



Getting kids to open up can be hard.

Helping them to continue talking about what's going on in their lives can be even harder.

Kids and teens may turn to peers instead of adults or keep their feelings to themselves. But as a parent, caregiver or educator, you want to know what's going on so you can help if needed.

Even when everything is going well, establishing the habit of starting conversations builds a strong foundation of communication. This is especially useful if kids need to talk about more complicated things in the future. Practicing this habit builds their confidence to have these difficult conversations as time goes on.

Test, that's why we want you to join us this May in **Operation Conversation** and foster the healthy habit of talking with kids about their thoughts and feelings.

How do you get started?



Timing is key. Conversations feel more productive when everyone is calm and attentive. Make sure you're in a private area with few distractions, so children are more likely to focus on the conversation and feel comfortable to say what's on their mind.



Sharing is caring. Sharing your own thoughts and feelings and how you cope helps children learn that emotions are normal and manageable. Remember, kids learn by watching us.



Asking questions. Asking “yes or no” questions will result in just that: one-word answers. When you ask **open-ended questions**, your child will learn and get more comfortable sharing information on all kinds of topics, in addition to their emotions or behaviors.

How can you keep the conversation going?

Now that you've found a good time and place to talk, you may wonder, "What do I say?" Here are a few questions to try:

- What was the best thing that happened today?
- If you could change one rule at home or school, what would it be?
- What were two fun things that happened at daycare/school today?
- When you're sad, what's one thing that helps you feel better?
- What's your favorite thing to do? Why?

Looking for more conversation starters?

Conversation Starters

Start building the habit today of starting conversations to provide a strong foundation if you need to talk about more complicated things in the future. Here are some ideas to get you started to build the habit—and some to use if you are concerned.

If you could pick a new name, what would you choose?

What was the best part of your day?

What is something that made you laugh today?

What do you want to be when you grow up?

What do you like about yourself?

What is your favorite color? What does it represent for you?

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ON OUR SLEEVES | Wolfson Children's Hospital
The Movement for Children's Mental Health | www.OnOurSleeves.org

Download our **conversation cards** (available in **English** and **Spanish**) to help build the habit of talking about feelings. Share which ones have worked best for your family on social media, using **#OnOurSleevesJax** and **#OnOurSleeves**

Don't forget to share how you're using *On Our Sleeves* resources! Hit the **reply button** to tell us your *On Our Sleeves* story.

Sincerely,
Wolfson Children's Hospital

The mission of *On Our Sleeves* is to provide every community in America access to free, evidence-informed educational resources necessary for breaking stigmas about child mental health and educating families and advocates. **For more information, visit OnOurSleeves.org.**

To access educational resources and revisit the mission of *On Our Sleeves*[®], visit wolfsonchildrens.com/onoursleeves.

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