

Answering Difficult Questions

Sometimes parents are uncomfortable starting a conversation because they are unsure how they would answer tough questions from their kids. Here are six tips to get any uncomfortable conversation going:

- 1. VALIDATE THE QUESTION:** Start by saying something like “thank you for coming to me about this” or “I am glad you feel comfortable asking that.” Be sure to add “that’s a good question!” to encourage them to feel comfortable asking in the future.
- 2. ASK CLARIFYING QUESTIONS:** Be sure you understand what the young person is asking. You can ask questions like “What do you already know about that?” or “What do you think?” This will help you understand where the question is coming from so you do not need to explain more than what they are asking.
- 3. DETERMINE THE TYPE OF QUESTION THEY ARE ASKING:** Most questions are fact-based, or values based. Answer fact-based questions with the facts you know. It is ok to say that you don’t know the answer to the question, but you will find out and get back to them or suggest you research the answer together. Answer values questions by exploring your values and your child’s values. Many questions are about what is normal and what is not. You can share your values with your child and ask them what they think.
- 4. USE IT AS A SPRINGBOARD:** Use the question as an opportunity for a discussion. Encourage your child to come to you with other questions in the future. You can keep the conversation going by using their question as a starting point to share more information or create a dialogue. Start a lifelong conversation grounded in honesty, trust, and respect.
- 5. PRACTICE:** It may be uncomfortable at first, but the more you practice answering difficult questions, the easier it will be!
- 6. BE PRO-ACTIVE:** Be a role model by asking your kids questions. Invite them to respond and share their thoughts and what they know about the topic.

