

Teen 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.

Let me tell you what I have learned so far. (Share developmentally appropriate information.)

✗ 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 we want to talk to you about how this will impact you. 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.

If you would like to purchase some “extra” items, this might be a good time to think about getting a job to make extra money that we can’t provide for you right now.

✗ Not THAT

We have money problems because you are so expensive.

Please answer the call. I need you to talk to the bill collector.

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

Do you think money grows on trees?

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 lost my job, which has been difficult. I have felt _____. I want you to know I want to work, and I am putting myself out there looking for another job.

✗ 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, and we’re in big 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.

✗ 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 I can trust that I have a problem, and you, too, can talk to a trustworthy person. 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, so don't tell anyone.

CHANGING CHURCHES

“ SAY THIS

We sense God is calling us to start attending a new church. Let's look at the youth group webpage and social media accounts.

We think it's time for our family to visit a new church. I know that sometimes new things can cause fear. I feel fear too. So together, let's try this out.

✗ Not THAT

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

You need to get over it and go.

DIVORCE

Note: Talk about the details the teen will experience: where he/she will live, church, school, pick-up, sports, visitation, etc. Keep the conversation focused on the teen. 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 teen 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.

You need to decide where you want to live.

PARENT WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

“ SAY THIS

I struggle with mental illness, and it is my responsibility to get help, which I am doing. Your responsibility is to focus on being a teenager. I am getting help, so know I am taking care of myself.

✗ Not THAT

I struggle with this mental illness, and I think you can help me get better. Will you do _____ for me? Look up _____ on the internet.

***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.**

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Conversation prompts to help parents
during difficult times.

WHAT TO SAY
WHEN YOUR
TEEN IS

Struggling with weight issues. • Comparing your family to others. • Experiencing rejection.
Struggling to put down their phone. • Experiencing delayed puberty.
Experiencing a difficult teacher. • Bullying someone. • Feeling lonely.
Feeling shame and guilt about having sex.
Feeling shame and guilt about having looked at pornography

STRUGGLING WITH WEIGHT ISSUES

“ SAY THIS

Our family is developing a healthy relationship with food. We are going to create a nutrition plan that can be fun, satisfying, and healthy.

Find ways to support without words, such as cook healthier meals and eat out less.

When she/he feels shame, speak words of “strength” into them like, “I believe you can do this.”

✗ Not THAT

You’re never going to get a boyfriend/girlfriend if you don’t stop eating like a cow.

Use the “Fat” word.

Make fun of others who are overweight.

COMPARING YOUR FAMILY (HOME, FINANCES, CARS, ETC.) TO SOMEONE ELSE

“ SAY THIS

Comparison is like a virus that infects our ability to find joy. Let’s stop the infection by focusing on what we do have.

Comparison makes us feel insecure, anxious, and depressed, and it doesn’t go away when we get older. Gratitude is the vaccine for comparison.

✗ Not THAT

If you like them so much more, then why don’t you just go be part of their family!

Well, I wish I had their teenage daughter/son.

You are so ungrateful. Do you know how hard I work to give you what we have?

Yes, I wish I were them, too.

EXPERIENCING REJECTION

“ SAY THIS

I'm so sorry your friends are treating you this way. You've been a good friend to them. Let's commit to each other that we will never intentionally make anyone feel the way you feel right now.

Thanks for sharing with me. I, too, know what it feels like to be left out. Just the other day on social media, I saw... (share a personal example).

✗ Not THAT

Find out what you did wrong so you can make it better.

Let's show them what they're missing by intentionally leaving them out.

STRUGGLING TO PUT DOWN THEIR PHONE

“ SAY THIS

I've noticed our family struggles with too much screen time (myself included). Let's declare dinner time a screen-free zone.

How is everyone doing with their screen-time limits? What limits have you set? Do you need help? I have been struggling to keep mine, so I am making adjustments.

✗ Not THAT

You teenagers- always on your phone.

What's wrong with you? Do you have an addiction?

You might as well be married to that phone.

EXPERIENCING DELAYED PUBERTY

“ SAY THIS

I know this is tough for you, but your body WILL develop. The next time we are in public, I want you to look at all the adults and see if you can tell by looking at them who struggled with delayed puberty. I bet you won't be able to tell . . .

✗ Not THAT

God knew I wanted you to be my baby boy/girl for as long as possible.

Don't worry. You will catch up and pass them.

EXPERIENCING A DIFFICULT TEACHER

“ SAY THIS

I wish your teacher treated students differently. We are going to choose kindness even though she/he chooses to be rude. And when you're an adult, remember this moment so you can do it differently.

It's not easy to be under a difficult teacher. I understand. As an adult, you may have a boss that may be difficult also. I experienced it with... (share example), and I made these adjustments (share example). This experience may help prepare you for that season.

What you are walking through is not easy. Let's look at what's within your control that you can change.

✗ Not THAT

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

Let's show that teacher whose really the boss. I am sending an email to their principal right now.

Don't worry. I shared about what is happening on social media, so now other parents know too.

BULLYING SOMEONE

“ SAY THIS

It may seem that what you write online isn't personal, but it is. Let's think about the fact that if she/he were here in front of us, would you say out loud what you wrote? This question is good to ask yourself before you hit send.

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

That kid is weird, but try to be nice so that you can 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.

Look, people take screenshots of what you write. Just don't write it, so you get caught.

FEELING LONELY

“ SAY THIS

I can understand. I feel lonely too sometimes. Just the other day at work, I (share example).

Something is not wrong with you. It's normal to feel lonely at times.

Even though you're always in a crowd, it's still possible to feel alone. You're not crazy.

Thank you for sharing with me. Is there a way I can help besides listening?

✗ Not THAT

Let me handle this situation. I will make sure you are never alone again.

You don't know what loneliness is. Let me tell you how lonely I have been...

Maybe it's because you did this or that.

FEELING SHAME AND GUILT ABOUT HAVING SEX

“ SAY THIS

I don't want you to feel shame about having sex. Shame will tell you lies like, 'It's hopeless, you'll never change,' or 'you'll never be pure again, so why care?' But shame is a liar, and those messages do not come from God. Conviction comes from God, and it tells us truths like, 'God's grace is enough,' and 'God forgives all sin.' Intimacy without a vow will always feel empty, and so waiting for God's best is still available to you and worth it.

I am so thankful to be your dad/mom, and I am thankful I have the chance to be here for you and with you. You are not alone.

✗ Not THAT

I am so disappointed in you.

I can't believe you did that. You should be feeling shame and guilt.

You will never be pure again.

Where did I go wrong?

You're just like your mom/dad (divorced).

FEELING SHAME AND GUILT ABOUT HAVING LOOKED AT PORNOGRAPHY

“ SAY THIS

I know our culture sees porn as no big deal, but just because a person is in a video doesn't mean they are free. Human trafficking is fueled by porn. I'm not trying to make you feel guilty, but instead, I'd like to inspire you to be part of the movement to end human trafficking by choosing sexual integrity. A website to help you learn more about living porn-free is fightthenewdrug.com.

Stepping into pornography means you are searching for intimacy of the heart but trying to do it without being vulnerable in relationships. Let's talk about how we can help you practice uncertainty and risk with relationships so you can one day enjoy intimacy in full within God's goodness of marriage.

✗ Not THAT

Porn is normal. I know you're going to struggle because you're a teen. Just don't let it become a problem.

Just keep it to yourself. I don't want to know.

You should feel bad. It's wrong, and I am so disappointed in you.

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