

Wanna Talk About It?

Getting kids (or anyone) to open up if something is bothering them can be difficult. In our house, we have a 'front step' tradition to help get us talking. Whenever anyone, visitors included, needs to vent, we go out and sit on the front step together. It's a sacred space. Everything that happens on the step, stays on the step. Everyone needs a safe place, a little familiar space to feel comfortable. If you don't have a front step, create a cozy spot, inside or out, where confessions, fears and secrets can be kept safe.

THINGS YOU'LL NEED:

Empty Box
Craft Supplies
Busy Box Items
Warm Or Cool Beverages
Blanket Or Spray Bottle

Confidential conversations sometime require a little distraction to get the ball rolling. We keep a "busy box" of pens, crayons, paper, cards, stuffed animals, finger puppets, clay, and a book of inspirational quotes designated for the step. Don't worry about the crayons giving off a kid-only vibe. Even adults love a little drawing time!

Start with a blank box and ask the kids to decorate it with glitter, stickers, markers, and tissue paper. Then fill it with busy box items you have around the house. Every once in a while, I slip in a new and special little surprise; a yoyo made a recent addition. Stay away from video games. I learned from experience that these are too distracting and counterproductive for a personal conversation.

Make the experience pampering; if it's cold outside, bring a blanket, comfy slippers/shoes and a warm beverage. If it's hot, go for a cold drink, a fan and spray bottle as a mister. These items give you something else to do while chatting.

When you first sit down on the step, open the box and offer up an object to play with. The clay is always a big hit. As everyone plays with their object, gently ask about their day. Your job is to mostly listen as everyone desires and needs to be heard (kids included).

End the session on a high note, with a sweet song and a pact reassuring them that the conversation is between you and the step (no one else).

This tradition is not meant to replace professional psychiatric therapy. It's about helping the folks in your sphere start to unblock and communicate. If you suspect something serious is going on, please seek professional help.