



## Discussion Questions to Get Your Family Talking

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Parents often struggle to get more than one- or two-word responses from their kids, especially in families that don't talk much. It's no secret that good communication builds family relationships. But, when the rubber meets the road, how does a parent actually help to get more out of family talk-times? In a previous Good Advice, we provided a piece with practical ideas for getting your kids talking. Here are more ideas I think you'll find helpful.

Parents can discuss these questions with their children and share their own answers as well.

### Discussion Questions to Get Your Family Talking - #1

Have you ever had a conversation with your adolescent that went something like this: "Did you have a good day?" "Yeah." "What did you do?" "Nothing." "Did anything exciting happen?" "I dunno." If this sounds familiar, you're not alone! Parents often struggle to get more than one- or two-word responses from their kids, especially in families that don't talk much. It's no secret that good communication builds family relationships. But, when the rubber meets the road, how does a parent actually help to get more out of family talk-times? One factor involves learning the skill of asking good questions.

Typically, asking "closed-ended" questions, ones that your kids can answer with a word or two, don't help to foster good communication. Questions like "Did you have a good day?" or "Did your teachers give you any homework assignments?" are examples of closed-ended questions. Learning to ask more "open-ended" questions is the pathway to better communication. The more personal and specific your questions are, the better. Questions like "What were the two most surprising things that happened to you today?" and "What homework assignments do you have to work on tonight?" are better, because they require a more in-depth response from your kids. Asking these kinds of questions doesn't guarantee that you'll never hear another grunt-like reply or an "I dunno" from your teen; still, learning to ask better questions makes it more likely that your kids will engage in better communication.

Here is a list of 20 open-ended questions you can use with your teens, with the goal of getting (and keeping) your family talking!

1. What is your understanding of what happened \_\_\_\_\_?
2. What caused you to behave the way you did when you \_\_\_\_\_?
3. What were you trying to accomplish when you \_\_\_\_\_?
4. What do you think caused them to \_\_\_\_\_?
5. How do you feel about \_\_\_\_\_?
6. What made your day good (or bad)?
7. What do you find challenging about \_\_\_\_\_?

8. What were you thinking when you \_\_\_\_\_?
9. What would you like to see happen when you \_\_\_\_\_?
10. What characteristics will you look for in a college or university?
11. If you knew that you could do anything for God and couldn't fail what would you do?
12. What do you hope your life will look like 10 years from now?
13. What kinds of things are important to you in life right now?
14. What characteristics make a person a good friend?
15. What worries you most about being an adult?
16. If you could change something about our family, what would it be?
17. What do you think are the biggest issues for teenagers today?
18. What do you think is the best decision you've ever made?
19. Who or what do you think influences your life the most?
20. How has your opinion of your family changed over the years?

### **Discussion Questions to Get Your Family Talking - #2**

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In ten years...

1. What do you want to be doing 10 years from now?
2. What will you have to do between now and then to get there?
3. How will you be able to judge whether or not you've arrived?
4. How do you think you will have changed in 10 years?
5. In 10 years, how do you think you will look back on this year of your life?
6. What activities do you see yourself involved in with your family members?
7. Who of your friends now, do you think will still be your friends in 10 years?
8. What new friends do you hope to make in the next 10 years?
9. What will you look for in a new friend?
10. Where would you like to be living in 10 years? Why?
11. What kind of life will you like to be living in 10 years? (fast-paced, lots of travel, quiet, stay-at-home, etc.)
12. What kinds of possessions do you see yourself having in 10 years?
13. How do you think your relationship with God will change over the next 10 years?
14. What kind of involvement in church do you see for yourself 10 years from now?

### **Discussion Questions to Get Your Family Talking - #3**

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Here is a new piece, the third in our series, and we trust you'll find them helpful.

### **The Way I Am / The Way I Was ...**

With the following series of discussion questions, your kids will talk about the way things are right now in their lives, while parents will talk about the way things were when they were teenagers.

- Talk about what you like (liked) doing most when you are (were) hanging out with your friends.
- Talk about what the biggest fads are (were) in your school.
- Talk about what are (were) the "in" words and phrases students at your school use (used) and what they mean (meant.)
- Who are (were) your favorite music artists? Why?
- Describe your best friend. What are (were) they like? What makes (made) them tick? Why are (was) he/she your best friend?

### **Family Talk ...**

Here are more open-ended discussion questions to keep your family talking:

- Describe an embarrassing moment in your life that your family members don't know about.
- Talk about the time you remember being the sickest. What was worst about going through that time?
- What are three of the happiest memories you have from your life? What made them happy experiences?
- Talk about one thing you know you should do differently that would make your family work better.
- What is your biggest fear? Why?
- What do think is the most important thing in your life? Why?
- (for kids) What is one issue you wish your parents would discuss with you? Why?
- (for parents) What is one issue you wish your kids would discuss with you? Why?
- (for kids) What is one area in your life you wish you had more control over? Why?
- (for parents) What is one area in your son's/daughter's life you next plan to give them more control over? Why? What will this look like?

