



# The Conversation Stage

If you are in the **Conversation Stage** with your young teen (puberty-early high school), you know that adolescence is a season of discovery and change, where teens explore identity, independence, and new ways of communicating. Some days your teen may talk nonstop; other days, you may notice him or her pulling away. In this tender stage, your steady presence and encouragement helps anchor your teen's heart. Just as an ephraim in Scripture reminds God's people of His faithfulness (see 1 Samuel 7:12), your affirming words become spiritual "markers" your adolescent will look back on in seasons of doubt. Your consistent encouragement serves as a reminder to your teen that he or she is valued, seen, and capable—with Christ working in and through him or her.

**"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up..."**

**1 Thessalonians 5:11**

## Tips for Caregivers

- Praise growth rather than perfection, helping your teen see progress as success.
- Offer encouragement that is specific and sincere. Teens recognize when your words are true and meaningful.
- Keep speaking life into your teen. Even when your teen acts embarrassed, he or she is still listening.
- Use consistent, positive language to help shift your teen's inner voice toward truth.
- Create a shared phrase or cue (like "I'm proud of your growth") to affirm your teen's development.

## Growth Model



### Plant

Teens struggle with self-doubt and often believe negative inner messages, so help them understand their worth by pointing out their positive attributes.



### Root

Teens listen to and value encouragement from caregivers they trust.



### Growth

Through encouragement, they seek to better themselves. Positive affirmation in their pursuit of Christ helps them to see their growth and continue pursuing it.



### Fruit

They internalize encouragement, understanding their value as a child of the King. They begin stepping forward with confidence and initiative, desiring to live for Christ.

# Activity: Positive Feedback

## STEP 1 (The Why)

Affirmation has power. When teens hear truthful encouragement, it strengthens their confidence and helps them understand who they are becoming. In-person conversations build empathy and mutual understanding, giving teens space to process emotions and learn from their experiences. Positive feedback reminds them that their growth is noticed, valued, and worth celebrating. Over time, these spoken reminders help shape an inner voice rooted in truth rather than insecurity.

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## STEP 2 (Activity Directions)

### 1 **Watch for Growth Moments**

- Look for moments when your teen shows maturity, effort, kindness, perseverance, self-control, etc. It's natural for negative behavior to stand out and get commented on, but try shifting the focus to what your teen is doing right. The more you look, the easier it is to start noticing these small, positive moments.

### 2 **Say It Out Loud**

- Keep your affirmation short, sincere, and specific so it feels real. Even a quick comment is meaningful. It shows your teen that you see his or her efforts and you care. Long speeches can sometimes make teens feel embarrassed, but consistent positive comments go a long way.

### 3 **Capture the Moment**

- Consider writing letters or short notes documenting the positive ways you're seeing your teen grow. Use specific examples. Keep these in a safe place and do it for as long as you want. Break them out during a special moment or milestone, like when your teen graduates or is preparing to head to college. Read the notes together and reflect on how far he or she has come over the years.
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## Encouragement

Your encouraging words are planting seeds in your teen's heart. Even if your teen rolls his or her eyes or seems indifferent, know that your words are taking root. Keep affirming the small steps of growth, and trust that God will bring fruit that lasts—in His time and in His way.