



Motivational Training: 4 Conversation Tools Every Parent Should Know

◆ Open-Ended Questions (O)

✚ Use these when your child doesn't want to talk—but you know something's off.

"If there was one thing you could change about how life feels right now, what would it be?"

"What's something people get wrong about you without even asking?"

"When do you feel safest or most like yourself lately—even just for a minute?"

"If talking was off the table, how would you show someone you need help?"

"What kind of day makes you just want to disappear or stay in your room?"

💬 These aren't fishing for facts. They open a back door when the front is shut.

◆ Affirmations (A)

 Use these to name their quiet wins, even if they won't say much back.

"You're still here, still trying—that says more than you think."


"You might not see it, but you've made it through harder than most."

"I know you've been holding a lot in. That takes strength, even if it doesn't feel like it."

"You're not invisible to me. Even your silence says something."

 These build trust without asking for it. They're invitations, not praise.

◆ Reflections (R)

 Mirror back what you sense, not just what was said.

"It seems like you've been in survival mode for a while."

"Maybe you're not angry—you're just tired of fighting to be understood."

"Feels like you don't want advice—you just want someone to shut up and listen."

 These show you're trying to feel with them, not fix them.

◆ Summaries (S)

 Wrap gently—don't force closure.

"So what I'm hearing is: You're doing your best not to lose it, even though it's been a lot."

"You're not asking for a rescue—you're asking to be heard before it's too late."

 These let them know the door's still open, even if they walk away.

Parent Tip

Never force a breakthrough. Sometimes the best thing you can do is ask the right question, then wait. Silence doesn't mean failure—it means they're thinking.

Disclaimer: This resource is for educational purposes only and does not constitute clinical advice, therapy, or emergency intervention. If a youth is in crisis or at risk of harm, contact a licensed professional or local emergency services immediately.

