

Preschool

CRISIS

PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

... for great conversations with kids

Your toddler/preschooler can have a meltdown over a toy or snack. But what happens when there is a bigger crisis or tragedy in their world, like the death of a loved one or a big move or a divorce? What do you do? What do you say? A preschooler may not be able to verbally express how they are coping, but there are ways to pay attention to your child's non-verbal cues.

No one knows your preschooler better than you. You will be able to notice if they are in crisis mode before anyone else. Pay attention to changes in behavior (like thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, and clinginess) and provide a consistent, safe, and loving environment for them to heal and grow.

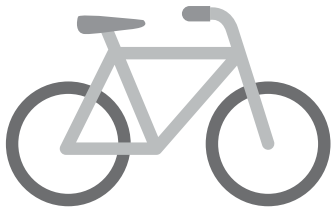
Help them feel secure. When your preschooler is experiencing a crisis, there are some things you can say and do that will help them feel safe. Here are a few ideas:

- "I'm here, you're not alone." (*Listen to their feelings and validate them.*)
- "Why don't we draw/color together." (*Observe how they express themselves symbolically.*)
- "I love watching you play." (*Pay attention to what they mirror, watch how they play and notice changes or regression in their behavior.*)
- "I am always looking out for you."
- "I'll help you when you need it."
- "I'll play with you. I love having time with you." (*Move to their play area or space. Play is their first language.*)
- "He/she died. That means their bodies stopped working." (*Explain in simple clear words. Don't use confusing phrases like, "We lost grandma."*)
- "You are a beautiful, wonderful, child of God."
- "You can know that God is always with you."
- "Even when you feel sad, God loves you."

Make sure to involve professionals, counselors (as needed), as well as your ministry leader.



**PARENT
CUE**



Elementary

CRISIS

PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

... for great conversations with kids

When a kid experiences crisis, they tend to have more questions than answers. What they're going through might sound minor to you, or be really scary to both of you. Either way, be sensitive to any changes you see in your child, and be careful to respond by offering grace and support along the way.

During this phase, your child is building a worldview, so when dealing with a crisis, remember to reiterate what is true. Be honest when you don't have the answers, assure them you're there and they are loved by you—and remind them that God is there, too.

Validate their feelings. When you interact with your child, there are some things that you can say and do to help them feel validated and secure. Here are a few:

- "Some things are changing, and that can be tough. But there are some things that will never change. I love you. God loves you. And we can trust God no matter what."
- "This is what I'm feeling right now, how are you doing?"
- "Can you put words to what you are thinking or feeling? Even if it doesn't all make sense, talking about it can help."
- "Do you have any questions for me?"
- "This doesn't make sense to me either. I can understand how this is confusing for you."
- "I am here whenever you need me."
- "Sometimes, scary things happen in our world, but I want you to know that God is always with you. And you can talk to Him anytime."

Make sure to involve professionals, counselors (as needed), as well as your ministry leader.

BULLYING

CONVERSATION GUIDE ... for parents

Bullying is defined by unwanted or repetitive behavior that is intended to cause physical or emotional harm. Bullying may be physical (hitting, punching), verbal (teasing or name-calling) or relational (social exclusion or cyberbullying). Bullying occurs in every community, and in every school setting—religious or secular, public or private.

Bullying is hurtful and can have serious and sometime long-term mental health consequences, which can be unique to each individual.

If your child is being bullied, or if you even suspect bullying, let them know that they are not alone and that they are not at fault. If they are the bully, it's important to dig a little deeper and take some action. And even if bullying is not on the radar, talk to kids about what to do if they ever experience it or witness it in any way.

These conversations aren't always easy to have. Make sure to involve professional counselors, as needed, as well as your ministry leader.

WHAT TO SAY

STARTING THE CONVERSATION ABOUT BULLYING:

- "Have you ever felt threatened by someone or teased to the point where you thought it might be bullying?"
- "Tell me what happened."
- "How did this person make you feel?"
- If not, "What would you do if you were ever bullied?"
- "What would you do if you saw someone else being teased or bullied?"
- "It's important to tell someone if you ever feel bullied or threatened by anyone."
- "Who is someone you would tell at your school?"
- "The quicker you tell someone, the quicker things will change."
- "Have you ever seen people make fun of others or say mean things online?"
- "Has anyone made mean comments to you?" If so, "What did you do?"
- "Have you ever said mean things online that you didn't know might be bullying?"
- "Let's take some steps to protect yourself online."

IF YOU FIND OUT YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED:

- "Thank you for telling me. This is a safe place."
- "This isn't your fault."
- "Who else feels like a safe person to tell?"
- "Bullies count on the fact that you won't tell anyone."
- "Here are some things you can say to someone who is teasing you . . ."
 - » "I didn't appreciate that."
 - » "I'm not sure if that was meant to be a joke, but I didn't find it very funny."
 - » "Stop." (Stand tall and say it in a strong, confident voice.)
- "If you ever feel unsafe, go find an adult right away."
- "There is nothing to be ashamed of."
- "Who are some people you enjoy being around who make you feel good about yourself?"
- "I care about you and I need to tell someone who can help us so we can stop this from happening again."

- "Sometimes hurt people, hurt people. Do you think this person might be hurting in any way?"
- "Let's pray for this person. That's hard to do sometimes, but God loves this person as much as He loves you and wants to help you both."
- "A bully wants to make you feel bad about yourself to feel better about themselves. What is something kind you can say or do for them?"
- "Let's talk about some things that are great about your life."
- "Here's what I love about you . . ."

IF YOU FIND OUT YOUR CHILD IS THE BULLY:

- "I need to talk to you about something important because I care about you."
- "Have you ever felt threatened by someone or felt bullied?"
- "Have you ever witnessed someone else experience bullying? How about online?"
- "Can you remember a time when someone was mean to you or when you were left out? How did that make you feel?"
- "Jesus reminds us to treat others the way we want to be treated. That's a good principle. Are you treating this person the way you would want to be treated?"
- "Adults sometimes send wrong messages without realizing it. Have I ever done anything to make you think this was okay behavior?"
- "Is there something at school or in our home life that feels stressful to you?"
- "Those behaviors are bullying behaviors. It's not who you are."
- "What can we do to make this right?"
- "We might need to bring other people into the conversation."
- "This doesn't change the way I feel about you. I love you."

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