YOUR GUIDE



Talking to Youth Before Crisis

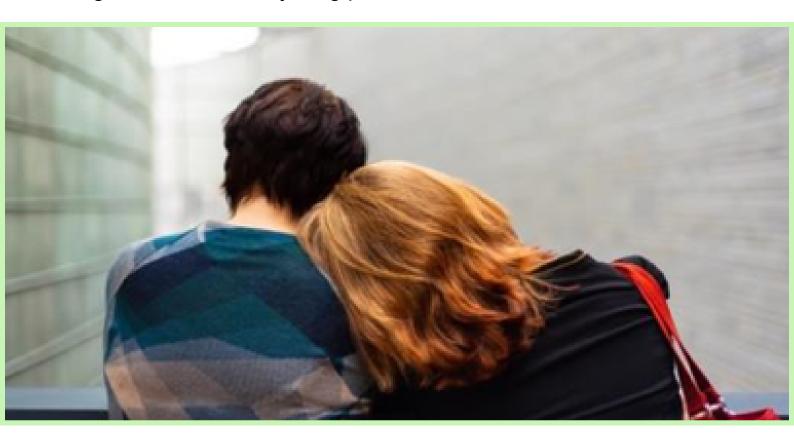


Introduction

Youth face a complex world filled with pressures, uncertainties, and emotional challenges. Before a crisis arises, before a young person feels the need to run away or withdraw, there is a powerful opportunity for connection. This guide is designed to help adults initiate meaningful conversations with youth that build trust, foster emotional safety, and open the door to support.

Whether you're a parent, caregiver, teacher, mentor or community advocate, your words and presence can make a lasting difference. By creating safe spaces, validating emotions, and recognizing early warning signs, you can help youth feel seen, heard, and valued. These conversations aren't just about preventing crisis, they're about nurturing resilience, strengthening relationships, and empowering youth to navigate life's challenges with confidence.

Let this guide be your companion in starting conversations that can change the course of a young person's life.





Talk Before Crisis

Create a Safe Space

Let youth know they can talk without fear of punishment or judgment. Use calm, open body language and tone. Avoid interrupting or dismissing their feelings.

Example Prompt: "I'm here to listen. Whatever you're feeling, it's okay to talk about it."

Validate Their Emotions

Acknowledge their feelings even if you don't fully understand them. Avoid minimizing their experiences.

Example Prompt: "It sounds like you've been carrying a lot. That must be really hard."

Ask Open-Ended Questions and Avoid Lecturing

Ask "How are you feeling lately?"

Focus on understanding, not correcting.

Recognize Warning Signs

Be alert to signs that a youth may be struggling: Withdrawal from family or friends, sudden mood or behaviour changes, expressions of hopelessness, signs of bullying, abuse, or anxiety.

Tip: Ask gentle questions like, "You've seemed a bit down lately - do you want to talk about what's going on?"

Offer Support and Resources

Connect youth with trusted adults (teachers, mentors, counsellors). Share resources, such as support groups or helplines. Let them know they're not alone and help is available.

Example Prompt: "Would you like to talk to someone together? I can help you find the right person."





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Teach Conflict Resolution

Help youth navigate disagreements constructively. Model respectful communication and problem-solving.

Example Prompt: "Let's figure out how we can work through this together."

Discuss Online Safety

Talk about the risks of online interactions and exploitation. Talk about the warning signs and red flags. Set privacy controls and monitor usage. Encourage reporting of suspicious behaviour.

Example Prompt: "Have you ever felt uncomfortable online? You can always tell me if something doesn't feel right, and we can figure it out together."

Keep the Conversation Going

Check in regularly, not just during tough times. Celebrate their strengths and achievements. Reinforce that they are loved and valued.

Example Prompt: "I'm proud of how you handled that situation. You're stronger than you think."





Navigating Disagreements

Disagreements are a natural part of life, but learning how to handle the situation respectfully can empower youth to build stronger relationships and avoid crisis situations. Here's how you can guide them.

Understand the Conflict

Encourage youth to pause and reflect before reacting. Help them identify the root cause of the disagreement (e.g. misunderstanding, unmet needs, emotional triggers). Teach them to listen actively, not just to respond, but to understand.

Prompt: "Can you tell me what happened from your point of view?"

Build Resilience

Remind youth that conflict doesn't mean a relationship is broken. Celebrate when they handle disagreements well. Reinforce that growth comes from learning through challenges.

Prompt: "You handled that really well, how did it feel to work through it?"

Problem Solve Together

Brainstorm solutions collaboratively. Focus on shared goals (e.g. fairness, safety, respect.) Encourage compromise and empathy.

Prompt: "What's a solution that feels fair to both of you?"

Communicate Respectfully

Use "I" statements to express feelings without blaming (e.g. "I felt hurt when..") Avoid name-calling, sarcasm, or yelling. Encourage calm tone and body language.

Prompt: "Let's talk about this calmly so we can understand each other better."





Online Safety

Red Flags

Be alert if someone:

- Asks to keep secrets from adults.
- Pressures to share personal photos or information.
- Tries to move conversations to private apps or platforms.
- Makes the youth feel uncomfortable, scared, or confused.
- Pretends to be someone they're not.

Always advise that If something feels off, trust your gut. You don't have to respond.

How to Stay Safe

- Keep personal info private: Don't share full name, address, school, or photos with strangers.
- Use privacy settings: Set accounts to private and limit who can make contact.
- Watch for the red flags.
- Think before clicking: Avoid suspicious links or downloads.
- Talk to someone that is trusted: If anything makes the youth feel uncomfortable, tell a parent, teacher, or counsellor.
- Report and block suspicious behaviour.

Reassure Them:

"You won't get in trouble for telling me. I'm here to help."

"If something feels wrong, it's okay to speak up."

What To Say

If someone online makes you feel uneasy, you can say:

- "I'm not comfortable sharing that."
- "I need to check with my parents first."
- "I don't talk to people I don't know online."
- You can also log off, block them and tell an adult.

Need Help?

If you're ever in trouble or unsure what to do, reach out to:

- A trusted adult.
- A counsellor
- · A youth helpline or support group.

Start the Conversation

When to Talk:

- While using devices together.
- After seeing something online or in the news.
- When setting up a new app or account.

What to say:

"Can we talk about how to stay safe online?"

"Do you know what to do if someone acts weird or asks for personal info online?"



Contact Us



If you are looking for more resources or assistance, contact us.



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