



## Having Difficult Conversations and why it's so important to try

We were so grateful to our parent community for the excellent turn out for the parent workshop. Despite the rain, lightning, and flooding, we were able to welcome our parents to share in discussions around supporting difficult conversations at home.

The focus of the workshop was about understanding the reasons for difficult conversations. Additionally the session helped to develop an understanding of what occurs when we engage (no matter how successfully) in difficult conversations. We also covered what is conveyed when we do not engage and ignore the issues that are visible.

The session was built around an understanding of neuroscience, with special attention on the adolescent brain. The talk explored developmental issues and the role of the prefrontal cortex and the limbic system. Our audience was able to gain an understanding of the battle between the limbic system (emotional) and prefrontal cortex (rational and logical) and how this plays out in adolescents.

Added to this appreciation of the brain we also explored the issues linked to hormonal and body changes. This was then linked to the shift in focus from adolescents towards peers and friends rather than with their parents and family. This identity shaping when seen in conjunction with hormones and massive neurological changes helps us as parents to understand why adolescents are potentially so difficult to engage with.

Our counsellors explored and unpicked what makes conversations difficult. This centred around discussion on:

- Values
- Conflict Aversion and Anxiety
- Confidence in discussing the issue
- Concern about the outcome

Following this, the session discussed the unconscious messages that are sent to our children when we avoid difficult conversations. This then led to discussions about what opening conversations and being open to them says to our children. No matter the outcome, there is always something positive that comes out of engaging in difficult conversations even if it isn't immediately apparent.

We explored fears around 'saying the wrong thing', with the realisation that saying something wrong is almost inevitable. Mistakes will occur and conversations won't be perfect but there is value in trying, even if it takes a few conversations to get to a solution that works for everyone.

The session unpacked and explored approaches to some of the most difficult conversations ranging from:



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- Motivation
- Relationships
- Drugs and alcohol
- Cultural Differences and Identity
- Mental Health
- Screen Time
- Social Media and Gaming
- Boundaries and Rules
- Bereavement and Grief
- Body Image
- Eating habits

The session culminated in the exploration of various practical skills to encourage and support conversations at home. This was centred around a number of key do's and don'ts in the process, though acknowledging this isn't a recipe book approach and magic formula that fits all situations. However, using the approaches as a toolbox and general guide will help tackle the most difficult conversations. Please find the slidedeck from the session here.

Should you wish to explore this topic further, please feel free to contact Mr Wills and so he can arrange a session with the ASC Team. If you want to suggest topics for future sessions, we welcome community feedback and sharing. To put forward topics for future sessions please use the Google Form below.

[Suggestions for Future Wellbeing Workshops](#)

We look forward to welcoming you all to future workshops in our wellbeing series.

Kind regards,

***The ASC Team***