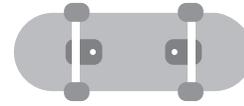


It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

As a parent, you want to invest your time in things that matter. Like having the right conversation with your child at the right time, with the right things to say at your fingertips. These conversation guides will help you navigate the critical issues you face at each phase, as you imagine the end for your child. They are based on research from **The Phase Project**, a collaborative, ongoing effort assembling classic and innovative research with practical application.



Middle School

TRANSITION

PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

... for intentional conversations with kids

At this point in your kid's life, you may be wanting to rewind the tape. And they might be wanting to fast forward. You're in this middle place asking, "How did we get here so fast?" Middle school isn't official for a few more months, but you probably feel like you've officially crossed into it with pressures from friends becoming bigger deals, emotions soaring, and the desire to have fun being trumped with the need to be accepted. You're going to want to engage and fix, but they're going to want you to lead them less and affirm their efforts more. In the tension, you'll want to think about how to resist your fears with faith—faith in your kid and faith in yourself. Remember that your role is to:

AFFIRM their personal journey



WHAT TO SAY:

"Let's go walk the halls and practice opening your locker before school starts so you'll feel more comfortable on the first day."

"Getting involved in other activities at school is a great way to make new friends who enjoy the same things you do. Let's look at what your options are."

"I know trying out for the team is scary, and I know you don't want to fail. But make it or not, you're showing courage, and that makes me really proud of you."

"If you notice someone sitting alone at lunch, why don't you go talk to them? They probably need a friend just like you do."

"Middle school is a chance for you to start figuring out who you are and what you like. You might feel awkward at times, but that's a normal part of growing up."

"I'm really proud of the person you're becoming."

"A lot of your friends might act differently toward you. Give them some grace. They're trying to figure out their place, too."

"It's okay to like boys/girls. But let's talk about what that should look like."

"Whatever happens at school, you always have a safe place to come home to."

"You'll probably have lots of questions this year. I always want to answer them and talk to you about the things you're dealing with."

"Let's think of some other people you'd feel safe talking to when you're not sure what to do."

"Text me, when you're allowed, if you need some encouragement during the day."

"Have a great first day! You've got this! We're going to celebrate so big when you get home!"

WHAT NOT TO SAY:

"You think this is hard, just wait until you get into high school."

"You better not make any stupid choices that will embarrass us."

"You're being silly—don't worry about it."

"If you don't do well in middle school, you'll never get a good job."

"Everyone hates middle school."



JUST REMEMBER

Every PHASE is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. The middle school years are the years your child is changing physically, relationally, mentally, and emotionally. They think like an engineer, they're always wondering "who do I like?" and they're motivated by acceptance. Take every opportunity to affirm their good choices and remind them that you not only love them, but you like them as well. Remember that they may appear to pull away from you, but they need you now more than ever.