

**Kid Edition**

**“SAY  
THIS”  
Not THAT**

**Conversation prompts to help parents  
during difficult times.**

## RECEIVE A MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS

### “ SAY THIS

The doctor told me I am very sick, but I will do everything the doctor tells me to do to try and get better.

For the next little bit, I may be sick and unable to \_\_\_\_\_, but know that I love you very much. I think about you a lot.

### ✗ Not THAT

The doctor told me I'm very sick, but that doctor doesn't know what he/she is talking about.

I promise I'm going to be okay.

## MOVING

### “ SAY THIS

We are moving, and there are parts of moving that are very sad (leaving friends, family, church, school, sports team, etc.), but there are parts of moving that are very exciting. Let me show you what your new (church, school, neighborhood, room) will look like.

God is in our new city preparing a home for us.

You may feel a lot of emotions, from sadness to fear to anger, which is normal. I will have emotions too. If you want to share them, I would like to listen.

### ✗ Not THAT

We are moving to a new city and leaving everything you know and love.

You need to deal with it.

# EXPERIENCING FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

## “ SAY THIS

We are experiencing money problems. I know you might worry or feel fear—which is normal. We are doing what’s within our control to come up with solutions to help the situation. In the meantime, let’s work together to save our pennies.

Right now, we are working to pay for our needs. I know it is difficult that we can’t spend it on what you want.

## ✘ Not THAT

We have money problems because you are so expensive.

We’re broke. Could you stop asking me for things?

I need you to tell your dad (divorced) we need more money.

We’re not like \_\_\_\_\_ family. We can’t afford it.

# JOB LOSS

## “ SAY THIS

I lost my job, which may cause worry, fear, and anxiety. This is normal. I want you to know I am doing everything I can to find another one. And I feel fear, too, sometimes.

I am going to working at a different place now. It would be like if you changed schools. I am no longer at my old “school,” but I don’t know where my new one is...yet. I spend time every day searching for my new place to work.

## ✘ Not THAT

I lost my job because I keep having to take care of you.

I lost my job because my boss is a jerk.

I lost my job, so we’re going to be in trouble.

## REMARRY

### “ SAY THIS

I am going to marry \_\_\_\_\_, but \_\_\_\_\_ is not going to replace your mom/dad. No one can replace your mom/dad.

I am going to marry \_\_\_\_\_, and I want you to know that you are still very special to me.

### ✘ Not THAT

I am going to marry \_\_\_\_\_, and he/she will be your new dad/mom.

I'm marrying \_\_\_\_\_, and then everything will be better, I promise.

## GLOBAL PROBLEMS

### “ SAY THIS

Our world is very broken, but our God is bigger than any problem we experience.

If you sometimes feel anxious or overwhelmed or fear about what is happening, I want you to know I do too. You're not alone. Do you have any questions you want to ask?

### ✘ Not THAT

The world is ending. It's doomsday.

It's what we deserve. We're all in trouble, so who cares?!?

## STRUGGLE WITH ADDICTION

### “ SAY THIS

I have an addiction, and I know this might cause you to worry. Know that I am doing everything I can to get better.

I'm telling people who I can trust that I have a problem, and you can talk to a trustworthy person too. We don't need to keep this a secret. I want you to be able to talk about it too.

### ✗ Not THAT

I wouldn't have an addiction if your behavior were better.

I need you to keep my addiction a secret.

## CHANGING CHURCHES

### “ SAY THIS

We sense God is calling us to start attending a new church. Let's look at pictures of the kids' ministry.  
Note: Talk about details the child will experience. If possible, visit the church before you take the child to explain the details of what to expect.

### ✗ Not THAT

We are changing churches because the pastors or other people in the church are bad, hypocrites, ungodly, hurt me, made bad choices...

No communication. Silence.

# DIVORCE

**Note:** Talk about the details the child will experience: where he/she will live, church, school, pick-up, sports, visitation, etc. Keep the conversation kid-focused. If your child asks a question that would require you to give adult-level details, answer by saying, “I love that you’re asking questions. Keep them coming. But the answer to your questions is a grown-up problem, and we are handling all of the grown-up problems for you. All you need to think about are kid problems.”

## “ SAY THIS

We are getting a divorce, and we want to talk to you about how this will impact you.

We love you, we are here for you, and it’s ok to ask questions.

## ✗ Not THAT

We are divorcing, and it’s your mother/father’s fault.

We are divorcing because of your behavior.

# PARENT WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

## “ SAY THIS

I struggle with mental illness, but it is my responsibility to get help which I am doing. Your responsibility is to focus on being a kid.

## ✗ Not THAT

I struggle with mental illness. Here are all the ways it affects me.

I need your help to get better.

**\*This content is not intended to be a substitute for professional advice or treatment. Please seek the advice of a qualified professional with any questions or concerns you may have. It is designed to encourage and is for informational purposes only.**

**Kid Edition**



# “SAY THIS” Not THAT

**Conversation prompts to help parents  
during difficult times.**

**WHAT TO SAY  
WHEN YOUR  
CHILD IS**

Being bullied. • Experiencing rejection. • Constantly fighting with their sibling.  
Struggling with learning. • Grieving the loss of a pet. • Experiencing a difficult teacher.  
Bullying someone. • Struggling to make a friend. • Afraid of the dark. • Taking a test.

## BEING BULLIED

### “ SAY THIS

Thank you so much for telling me. I know this can be scary.

Let's talk about a couple of responses, and let's act out one so you can practice.

Let's list the adults who are safe that you can ask for help.

Let's pray for your safety, but let's also pray for your bully.

I believe in you and support you. This is not your fault. I am right here with you, and you are not alone.

### ✗ Not THAT

It's not that big of a deal. Just ignore them.

What?!? How dare they? You just wait to see what I do to them.

Can't you stand up for yourself?

Everything will be okay.

## EXPERIENCING REJECTION

### “ SAY THIS

I'm so sorry your friends are treating you this way. I have experienced feeling this way too. When I was in \_\_\_ grade, I (share a personal example). So I understand what it is like. It's not easy.

I am sad with you.

### ✗ Not THAT

Why are they treating this way? Find out what you did wrong so you can make it better.

Welcome to the world, kid. Deal with it.

Want to have some friends over so they can see what it feels like?



## CONSTANTLY FIGHTING WITH THEIR SIBLING.

### “ SAY THIS

I've noticed there is more and more fighting taking place with your sister/brother. I want both of you to take some time to think about what it's like to be the other sister/brother and give me one example of how you think they feel. What is one thing you think they want to see change?

Let's look at what you two are fighting about. Each of you takes a minute and say what you need and what you hope is the outcome.

Let's define what is and is not okay for each of you moving forward.

### ✘ Not THAT

Why can't you be like the \_\_\_\_\_ family? They never fight.

All I've ever wanted is for you to get along.

Guys-cut it out, or you'll wish you had.

Why can't you be like the other sibling?

I am so mad at you.

## STRUGGLING WITH LEARNING

### “ SAY THIS

Thank you so much for sharing this with me. You are not alone.

Let's take a brain break, go outside, and get our wiggles out. Once we've given our brain a chance to play, let's try again.

Is there someone like a teacher or older student with who you would be comfortable asking for help?

How can I help you at home? Let's look at the space you study and when you study to see what we can do.

### ✘ Not THAT

This is so easy. You need to try harder.

Just figure it out. Get your act together.

## GRIEVING THE LOSS OF A PET

### “ SAY THIS

I miss Fluffy too. She was such a sweet pet. Just the other day, I was thinking of her/him.

Do you want to look at some pictures of when we had Fluffy?

Do you want to draw or color a picture for me? I would love one of Fluffy.

### ✗ Not THAT

You need to get over it. It was just a dog. We can get another one.

I am glad it's gone. It's saved me so much money.

## EXPERIENCING A DIFFICULT TEACHER

### “ SAY THIS

Thank you for sharing this with me. I know it isn't easy with Ms/Mr \_\_\_\_\_. When I was in elementary school, I struggled with \_\_\_\_\_. I can understand how hard it is.

As an adult, you may have a boss at work that you don't like. Learning how to be with a difficult teacher for a year will give you lots of learning time to prepare you. Let's talk about what is within your control to change.

### ✗ Not THAT

That teacher doesn't know what she/he is talking about. You don't have to listen to her/him.

Don't worry. You will soon have a different teacher. I'm meeting with the principal.

## BULLYING SOMEONE

### “ SAY THIS

Making fun of someone shows something is going on within you, so let's find out together. Why did you choose that person? When you did it, how did it make you feel? What were you hoping would happen?

The reason why people bully is that it points to something they need or struggle with themselves. Let's find out together what is going on because I really care for you.

### ✗ Not THAT

Just stay out of trouble.

I can't believe you did that. You are such a... (then bully them with words).

Don't you know better? What kind of kid are you? I expected better.

## STRUGGLING TO MAKE A FRIEND

### “ SAY THIS

Sometimes making a friend takes a little time. It's okay that it takes time.

Let's pray together and ask God to help you find a friend soon.

You keep being yourself and look for someone who could use a friend.

List the things that you are interested in. Now let's list others who share those interests too.

### ✗ Not THAT

Making friends is easy.

I had tons of friends when I was your age.

You just need to try harder.

# AFRAID OF THE DARK

## “ SAY THIS

Being afraid of the dark is super normal. There are lots of kids who are afraid of the dark. Grownups too!

I don't like not being able to see things well when it's too dark.

Let's see about adding some light to your room if you would like.

## ✗ Not THAT

Stop acting like a baby.

Big kids aren't afraid of the dark.

You need to learn how to sleep in the dark -time to grow up.

# TAKING A TEST

## “ SAY THIS

You have worked very hard to get ready for this test. Take a deep breath before you start, and trust your hard work.

No matter what happens, I respect you and am proud of your hard work.

If you feel a little nervous, that's okay. It's normal. When I was in \_\_\_\_\_ grade, I would do \_\_\_\_\_ before a test.

Can I pray for you before you go to school?

## ✗ Not THAT

I need you to study on the way to school and keep studying until the test starts. Focus. Focus.

What you make on this test really matters. We want nothing less than a \_\_\_\_\_ or else.

Your grades are all you have, and they define who you are. You come from a family that doesn't accept failure. Do not mess this up.

If you don't know it, find a way to get the answer.

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