

Talking Tough Topics with Kids

A Step-by-Step Guide

Step One: Research

Most parents worry about giving wrong information or not knowing the answer to a question.

- Brainstorm a few questions you think your child will ask.
- Get online on a reliable website or talk to an expert you trust or get a book from the library.
- Learn enough to feel comfortable that you now something about this, and know where to get more info if you need it.

Step Two: Decide How Much Info is Enough

Talking to kids about a topic doesn't mean you have to give full disclosure!

- Discuss with your co-parent if you have one, or a trusted friend or mentor.
- Decide what questions you'll answer, and how much detail you feel is appropriate.
- Choose a response to a question that is too in-depth. Maybe:
 - "That's a little advanced for this discussion, we'll talk about this again."
 - "Great question, and I'll answer that another time."
 - "What do you think about what I've already told you?"

Step Three: Explore the value you want to impart

What do I want my child to believe about this topic

- Choose one thing you want your child to feel or believe about this topic right now.
- Decide on the most important idea you want to stick with your child.
- Remember that the values your child can hear depend on their age and temperament. Repeat these conversations often!

Step Four: Sketch out what you want to say

- You don't need a script, but making some notes (on paper or in your head) will give you confidence and increase your ability to send the message you want to send.
- Focus on one "take home message" that you want your child to remember.
- Keep it short!

Step Five: Have the Conversation

- Pick your moment - few chances of interruption, everyone well-fed, TV off.
- Start by asking your child what they know or have heard about this topic.
- Listen to their answers, not what they understand and where they've got wrong information.
- Start your talking with your take home point
- Answer questions but keep your answers short.
- Take a break and do something you enjoy.
- Repeat these conversations often.