

The Low-Pressure Bridge™

Bonus 3: Parent–Teen Difficult Conversation Scripts

Ready-to-use starting points for conversations that can easily become arguments.

These scripts are starting points, not word-for-word rules. Adjust them so they sound natural in your home.

8 Difficult Conversation Scripts

Phone use

“I want us to talk about your phone, but I’m going to listen first. What’s your side of it?” Then listen. After that: “I hear you. We still need a rule that keeps you safe and respects the family.”

School performance

“I’ve noticed your schoolwork has changed. I don’t want to start with a lecture. What do you think is going on?” Listen first, then agree on one small next step.

Friendships

“Tell me about the people you spend time with. I’m interested, not looking for a reason to punish you.” If concerned: “I may see something differently. Can I tell you why?”

Dating

“I know growing up means relationships and feelings become part of life. You can talk to me without being shamed.” Then discuss healthy relationships, family values, and boundaries.

Social media

“Show me what you enjoy online. I want to understand your world.” Ask what they think is risky online, then agree on practical safety rules.

Lying

“I’m upset because what you told me wasn’t true. Before we talk about consequences, I want to understand what happened.” Ask what made telling the truth difficult, then set a clear boundary.

Peer pressure

“If your friends ever push you to do something you don’t want to do, I want you to know you can call me.” Ask what would make it easier to say no.

Breaking house rules

“You broke the rule, and we need to deal with that. First, tell me what happened.” Listen, then explain the boundary, consequence, and what can be done differently next time.

The 4-step conversation

1. Listen — Let your teenager explain before deciding what happened.

2. Clarify — Ask enough questions to understand, not enough to make them feel trapped.

3. Connect — Show that you understand the feeling or situation, even when you disagree with the choice.

4. Guide — Set the boundary, consequence, or next step clearly.

Remember

Listening does not mean approving everything. You can be warm and still have firm rules. The aim is to protect both the relationship and the boundary.