

Communicating With Your Kids on a Deeper Level

Recently, I had some downtime in my workday and I walked by my son's room to find him leaning on the steps of his bunk bed, staring and doing nothing. I work from home and he is homeschooled.

So, I walked into his room and rested next to his beanbag chair. He immediately came off the steps and sat next to me. I asked him, "What's on your mind?" What followed was a deeper conversation than I anticipated. It started light with basic topics covered—his sister's 16th birthday party, my brother and his family who had recently visited from out of state, and some of the superhero movies we had recently watched.

Then we found ourselves talking about school concerns, problems he and his siblings had been having, and more. As we talked I realized how important these one-on-one talks are. I need to be intentional in fostering these types of conversations regularly. Now I have scheduled times for each child to have alone time with me. It's my way of making these types of conversations happen.

Here are four ways to have deeper conversations with kids.

Get on Their Level

Our 6-year-old is the youngest and shortest in the house. One time I got on my knees and walked around a little bit. It was a completely different perspective, and that is his view all the time. He looks up to everything, making it seem like everybody is looking down on him. So, I often squat or sit down when I speak to him. It enables me to get face-to-face, to look him eye-to-eye and gets me on his level. When I do, he knows he has my attention and the conversations flow. Try getting on your kids' level, physically, when talking to them.

Get Comfortable in Their Space

As I reflect on the conversation I mentioned in our son's bedroom I'm realizing some of our best and deepest conversations happen there. When I sit or lay down in his room, I'm in his area where he's most comfortable, and he opens up. The same happens with our other two kids as well. They sleep, hang out and just spend time in their rooms. They are very comfortable there and it's private. They can just relax, open up and be themselves.

We have talks at the kitchen table, but that's not just their space. Deep conversations have happened there, but I think the deepest conversations we've had happened when I got comfortable in their own space. I believe the same will happen with you.

Never Stop Talking

Small talk, deep conversations, talks about goals, about school, sports—whatever, never stop talking to them, even when they aren't as talkative. Keep the lines of communication open, and have as much conversation with your kids as you possibly can. The more quantity conversation you have will open the door for more quality conversations. When the communication dies in any relationship, the relationship will soon follow. Never stop talking to your kids.

Never Stop Listening

Make sure you are listening, intently. I'm guilty of forming an opinion before they are done speaking. Or going into problem-solving mode when they just want to express themselves to me. Your kids aren't always looking for an answer, sometimes just an ear. Listening to your kids will keep open the door to deeper conversations.

As dads, we want to have meaningful influence with our kids. If we have a surface-level relationship built on surface-level

conversations, then our influence will be limited. Practice what I've mentioned above and you'll be able to go deep with your kids. {eoa}

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