



SEVEN TIPS FOR POSITIVE CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR PRE-TEEN SON

WELCOME PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS OF PRE-TEENS.

The journey from boyhood to adolescence is filled with growth, challenges, and opportunities. You're already starting to see changes in his appearance, the cupboards are regularly raided for food and he's developing a sense of himself, his identity and his independence.

At Top Blokes, we're dedicated to supporting you through this critical phase with practical and effective strategies. This guide focuses on fostering meaningful conversations with your pre-teen, drawing upon our experience in mentoring and youth development.

Together we'll explore seven tips to help you foster empowering conversations, celebrate growth and be a champion in your son's life every step of the way.

BUILDING UP BOYS. SHAPING TOP BLOKES.

“ We've always been really open and honest about things he does, says or tries. It helps him to know if he's open and truthful then I'll always be in his corner. ”

TOP BLOKES PARENT

TIP 1

SHARE MOMENTS BUILD BONDS

In our fast-paced world, it's important to carve out quality time with your son. Finding activities that both of you enjoy, such as outdoor adventures, movie nights, or sports, not only strengthens your bond but also creates a relaxed environment to engage in open and meaningful conversations.

These shared adventures do more than just bring you closer; they create a laid-back space where conversations naturally unfold. It's about showing up, not just in the big moments but in the everyday ones too. This quality time is your way of saying, "I'm here for you," opening the door to talks that range from the day's small moments to the more profound, or sometimes tricky discussions.

Boys often find it challenging and intimidating to have those sit down/heavy eye contact/interview style conversations, particularly when it comes to more challenging conversations. Driving in the car, going for a walk are all great settings to have these chats.

By making these hangouts a regular part of your routine, you're not only building a strong bond but also laying the groundwork for open communication, particularly when your son gets older. It's in these moments that your son learns he's got a champion in his corner, ready to listen, laugh, and guide.

With Top Blokes, it's all about turning ordinary time into extraordinary connections, ensuring your son knows he's always got a safe space to voice his thoughts, dreams, and concerns.

HELPFUL WORDS

- 1 "Hey, how about we go for a bike ride this weekend? Just you and me."
- 2 "I thought we could have a movie night tonight. Your pick!"
- 3 "I've got tickets for the game on Saturday. Thought it'd be fun for us to go together. What do you say?"

TIP 2

CULTIVATE A SAFE AND BRAVE SPACE

Creating a space where your son feels safe to express himself is paramount. Regularly reassure him that his thoughts and feelings are valid and important. Celebrating his successes and being a source of comfort during his struggles, helps to foster a sense of security and trust.

A brave space is where your son can muster the courage to be vulnerable and share his highs and lows without fear of reproach. It's where you, as a parent or caregiver, affirm that showing vulnerability is not just okay; it's a sign of strength.

These moments of bravery are opportunities to deepen your connection, showing you're fully engaged and present in his world.



HELPFUL WORDS

- 1 "I want you to know that you can talk to me about anything, no matter what it is. I'm here to listen, not to judge."
- 2 "It's okay to feel upset about this. Let's talk about what's bothering you."
- 3 "I'm really proud of you for sharing that with me. It takes courage to open up like that."

TIP 3

CHAMPION HIS VOICE WALK IN HIS SHOES

Understanding and empathising with your son's experiences helps build a strong relationship. You can do this by showing genuine interest in his life and feelings. This empathetic approach will encourage trust and fosters an understanding that bridges common gaps that may be generational, cultural, or simply because you are two different people who are learning how the other communicates.

It's not uncommon for all of us to be hesitant with what we initially want to say, and everyone expresses their emotions differently. Your son might process situations internally, or perhaps he might express outwardly through words and actions.

Understanding someone else can always be a challenge. Opening up the approach by sharing your feelings can create a sense of security and lead to a healthy discussion that expresses vulnerability safely.

It's also good to celebrate his achievements and success when your son is in this space. It affirms his identity and can be a great tool to encourage resilience and build upon his great personal qualities.

HELPFUL WORDS

- 1 "I noticed you seemed a bit down after school today. Want to talk about what happened?"
- 2 "I remember when I was your age, I faced something similar. It was tough, but here's how I dealt with it/ here's what I know now."
- 3 "I know you found that hard but I think it's really great that you"

TIP 4

LISTEN WITH INTENT RESPOND WITH HEART

Listening is more than just hearing; it's about truly understanding your son's perspective. Practice active listening by giving him your full attention. It's important not to interrupt - give him a moment to find his words. When he is ready try asking clarifying questions to dive deeper and confirm your understanding.

If he is struggling to express himself, gentle prompts such as open-ended questions can be a helpful tool to show him you're listening and generate some ideas for him to get started.

Show him that his thoughts and experiences, no matter how trivial they may seem, are important to you. This approach will build his confidence in sharing more significant concerns with you in the future.

Paraphrasing is also a great way to confirm you really understand. It is one of the most direct ways to show someone that their thoughts and feelings are understood. It helps people feel that their ideas are valid and respected because there is no judgment involved and allows your son to hear how their ideas are being interpreted by you.



HELPFUL WORDS

- 1 "I'm all ears. Tell me more about what happened."
- 2 "It sounds like that was a really big deal for you. How can I help?"
- 3 "I appreciate you telling me this. Let's figure out what we can do together."

TIP 5

VALIDATE HIS FEELINGS

Many things are changing in your boy's life and, as with anything new, this can cause concern for him. It's important to recognise whatever feelings, fears, anxieties or frustrations he may have as he brings them up.

We all like to feel validated and heard – no one likes to be dismissed with a “Calm down”, “That’s it?!” or “Get over it”. This is also true with pre-teens and young males. Helping them understand that their voice is valued will build the resilience, skills and safety they will need to communicate larger issues that may present in the future.

After all, why do we have so many of our kids' drawings and paintings pinned to our fridges? They may not be the greatest works of art, but they're important to our child and encouraging them means they don't give up. The same is true of conversations. When we listen and validate what they're saying, they grow in confidence. They know they can be honest about their initial concerns.

As parents, it is natural for all of us to make guiding decisions or suggestions when a problem arises for our young boys. However, offering a fixed solution can be a prompt after we acknowledge the emotions of our children.

Statements that show empathy, such as “That must be a hard thought for you to deal with” or “I'm sorry you're feeling this way. Would you like to talk about it?” are a great way to show you care and understand.

Once you've established a safe environment, your child will be more open to solutions or guidance that you may want to offer.

HELPFUL WORDS

- 1 "It's completely normal to feel this way. I understand why you'd be upset."
- 2 "I can see why that bothered you so much. Your feelings are valid."
- 3 "It's okay to feel like this. Do you want to talk about what might help you feel better?"

TIP 6

FOSTER CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING

Encouraging your son to think critically and solve problems is vital for his development. Discussing various scenarios that may be relevant to boys his age. It is understandable that these can be uncomfortable conversations, so following our other steps will hopefully be a big support when leading up to these topics.

Sharing your own experiences can bridge gaps, showing your son that everyone, including his parents, faces challenges. These stories aren't about condoning certain actions but about sharing life lessons learned. It's these relatable tales that can illuminate paths for your son, helping him navigate his own journey.

Setting clear and understandable boundaries is important for your son's growth. Explain the reasons behind rules and the consequences of breaking them. This clarity provides a sense of security and helps him navigate social norms and expectations.

Conflict resolution is a critical skill for any young person. Teaching your son peaceful and constructive ways to confront disagreements, displays the importance of communication and develops a resilient independence that is healthy.



HELPFUL WORDS

- 1 "What do you think would be a good way to handle this situation?"
- 2 "Let's think about the possible outcomes of each choice you could make. What do you think is best?"
- 3 "I've faced something similar before. Want to hear about it and see if it gives you any ideas?"

TIP 7

MEET THEM WHERE THEY'RE AT

Maybe they've had a bad day. They didn't get picked for the school team, they struggled on a test or their friend went and played with someone else. Understanding your son means meeting him where he's at, emotionally and mentally. What might not seem like a big deal to you as an adult could mean the world to your son. And if they are hungry as well...then hold on tight!

Each day can bring a new perspective or challenge for him, and it's our role to adapt, listen, and connect without judgment. Sometimes our own expectations or past experiences can cloud our words and our thinking. When we prioritise his voice and tune into his world, we're not just listening; we're empowering him to express himself freely and confidently. It's about being present, holding space, and fostering a bond that encourages him to share, knowing he's supported every step of the way

LET'S WRAP UP

Guiding your son through the formative pre-teen years is a journey filled with opportunities for growth and connection. By implementing these strategies from Top Blokes - valuing quality time, ensuring a safe and supportive environment, practising empathy, engaging in active listening, promoting problem-solving skills, setting boundaries, and teaching conflict resolution - you are equipping him with essential life skills.

We hope we've helped assist you in successfully steering these pre-teen years and building a lasting, positive relationship with your son - one that keeps the communication lines open, honest and safe. Together, we can foster a generation of young men who are empowered to lead healthy, happy and fulfilling lives.

HELPFUL WORDS

- 1 "I noticed you're a bit quiet. Want to talk about it, or need some space first?"
- 2 "It sounds like today was rough. Do you want to share more about it, or would you rather do something to take your mind off things for a bit?"
- 3 "I'm here for you, no matter how big or small you think your problem is. What's on your mind?"



TOP BLOKES
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MENTORING YOUNG MALES TO LIVE HEALTHY AND SAFE LIVES

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