



REMEMBER

- A recently released [Barna Gen Z study](#) shows that the majority of young people feel a deep sense of disconnection. Only 1/3 of participants could say that they often feel deeply cared for by someone around them or that someone believes in them. The listening that we offer in deeper conversations communicates value and builds connectedness. It says that the person's thoughts and feelings matter.
- Deeper conversations are a gift given by a youth to someone that they believe will treat what they have said with respect and care. These conversations are built on trustworthy connections grown over time.
- Deeper conversations can bring about new perspectives and possibilities. They help the young person discover how they see themselves, perceive the actions of others, understand the heart of God, or approach challenges. God loves when we explore our thoughts and feelings with Him. Ps. 62:8 (NLT) says: "...trust in him at all times. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge."



RECOGNIZE

- Whether the conversation is personal or spiritual, deeper conversations go beyond sharing information. They come out of the feelings and thoughts *about* the information. These are conversations that invite the youth to notice, reflect on and process the experiences, emotions and beliefs of their life experiences.
- Invitations into deeper conversations need to be timely and respectful. Choosing a time and place where you cannot be easily overheard or distracted helps the young person feels emotionally safe and guarded from embarrassment.
- Conversations don't come with a "one size fits all" script. Notice reactions and responses to your personal communication style and choose to make adjustments - and apologies! - when necessary. This shows that you are serious about communicating with them for their sake, not yours.
- Not every young person is at the place where they have the emotional vocabulary or reflective perspective to go deeper than surface conversations - but they can learn. Since deeper conversations help build relationships, enlarge perspective, and open the door for transformation it's worth intentionally inviting teens to grow in this skill.



RESPOND

- **Build a foundation of trust.** Build trust through things like showing up when you said you would and remembering and checking back on things they've said. Trust often comes out of nearness. Step into the young person's world with genuine interest and invite them to share parts of your world too.
- **Ask compelling questions.** The initiative to go deeper in a conversation usually rests with us. The best invitations to something deeper are:
 - * Curious - Use words like: I wonder ..., what do you think of ..., Have you ever noticed ...
Eg. "I'd be interested to know what you think it takes to be a good friend."
 - * Open-ended: Explore with *why, how, what, describe, explain, tell me about*.
Eg. "Tell me about how that felt for you."
 - * Impact focused: Look for the weight and influence of what they are telling you.
Eg. "How did that impact you?" "Why do you think that mattered to you?"
- **Listen without correcting.** Allow the person's words and feelings a space to exist without needing to defend themselves. Hold back your opinions about what they have said, knowing that you can listen well whether you agree with what they are saying or not.
- **Reflect back what you've heard.** Rephrase the content and offer back what you're hearing about its meaning for them. This in itself often opens up the next level of sharing. Eg. "Here's what I've heard. Tell me if I'm missing anything."
- **Affirm their heart.** Notice and tell them about where you have noticed the image of God in them. What evidence of His heart do you see in them? Be specific and genuine with actual examples to back up what you are saying.
- **Wait your turn.** Our stories and thoughts have a place in deeper conversations, but **ONLY** after we have respectfully listened, holding back correction and opinions. Ask permission to share your thoughts and perspective, making sure that your words don't take up more space than theirs in the conversation. Ask for their thoughts about what you share because you care what they think.



RESOURCES

centerforparentingeducation.org - Search "The Skill of Listening" for a helpful overview of essential listening skills to learn and practice.

fulleryouthinstitute.org - Search "Relationship Skills" for 3 steps to attentive listening in ministry.

YouTube - Search "The Most Important Part of any Conversation" to recognize the spiritual importance of being intentional in a deeper conversation with another person and with God.