

Tackling difficult conversations



10 tips you can take to tackling difficult conversations:

1.

Open with curiosity and care



Begin from a point of genuine interest rather than fear or control. Let your child know you are asking because you care about how they are feeling and want to understand.

2.

Choose the right moment or start with a gentle message



Pick a calm time, such as during a walk or while doing something together. If talking in the moment feels hard, you can send a soft message like, "I have noticed you seem a bit quieter lately and wanted to check in. Can we talk soon?"

3.

Know when to use open or direct questions



Open questions help your child share freely what they are doing online. If you are worried about their safety, it's important to use direct and calm questions, such as, "Are you thinking about harming yourself?"

4.

Be conscious of language



Avoid language that feels dismissive or places blame. Talking about suicide is difficult, and guides such as those from [Ripple](#) can help you choose words that support and do not harm.

5.

Help your child feel heard and supported



Keep in mind that the aim is to help them feel listened to. Listen without judgement, avoid interrupting or answering for them so they feel safe to talk in their own time.

6.

Respond to emotional cues



Notice how your child shows their feelings. Going quiet or withdrawing can suggest they don't feel listened to or are unsure how to answer. These cues can guide you to adjust your tone, pause or offer reassurance so they feel supported.

7.

Acknowledge you do not have all the answers



Show that you are learning too. If something comes out wrong, you can say, "Let me try that again." Being open in this way helps show you want to support them on their terms and helps them feel safer and more understood.

8.

Let the conversation unfold over time



Short, regular chats work well when tackling difficult topics. They can feel less overwhelming for both you and your child and help build trust. If you need to pause, you can agree a time to talk again.

9.

Close with reassurance and trust your instincts

End by reminding your child that they are not alone and share support options like [Childline](#) or [Shout](#). If something feels off, trust your instincts and seek further help.

shout
85258



childline

ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME
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10.

Gently follow up



Check back in after the conversation, either in person or by sending a message. This shows your child that you meant what you said and that your support did not end with one talk.

If you're worried about a child's safety or wellbeing, then seek help and advice from the **NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000** or **Young Minds Parent Helpline on 0808 802 5544**. You can also visit the 'Get Support' pages on our website for more advice – [mollyrosefoundation.org](https://www.mollyrosefoundation.org)