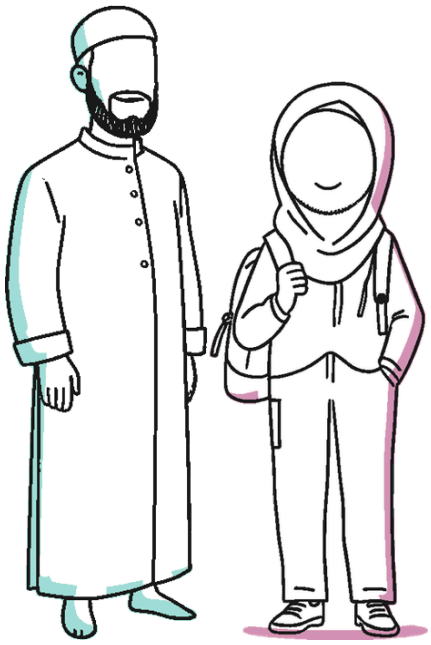
Would your Teenager come to you with Anything?

A Muslim parent's guide to getting them talking, and having the hard conversations



By **Imran Ali**
author of *Remember Me*

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About the author. Imran Ali is an Islamic family coach, a father of six, and the author of *Remember Me*, a #1 Amazon UK bestseller. More at **akhimranali.com**.

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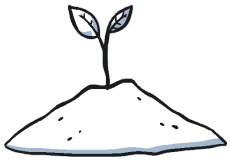
How it was checked. Every hadith was checked on sunnah.com, and every verse on quran.com. The pages were reviewed for theology and tested with parents and teenagers. Where the guide gives advice, it's a parent's advice, not a religious ruling.

Our agreement. This guide is free. Print it as often as your family needs, and share the link below.

Share this with another family.

akhimranali.com/teentalk

REMEMBER WHEN...



...they came through the door with the whole day in one breath? Who sat next to whom. What the teacher said. The story from madrasa, told twice. You never had to ask.

Then, somewhere around 10 to 14, it changed. "How was school?" "Fine." The bedroom door closes, and stays closed a little longer. You're still under the same roof, but you've stopped hearing about their day.

Some of this is just growing up. Allah made us in stages:

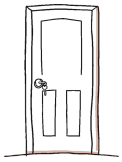
> "It is Allah Who created you in a state of weakness, then developed [your] weakness into strength..." **Qur'an 30:54**

WHAT IT OFTEN LOOKS LIKE

- **Around 9 to 11 (before the teenage years):** fewer stories after school, more time in their room, more things kept private.
- **Around 12 to 14:** the age of the one-word answer. Friends' opinions start to matter more than yours.
- **Around 15 to 17:** many start talking again, but differently. Some days they'll talk for an hour, other days not at all. Big questions come: about faith, their future and who they are.

But some of the silence comes from how we react when they talk to us, and that part we can change. The next page shows where it goes wrong.

WHY THEY STOPPED TELLING US



Look at the battles in a home with teenagers: salah, screens, grades, friends, the state of their room. Underneath almost every one is a conversation that broke first. And it breaks both ways. They stop telling us, and we stop really talking to them. Our words shrink to instructions: prayed, homework, bed.

Most parents think the door is still open. In one US survey, **80%** of parents said they were comfortable talking with their teenager about mental health. Only **52%** of teenagers said the same (Pew, 2025).

Tick the ones you do. Nobody else sees this.

What we do, with good intentions	What they learn
☐ Turn what they tell us into a lesson	*"Next time, I'll keep it to myself"*
☐ Get angriest at the moment they own up	*"Hiding is safer than telling"*
☐ Take their phone when they tell us something went wrong online	*"Telling costs me my phone"*
☐ Only call them for a talk when something's wrong	*"A talk with my parents means trouble"*
☐ Ask "Have you prayed?" before we've said salaam	*"Salah is a test I can fail, not something we share"*
☐ Jump in with the answer before they've finished	*"You weren't really listening to me"*
☐ Tell the wider family what they told us	*"Nothing I say stays private"*
☐ Bring up old mistakes in later arguments	*"Anything I tell you will be used against me"*
☐ Worry out loud about what people will say	*"Our name matters more than I do"*
☐ Compare them with a brother, sister or cousin	*"I'll never be enough here"*
☐ Half-listen while looking at our phone	*"Something else matters more than me"*

None of this comes from a lack of love. We love them with all our heart. But a teenager doesn't see our love and concern for them. They see how we react, and decide from it what is safe to tell us.

NOW ASK THEM

On an ordinary day, ask each child: "From 1 to 10, how easy is it to talk to me about hard stuff?" (16 or older: "Honest question: am I easy to talk to?") Don't argue with the answer. If it's low, or they've already gone quiet, don't push for a big talk. Thank them, say sorry for anything you know you did, and give it weeks, not days. Write it down once they've left the room:

WHO THEY ASK INSTEAD



A teenager who can't talk at home still talks. To friends who are fifteen too. To the group chat. To whoever is loudest online. In the UK, **12%** of children who use AI chatbots say they do so because they have no one else to talk to (Internet Matters, 2025).

And you find out last. The call from school. The screenshot someone else shows you. The thing you found in their bedroom. Something that happened months ago that you only hear about now.

WHEN TO WORRY

Some changes are more than growing up:

- a sudden change in their character, such as an easy-going child who becomes fearful or secretive
- cutting off friends as well as you
- anger at the smallest things, day after day
- eating far less than usual, or seeming sad or uninterested in everything, most days for two weeks or more
- signs they may be harming themselves, or saying things like "I don't want to be here" or "You'd be better off without me". Don't wait on this one: talk to them the same day.

If you notice any of these, sit with them and gently ask what's going on.

STILL AHEAD

If they can't bring you the small things, they won't bring you the big ones. And the biggest questions are still ahead: which university, who to marry, which job to take, the business they want to start, the hard times in their own marriage. They'll ask someone. You want it to be you.

> "[Remember] when Joseph said to his father, 'O my dear father! Indeed I dreamt of eleven stars, and the sun, and the moon...'" **Qur'an 12:4**

When Yusuf was a boy and had a dream, he took it to his father. Ya'qub listened, took him seriously, and told him how to keep himself safe. Qur'an 12:5 That trust started young.

When a child brings you something, they've chosen you over the chatbot, their friends and the group chat. That's an honour. Be the person they ask, now and for the rest of their life.

WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

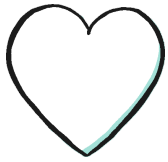


Before changing anything, take an honest look. Tick the hard conversations each child has properly had at home, with you or their other parent. These conversations can't be left to school or madrasa: they'll never do it as well as you can, and it's yours to do. If you think they've covered one, have it again yourself. If one didn't go well, leave it unticked and have another go, calmly.

THE HARD CONVERSATIONS	Name 1	Name 2	Name 3
Younger			
Why we pray	☐	☐	☐
Their screens, and how long they spend on them	☐	☐	☐
Someone making them uncomfortable	☐	☐	☐
Being picked on, or picking on others	☐	☐	☐
Their questions about Islam	☐	☐	☐
Death, and losing someone they love	☐	☐	☐
As puberty starts			
Growing up and their changing body	☐	☐	☐
Becoming an adult in Islam: now answerable to Allah	☐	☐	☐
Ghusl (the full bath after puberty), and staying clean	☐	☐	☐
Modesty, and how they dress	☐	☐	☐
How they feel about how they look	☐	☐	☐
Early teens			
Friends, and who they spend time with	☐	☐	☐
Inappropriate websites and videos	☐	☐	☐
Pictures: being asked for them, or sending them	☐	☐	☐
Liking someone, and how boys and girls mix	☐	☐	☐
What school teaches about relationships and families	☐	☐	☐
Being Muslim at school and in public	☐	☐	☐
What they hear online about men and women	☐	☐	☐
Older teens			
Feeling low, worried or stressed	☐	☐	☐
Vaping, smoking, drugs and alcohol	☐	☐	☐
Money: earning, spending, giving and gambling	☐	☐	☐
Their future: study, work and marriage	☐	☐	☐
Mistakes, and tawbah (turning back to Allah)	☐	☐	☐

Your teenager won't bring up many of these. Often you'll have to open the door yourself. Page 7 gives you the mindset, and page 8 gives you the words.

THE MINDSET: HERE TO SERVE THEM



'A'isha was asked what the Prophet ﷺ did at home. She said: "He used to keep himself busy serving his family and when it was the time for prayer he would go for it." **Bukhari 676**

When your child comes to you with a question, Allah has sent you a chance to serve them. See it that way, and everything else in this guide gets easier. You don't need every answer, or to look strong, or to win the argument. You can say, "I don't know. Let's find out together." You can hear the hardest news without making it about you. Whatever they tell you, your first thought is "What can I do to help now?", not "What have you done?" or "Why did you do that?" That's the parent a teenager comes to.

1 MERCY FIRST

Allah introduces Himself with mercy: every surah but one opens "In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful." Mercy comes first with our children too.

The Prophet ﷺ kissed his grandson al-Hasan. A man sitting with him said he had ten children and had never kissed any of them. The Prophet ﷺ looked at him and said: "Whoever is not merciful to others will not be treated mercifully." Bukhari 5997

2 BE EASY TO TALK TO

1. **Look pleased to see them.** Your face is the first answer they get. "Your smiling in the face of your brother is charity." Tirmidhi 1956 That includes your own child.
2. **Listen to the small things.** The game, the YouTuber. Say it back so they know you heard.
3. **Ask before you advise.** The Prophet ﷺ often asked first, such as "Do you know who is poor?" Muslim 2581 Ask what they think, then add what you know.
4. **Not everything needs to become a lecture.** Some things can wait for later.
5. **Keep what they tell you private.** Not to brothers, sisters or the wider family. Tell them whether you'll share it with their other parent.
6. **When you get it wrong, say sorry plainly.** No "but...". It teaches more than any lecture.
7. **Stay calm at a hard question.** If you don't know, say so, and find out together from someone with sound knowledge.

3 WARM, AND FIRM

Mercy isn't the same as no rules. Allah told the Prophet ﷺ: "Bid your people to pray, and be diligent in [observing] it." Qur'an 20:132 It's high standards, held with love that is never withdrawn.

When 'Umar ibn Abi Salama was a boy in his care, his hand used to wander round the dish. The Prophet ﷺ said: "O boy! Mention the Name of Allah and eat with your right hand, and eat of the dish what is nearer to you." 'Umar said: "Since then I have applied those instructions when eating." Bukhari 5376

THE WORDS: WHAT OPENS THEM UP



When you're there to serve, you want to know more, and you ask the right questions. These are the words that show it.

TRY THESE

- "Do you want help with it, or do you just want me to listen?"
- "I'm glad you told me."
- "What do you think?" (and sometimes, go with their answer)
- "That sounds hard. What happened?"
- "I haven't seen much of you this week. How are things?"
- "Anything good happen this week? Anything annoying?"
- "I was wrong. I'm sorry."
- "I made du'a for your exam today."
- "I'm proud of how you handled that."
- "If you ever mess up, I'd rather hear it from you first. I'll stay calm."
- Now and then: "Be honest, what do I do that makes you stop talking? A lecture? Getting angry? My face?"
- "You can talk to me anywhere: in the car, late at night, or in a note. If it's hard to start, just say, 'I need to tell you something.'"

CONVERSATION STARTERS, IN THE CAR OR OVER FOOD

- What's one thing adults get completely wrong about people your age?
- What's something you're into right now that I'd never get? Explain it to me.
- Who's the funniest person in your year, and what did they do?
- If you ran the school for a day, what's the first rule you'd scrap?
- If someone gave you a bag (a thousand) tomorrow, what would you do with it?
- If you had a million followers, what would your channel be about?
- If our family was a TV show, who'd be the main character, and who'd be the funny one?
- Is there anything about Islam you've always wondered but never asked?
- What good happened this week? How did Allah help you?
- What didn't go to plan this week? What might Allah want you to learn or to realise?
- You go first: when have you felt closest to Allah? Then ask them.

TRY NOT TO SAY

- "Because I said so."
- "How many times do I have to tell you?"
- "When I was your age..." to win an argument
- "Who's been putting ideas in your head?"
- "What will people say?"
- "Give me your phone," the moment they tell you something went wrong online
- "After everything we've done for you..."
- "You're overreacting." or "It's just a phase."
- "Have you prayed?" before you've even said salaam
- "I'm not angry, I'm just disappointed." (They hear shame.)

FOR THE LONG RUN



Nothing in this guide works once. It works when it becomes the way your home runs. The Prophet ﷺ was asked which deeds Allah loves most. He said: "The most regular constant deeds even though they may be few." Bukhari 6465 You can't fix things with a teenager overnight.

MAKE DU'A FOR THEM, ALWAYS

"There are three supplications that will undoubtedly be answered: the supplication of one who has been wronged; the supplication of the traveler; and **the supplication of a father for his child**." Ibn Majah 3862 Mothers and fathers alike, make du'a for each child by name: in sujud in your voluntary prayers, and sometimes to their face. It might feel a bit cringe, but it's okay.

WHEN THEY TELL YOU SOMETHING BIG

Keep your face calm. Tell them you're glad they told you, and let them finish before you ask anything. **If there's a punishment, keep it the size it would have been anyway. Never make it bigger because they told you.** If it must be shared with their other parent, tell them: "I need to tell your mum (or dad) about this, and here's why." It shows you respect them.

IF THEY'VE DRIFTED FROM THE DEEN

Keep your reminders few, short and gentle, about salah most of all. Never threaten, shame or cut them off: they need to know they can always come back to you, and to Allah. Keep making du'a for them. Guidance is Allah's to give: "You surely cannot guide whoever you like [O Prophet], but it is Allah Who guides whoever He wills..." Qur'an 28:56 That should take the weight off you, but our role is to keep trying.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IT'S WORKING?

When your sixteen-year-old comes into the kitchen, or turns to you in the car, and says: "Can I tell you something?" It might be the friend they're worried about, the person who keeps messaging, the question about Allah they've been carrying for months, or a mistake, told to you before anyone else found out.

Over the page: a poster to print and put on your wall, where everyone can see it. It reminds your teenagers, and you, how we talk to each other.

HOW WE TALK TO EACH OTHER

SEE and SMILE

Our face is the first answer. The Prophet ﷺ greeted Jarir with a smile, every time. Bukhari 3035

ASK Anything ANYTIME

Even the awkward stuff, and nobody laughs. That's our Prophet's ﷺ way. Bukhari 130

The truth is ALWAYS SAFE Here

Nobody asks "Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

Telling us never makes it worse.

The Prophet ﷺ said the truth brings peace of mind. Tirmidhi 2518

it stays A TRUST

The Prophet ﷺ said: "When a man tells something and then departs, it is a trust." Abu Dawud 4868

ALL EARS

We listen to the end, with no lecture after. The Prophet ﷺ stood aside with a woman until she had what she needed. Muslim 2326

How can I HELP?

The Prophet ﷺ said Allah keeps helping a person as long as they keep helping their brother or sister. Muslim 2699

Say SORRY start fresh

Grown-ups too. Adam and Hawwa owned their mistake to Allah: "Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves." Qur'an 7:23

a Home of DU'A

We make du'a for each other, sometimes out loud. The Prophet ﷺ hugged young Ibn 'Abbas and made du'a for him. Bukhari 75

The Thursday Family Meeting

Once you've read this guide, keep it going.

A guide read once won't change a home. You need a weekly family meeting, when the family sits down together, so talking becomes part of every week.

WHERE MOST OF US ARE

Nobody taught us parenting, but we do our best.

We remind the kids in the car, at the door, on the way to school. But by bedtime, most of it is forgotten.

WHAT WE HOPE FOR

A home with *sakinah*: calm and contentment.

Children who feel heard, parents who keep growing, a family helping each other succeed, in this life and the hereafter.

WHAT WE GET

Everyone is busy with their own week, and there's never a moment to stop and see how the family is getting on.

So the week decides for us, and small things grow: the same argument every week, or a child who stops telling us things.

TWENTY MINUTES A WEEK

Reminders turn into habits when they have their own time.
The Thursday Family Meeting gives them one: once a week, together.

20 min



1. **Last week.** How everyone's week went, and a check on what was decided.
2. **The week ahead.** Everyone has their say, then Mum and Dad decide.
3. **To finish.** Anything else, then you're done.

Thursday evening works well: the week is nearly done, and the blessed night of Jumu'ah begins at Maghrib.

Ibn Mas'ud, the Companion, taught the people every Thursday. When a man asked for it daily, he said: *"...I hate to bore you, and no doubt I take care of you in preaching by selecting a suitable time just as the Prophet ﷺ used to do with us..."* **(al-Bukhari 70)**

Whoever is home is enough. One parent and one child is a meeting.

Your first family meeting could be

this Thursday

Download your free guide

- What to say to your family to start it
- A script for whoever leads it, so anyone can run it
- A simple one-page template for each week

akhimranali.com/thursday