



## **Parent Resources**

### Engaging in Intentional Conversations

Parents!! I want to steal just a few minutes of your time today to share some thoughts with you centered on the idea of engaging in intentional conversations with your teenager.

I'm not sure about you, but I was under the impression that more face time, home time and family time would naturally lead to more intentional conversations with my family. However, that hasn't even been close to true. Maybe up to this point, the mere thought of engaging in intentional conversations has elicited guilt or shame inside of you because you feel you've been doing a poor job. However, fear not. Because you can make the choice TODAY to change that moving forward.

Here are three ways to engage in an intentional conversation with your student today.

#### **Listen**

Here's the thing, in conversations with your teenager, you need to be a guide, not a whip. You need to gently lead your students through conversation with open-ended and follow up questions (more on that in a minute). Sometimes, super direct questions can feel invasive and intrusive. I want to encourage you to take the back-handed, coy comments your students make and to run wide with them. Cast a wide net. Ask how they feel, what they mean, tell me more. When you choose to engage your student past the initial defense, their guard will start to be let down and they'll begin to feel like a conversation with you is a safe space. Be a good listener.

#### **Validate Their Feelings**

Listen, I think if we're honest, we've lumped ALL high school drama into this one idea that Middle and High Schoolers are simply dramatic. The reality, friends, when we choose to downplay our teenagers' disappointments or try to solve their problems for them without really taking the time to validate how they feel, it comes across as dismissive. There's a good chance that there's a well of feelings that your student is waiting for you to press into. They may not reciprocate right away, but as you begin to peel back the layers, use those opportunities to validate the way your student feels.

#### **Follow Up**

In that same vein, one intentional conversation with your student doesn't make you super-mom or dad. It simply means you had an intentional conversation. However, consistency and follow up to those intentional conversations, over time, will go a long way towards making you a person whom your student feels they can trust and is in their corner.