

Tips for Awkward Conversations with Your Teen

For all parents, there arise times when you need to have an uncomfortable conversation with your teenager. This may be something huge like discussing sexuality or it may be smaller like hearing gossip regarding your kiddo. Regardless, the frank awkwardness doesn't mean we get to take a pass as a parent. So, the discussion must be had, but you can make some adjustments to make it less uncomfortable. Here are some simple tips to help with that.

1. **Sit next to each other.** I know this seems weird. However, talking while you ride in the car, sit beside each other at a game or event, or at the kitchen bar helps reduce the direct eye contact that can make the awkwardness palpable.
2. **Limit interruptions.** If this conversation was difficult to initiate, the last thing you want to do is restart it. Silence phones and be in a place you won't be disturbed.
3. **Allow enough time.** This is a repeat of what was said above. Don't start a discussion 10 minutes prior to an activity. It will need to have a part 2 later.
4. **Choose a comfortable/safe place.** If you know that the subject matter you will discuss could lead to your teen being upset or emotional, make sure you are in an environment that allows for that and one where they are able to focus and feel safe.
5. **Keep it private.** Don't have awkward conversations in front of their friends or others. This can lead to them feeling trapped and even more embarrassed.
6. **Give them some prep time.** Just like us, teens can be super busy and have a lot going on. If we just walk in and start talking, they are often distracted, feel irritated by the interruption, and have a hard time changing focus to what you want to discuss. Saying something like, "Hey, I wanted to talk for a few minutes. Could we do that in the kitchen in a half hour?", gives them some time to transition.
7. **Tell them the what and the why.** Teens can sense your discomfort. They will be distracted wondering where this conversation is going and why. They often assume they are getting in trouble. Giving them the punchline first will help them to listen better. Consider saying something like, "I wanted to talk to you about drinking because I remember it being a big deal when I was in middle school."