

Teen Edition

**“- SAY
THIS”
Not THAT**

**Conversation prompts to help parents
during difficult times.**

RECEIVE A MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS

“ SAY THIS

The doctor told me I am very sick, but I will do everything the doctor tells me to do to try and get better.

Let me tell you what I have learned so far. (Share developmentally appropriate information.)

✗ Not THAT

The doctor told me I'm very sick, but that doctor doesn't know what he/she is talking about.

I promise I'm going to be okay.

MOVING

“ SAY THIS

We are moving, and we want to talk to you about how this will impact you. Let me show you what your new (church, school, neighborhood, room) will look like.

God is in our new city preparing a home for us.

You may feel a lot of emotions, from sadness to fear to anger, which is normal. I will have emotions too. If you want to share them, I would like to listen.

✗ Not THAT

We are moving to a new city and leaving everything you know and love.

You need to deal with it.

EXPERIENCING FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

“ SAY THIS

We are experiencing money problems. I know you might worry or feel fear—which is normal. We are doing what’s within our control to come up with solutions to help the situation.

If you would like to purchase some “extra” items, this might be a good time to think about getting a job to make extra money that we can’t provide for you right now.

✗ Not THAT

We have money problems because you are so expensive.

Please answer the call. I need you to talk to the bill collector.

I need you to tell your dad (divorced) we need more money.

Do you think money grows on trees?

JOB LOSS

“ SAY THIS

I lost my job, which may cause worry, fear, and anxiety. This is normal. I want you to know I am doing everything I can to find another one. And I feel fear, too, sometimes.

I lost my job, which has been difficult. I have felt _____. I want you to know I want to work, and I am putting myself out there looking for another job.

✗ Not THAT

I lost my job because I keep having to take care of you.

I lost my job because my boss is a jerk.

I lost my job, and we’re in big trouble.

REMARRY

“ SAY THIS

I am going to marry _____, but _____ is not going to replace your mom/dad. No one can replace your mom/dad.

I am going to marry _____, and I want you to know that you are still very special to me.

✗ Not THAT

I am going to marry _____, and he/she will be your new dad/mom.

I'm marrying _____, and then everything will be better, I promise.

GLOBAL PROBLEMS

“ SAY THIS

Our world is very broken, but our God is bigger than any problem we experience.

If you sometimes feel anxious or overwhelmed or fear about what is happening, I want you to know I do too. You're not alone.

✗ Not THAT

The world is ending. It's doomsday.

It's what we deserve. We're all in trouble, so who cares?!?

STRUGGLE WITH ADDICTION

“ SAY THIS

I have an addiction, and I know this might cause you to worry. Know that I am doing everything I can to get better.

I'm telling people I can trust that I have a problem, and you, too, can talk to a trustworthy person. We don't need to keep this a secret. I want you to be able to talk about it too.

✗ Not THAT

I wouldn't have an addiction if your behavior were better.

I need you to keep my addiction a secret, so don't tell anyone.

CHANGING CHURCHES

“ SAY THIS

We sense God is calling us to start attending a new church. Let's look at the youth group webpage and social media accounts.

We think it's time for our family to visit a new church. I know that sometimes new things can cause fear. I feel fear too. So together, let's try this out.

✗ Not THAT

We are changing churches because the pastors or other people in the church are bad, hypocrites, ungodly, hurt me, made bad choices . . .

You need to get over it and go.

DIVORCE

Note: Talk about the details the teen will experience: where he/she will live, church, school, pick-up, sports, visitation, etc. Keep the conversation focused on the teen. If your child asks a question that would require you to give adult-level details, answer by saying, “I love that you’re asking questions. Keep them coming. But the answer to your questions is a grown-up problem, and we are handling all of the grown-up problems for you. All you need to think about are teen problems.”

“ SAY THIS

We are getting a divorce, and we want to talk to you about how this will impact you.

We love you, we are here for you, and it’s ok to ask questions.

✗ Not THAT

We are divorcing, and it’s your mother/father’s fault.

We are divorcing because of your behavior.

You need to decide where you want to live.

PARENT WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

“ SAY THIS

I struggle with mental illness, and it is my responsibility to get help, which I am doing. Your responsibility is to focus on being a teenager. I am getting help, so know I am taking care of myself.

✗ Not THAT

I struggle with this mental illness, and I think you can help me get better. Will you do _____ for me? Look up _____ on the internet.

***This content is not intended to be a substitute for professional advice or treatment. Please seek the advice of a qualified professional with any questions or concerns you may have. It is designed to encourage and is for informational purposes only.**