

Family Conversation Journal

As kids reach adolescence and enter the teen years, their bedroom door is closed more often than not. Privacy becomes a priority and one-on-one time for candid, carefree conversations becomes nearly a thing of the past. Add to this the pressures and stress that go along with being a teenager and a parent can end up feeling on the outside of much more than the bedroom door.

Parents, don't despair! You don't have to master the art of text messaging to stay in touch with your teen. All you need is a notebook (or journal) and a pencil. Although most journals work like diaries – for the writer's eyes only – a “conversation journal” is meant for two or more writers (and readers.) The idea is to share thoughts, feelings, compliments and, on occasion, apologies with one another.



What You Need:

- A notebook or journal
- Pen or pencil
- Two or more participants

What You Do:

1. This works best if participants agree on a writing schedule. Maybe writing every day is too optimistic for you and your busy teen, but both of you should be able to write at least once a week.
2. The first writer has possession of the journal and writes his or her entry to the other person. Entries can be as long or short as you like and can include personal thoughts, questions, jokes, memories, dreams about the future, poetry, artwork, or just about anything else that comes to mind!
3. The journal can left in an agreed-upon place (such as a bedroom) for person number two to find and write in response. And so on, back and forth. If you agree to write weekly, each person has seven days to respond to their partner's entry. It sounds simple, and it is.>
4. Keeping a conversation journal is a great way to “discuss” difficult topics and keep lines of conversation open. It is also a way to consistently connect with a busy teen who may have odd hours and a schedule more hectic than you'd imagine. Some things are hard to say face-to-face, especially if you and your teen are prone to arguing rather than discussing. By putting it on paper, you and your teen can send a “text message” that both of you will understand.