

# 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.