



Starting the Tough Talks

By Lynn Cowell

Sitting on the side of the pool, my youngest speaks in a tone not much higher than a whisper, “I’d really like to tell you something, but I don’t want you to make fun of me...or worry either.” I inch my way closer to my girl, showing interest, yet not wanting her to feel as though I’m pouncing on this opportunity.

I don’t take this for granted; the fact that my daughter is willing to talk about the tough things in her teen life. I didn’t have this open relationship with my oldest, so I know it is rare.

So how did we get to a place where my girls feel comfortable talking to me about the touch stuff in their world? Why are they open to the questions I ask about their personal lives? Here are a couple of pointers I have learned about controversial conversations with my girls:

Make no topic off limits.

No matter what it is, friendships, sexual questions, guy/girl relationships, nothing is off limits. In fact, more often than not, it is me who brings up these hard topics. Often, a question in a non-threatening tone cracks the door, “I’ve heard bi-sexuality is a big deal in a lot of high schools. Do you have any friends struggling with confusion about this whole homosexuality thing? What do you think about that?”

Make sure you listen.

Don’t be so caught up in planning your advice that you don’t hear what they are saying. They can tell if you are really listening or waiting for your time.

Make your ears and mouth a safe zone.

Kids need a safe place to unload. My kids know that they can tell me anything and it is safe with me. They know that I value their confidence and will not share personal information with others. More than once, this safe zone has put me in a tough spot: do I tell another parent things my child has shared about their child or do I hold my child’s confidence? My kids know that I have been in this place. They have watched me choose their confidence first. This has been so crucial in keeping the doors of open communication. As I have chosen to pray for the child in the tough spot, I have watched God’s faithfulness to give that child the direction they need. It’s not either/or. When God is involved, He can do both; help me to be my child’s safe place and intervene in the lives of the child who needs direction.

[Lynn Cowell](#) is a Proverbs 31 speaker and the author of "[His Revolutionary Love](#)" and "[Devotions for a Revolutionary Year](#)." Her passion is empowering women to be wise and raise wiser daughters. She lives in North Carolina with Greg, her husband of 25 years, and their three kids. A perfect day for her includes the mountains, well-worn sweatshirts and anything that combines chocolate and peanut butter. Connect with Lynn at www.LynnCowell.com, on Facebook at Lynn Martin Cowell and on Twitter at Lynn Cowell.