

PINNACLE PARTNERSHIP'S
ULTIMATE
**GUIDE TO HARD
CONVERSATIONS
WITH KIDS**

2023





Dear parents,

In an ever-evolving world filled with complexities and challenges, your role as nurturers, guides, and protectors is more vital than ever. We recognize that with the vastness of information at our fingertips, deciphering what to share, how to share, and when to share with our young ones can be daunting. This e-book is a heartfelt endeavor to stand beside you on this journey, offering guidance, support, and strategies. Remember, while we might not have all the answers, we can equip our children with understanding, resilience, and hope. Together, as a collective community of caregivers, we can navigate these tides, ensuring a brighter, more informed future for our children.

Be Well,

Pinnacle Partnerships



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Understanding Your Child's Perspective

Before initiating a conversation, try to understand the world from your child's eyes.

Children often perceive situations differently from adults, so gauging their knowledge, feelings, and concerns is crucial.



Pinnacle Pro Tips:

- Ask open-ended questions.
- Listen actively without interrupting.
- Validate their feelings, letting them know it's okay to feel scared, confused, or curious.

Choosing the Right Time and Setting



Pick a comfortable setting free from distractions where your child feels safe to express themselves.

Ensure it's a time when they're not overwhelmed with other emotions, like just after a tantrum or during bedtime.

Age-Appropriate Conversations



- **Toddlers and Preschoolers:** Stick to basic explanations and reassure safety.
- **Elementary School Children:** Offer more detailed explanations but focus on how it affects their immediate world.
- **Teenagers:** Engage in open discussions, asking for their opinions and addressing their concerns.

Toddlers and Preschoolers:

At this age, children primarily need to know they're safe and that the adults around them are in control.

Examples:

Event: Natural Disaster (like a hurricane)

What to Say: "There was a big storm far away, but we're safe here, and I'm here to keep you safe."

Event: Pandemic

What to Say: "We wear masks to keep ourselves and our friends healthy. It's like how we wear coats in the cold."

Elementary School Children:

These children are more inquisitive and may hear things from peers. They may need more information but in simple terms.

Examples:


Event: Protests or Civil Unrest

What to Say: "People are gathering because they want to make sure everyone is treated fairly. Sometimes, they march or hold signs to share their message."

Event: Terrorist Attack

What to Say: "A sad and scary thing happened where some people got hurt. But there are many people working to keep us safe, and we're safe here at home."

Teenagers:



Teens are more aware of world events and are forming their own opinions. They may need a space to discuss their feelings and thoughts openly.

Examples:

Event: Political Scandals

What to Say: "I've heard about this too. It's disappointing when our leaders make poor choices. How do you feel about it?"

Event: Climate Change

What to Say: "It's a big challenge our world is facing. I'm concerned too. Are there ways you think we can make a difference together?"

Managing Your Emotions



It's okay to admit if you're feeling scared or unsure. However, try to remain as calm and composed as possible, ensuring the conversation remains focused on the child's feelings and concerns.

In the following pages we will detail some examples of how you can learn to manage your own emotions when having these conversations with children.

Managing Your Emotions

Deep Breathing: Before starting the conversation, take a few deep breaths. This can help calm your nerves and give you a moment to collect your thoughts.

Example: *If a child asks about a distressing news story they overheard, instead of immediately reacting, take a deep breath and say, "Thank you for bringing that up. Let's sit down and talk about it."*

Acknowledge Your Feelings: It's okay to admit you're feeling a certain way, but distinguish between your emotions and the facts of the situation.

Example: *When discussing a natural disaster, you might say, "It makes me sad to hear about the people affected by the hurricane, but it's important to know that there are teams of people helping them."*

Managing Your Emotions

Practice Mindfulness: Being present in the moment can help you remain grounded during the conversation. This involves actively listening to your child and responding to their concerns rather than becoming overwhelmed by your own emotions.

Example: *If your child expresses fear over a global event, focus on their words and reassure them, rather than getting lost in your own anxieties.*

Seek Support: Sometimes, you might need to speak with another adult — a partner, friend, or therapist — to process your emotions before discussing challenging topics with your child.

Example: *After a particularly troubling event, you could say to a friend or partner, "I'm struggling with how to explain this to our child. Can we talk it through first?"*

Managing Your Emotions

Limit Media Consumption: It can be helpful to limit your own exposure to distressing news to avoid becoming overly anxious or upset, especially just before discussing it with your child.

Example: *Choose specific times of the day when you'll check the news, rather than constantly refreshing or getting real-time updates.*

Reframe Negative Thoughts: Try to reframe any catastrophic thoughts or worst-case scenarios with more balanced, realistic ones.

Example: *Instead of thinking, "The world is falling apart," consider, "There are challenging events happening, but there are also many positive actions being taken."*

Managing Your Emotions

Set Boundaries: If you're feeling particularly emotional about a topic, it's okay to delay the conversation slightly until you're better equipped to handle it.

Example: "I know you have questions about what happened, and I promise we'll discuss it. Can we talk after dinner when I can give you my full attention?"



Encouraging Open Dialogue



Let your child know that it's okay to come to you with questions anytime.

The goal is to foster an environment where they feel safe sharing their thoughts and concerns without judgment.

Encouraging Open Dialogue

Active Listening: Demonstrate that you're fully present and attentive when your child speaks.

Example: *If your child talks about a concern at school, instead of immediately offering solutions, first respond with, "I hear what you're saying. Tell me more about that."*

Ask Open-Ended Questions: These can elicit more than just a 'yes' or 'no' response.

Example: *Instead of asking, "Did you have a good day at school?", you could ask, "What was the most interesting part of your day today?"*

Encouraging Open Dialogue

Share Your Own Feelings: Doing this in a controlled manner can model open communication for your child.

Example: *"I felt a bit overwhelmed at work today, but talking with a friend helped."*

Establish Regular Check-Ins: Make it a habit to have daily or weekly discussions where your child can share their feelings and concerns.

Example: *Instituting a "High-Low-Hero" routine at dinner where everyone shares the high point of their day, a low point, and someone they're grateful for.*

Encouraging Open Dialogue

Avoid Interrupting: Let your child complete their thoughts before you respond.

Example: *If they're discussing a problem with a friend, resist the urge to jump in with advice. Instead, wait for a pause and then share your thoughts.*

Create a Safe Space: Ensure your child knows that home is a place where they can express themselves without fear of judgment or punishment.

Example: *"You can always tell me anything, even if you think I might not agree or understand. I'm here to listen and help."*

Encouraging Open Dialogue

Validate Their Feelings: Recognize and affirm your child's feelings, even if you don't fully understand or agree.

Example: *If your child is upset about something you deem minor, avoid saying, "That's not a big deal." Instead, opt for "I can see you're really upset about this. Let's talk through it."*



Encouraging Open Dialogue

Model Openness: Share age-appropriate information about your own experiences, challenges, and feelings.

Example: *Discussing a challenge you faced when you were their age and how you dealt with it.*

Provide Reassurance: Remind your child that their thoughts and feelings are valuable, and you appreciate them opening up to you.

Example: *"I'm really glad you told me about this. It helps me understand what you're going through."*

Encouraging Open Dialogue

Encourage Journaling: For older children, journaling can be a way to express and process their feelings. They can then choose to share their writings with you.

Example: *Gift your child a journal and say, "This is a place for you to write down your thoughts, whatever they may be. If you ever want to share or talk about them, I'm here."*

Using Media Mindfully

Using media mindfully is crucial in today's information-saturated world. Consuming media without discretion can lead to misinformation, heightened anxiety, and an imbalanced perspective on global events. By approaching media with intention and critical thinking, we can ensure that we receive accurate information, protect our mental well-being, and foster a balanced understanding of the world around us.



Pinnacle Pro Tips

- **Limit Exposure:** Continuous exposure can be overwhelming and anxiety-inducing.
- **Choose Reliable Sources:** Opt for age-appropriate news sources.
- **Watch Together:** This allows immediate discussion and clarification.

Addressing Misinformation and Bias

Addressing misinformation and bias with children is fundamental in cultivating a generation that values truth and fairness.

As they grow in an era inundated with information, teaching them to discern fact from fiction empowers them to make informed decisions.

Moreover, by confronting biases early on, we nurture their ability to build inclusive, understanding communities, ensuring a more equitable future for all.



Pinnacle Pro Tips

Discuss the importance of critical thinking and the potential for misinformation or biased perspectives in media.

Guide them towards reliable information sources.

Providing Reassurance and Hope

Providing reassurance and hope to children lays the foundation for their emotional resilience and fosters a positive outlook on life.

In uncertain times, these affirmations anchor them, ensuring they feel secure and optimistic about the future.



Pinnacle Pro Tips

Emphasize aspects of hope, resilience, and the human capacity to come together during tough times.

Highlight positive stories or actions being taken to address the situation.

Seeking External Support

If your child is exhibiting signs of extreme anxiety or distress, consider seeking professional guidance, such as counseling or therapy.



When it comes to discussing challenging world events or addressing your child's mental health journey, it's natural to seek guidance. Our PERLs are here to help you navigate these important conversations. They offer a listening ear, expert advice, and valuable resources to ensure you approach these topics with confidence and sensitivity.



Resources:

Family and Parent Mental Health
Coach:

PERL: www.pinnships.org

Kid Friendly News:

Time for Kids:

<https://www.timeforkids.com>

Dogo News:

<https://www.dogonews.com>



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