



REMEMBER

- As adults, we also need to fight the easy emotional gratification and neural chemical rewards that teens get from engaging with screens. We can model what it looks like to choose people over screens.
- Face-to-face conversations bring connections to a deeper place. Honour that place and be prepared to hold back all that you want to tell them by practicing James 1:19 - "Be quick to listen and slow to speak."
- Making space for solitude and stillness in our everyday lives increases our ability to hear those God loves. As we practice "face-to-face" conversation with Jesus, we are drawn toward looking into the eyes of His precious creations.
- Relationships deepen not because we said all the right things but because we showed up, put aside distractions and made ourselves available to listen - again and again. Intentionally offering conversation to young people embodies the God who is waiting to listen intently to them (Ps. 116:2).



RECOGNIZE

- Young people often feel uncomfortable with face-to-face conversation because, unlike online communication, it feels unpredictable and therefore vulnerable.
- The eye contact found in face-to-face conversation is essential for establishing human connection as well as developing empathetic understanding. Empathy is part of resilience and signs of empathy in young people have dropped by 40% in the last 20 years.
- It's been said that more than 70% of our communication happens without words. It's hard to catch all that in a text. We only need 5 facial muscles to survive but God gave us 43 so we can reveal what's going on inside. Much is communicated through eye contact, attention, and facial expressions.
- In conversations with teens, overthinking is the quickest way to freeze up. You can't script or plan out genuine exchanges. The goal is to push past our own discomfort and focus on caring about the person in front of us, rather than making a perfect conversation happen.



RESPOND

- **Embrace the awkwardness.** Initiating face-to-face conversation may feel like you are stepping into a young person's life uninvited. Do it anyway. Show them that they are important enough for you to take the risk.
- **Be all there.** Acknowledge and deal with the things inside you and around you that distract you from genuinely listening. We communicate that the teen is valuable, interesting, and worth our attention when we put our distractions aside and focus on listening.
- **Offer onramps.** Invitations into conversation come out of what is right in front of you. "F.O.R.M." is a place to start:
 - Family ("Tell me a bit about the people who live in your house or the people you would call family.");
 - Obligations ("What are the things you get no choice about doing each week?");
 - Recreation ("If you had \$1000 to spend doing something fun, how would you spend it?");
 - Motivation ("Why is ___ important to you?" "What are the dreams that keep you going?").
- **Ask followup questions.** Think in terms of discovering one more thing about them. Cultivate your curiosity and bounce off of something you've seen them communicate online, what you've noticed in person or what they just said. Try this: "Tell me more about ..."
- **Summarize what you've heard them say.** Offer back what they've said in your own words without evaluation. This helps you be sure you're accurately hearing what they intended to say and lets them know that their words are heard and held.
- **Affirm and encourage.** Often teens expect face-to-face conversation to be about correction or judgement. Look for ways to speak out specific good things you have noticed in them - no matter how small. Let them know you appreciate them taking the time to talk with you and that you enjoyed the conversation.



RESOURCES

Book: **Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital World** by Sherry Turkle

www.thriveym.org.uk/10-ways-start-conversation-teenager - Focused on starting conversations in youth ministry.

www.mentalhelp.net - Helping us understand the impact of losing face-to-face communication with teens.