

10 Scripts for Talking to Teens Without a Blow-Up

1. Instead of: “You’re always on your phone.”

👉 Say: “I need your attention. Put your phone down for 15 minutes. We’ll both do it.”

2. Instead of: “Because I said so.”

👉 Say: “Here’s why the rule matters. I am always happy to explain the why, that’s respectful to you. You in turn follow the rules. That’s respectful to me. This builds trust and you will gain more freedom as a result.”

3. Instead of: “Calm down!”

👉 Say: “You’re upset. Take 10 minutes in your room, then we’ll talk.”

4. Instead of: “You never listen.”

👉 Say: “Pause. I want to say something, then I’ll hear your side and we will talk it out.”

5. Instead of: “Why can’t you just...?”

👉 Say: “What part of this is getting in your way? Let’s tackle that, not the whole thing.”

6. Instead of: “You don’t care about school.”

👉 Say: “School is your job right now. It matters. Let’s figure out the first step together.”

7. Instead of: “Stop being so dramatic.”

👉 Say: “Your reaction is big. That tells me this matters to you. Let’s get clear on why.”

8. Instead of: “You’re grounded!”

👉 Say: “Here’s what happened. Here’s the consequence. This isn’t punishment, it’s accountability.”

9. Instead of: “Do what I say.”

👉 Say: “Here’s what needs to happen.”

10. Instead of: “You’re impossible.”

👉 Say: “This is hard, but we’re still a team. Let’s figure it out together.”