



Parent & Sibling Toolkit



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CREATING MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS



How can parents support meaningful conversation?

It's likely no surprise to hear that some young people find sharing to be quite difficult, especially when it comes to their parents. It makes sense that with so much else going on in the family (and the reasons explained in other areas of these toolkits), it can be even more difficult to talk to parents. However, there are a few things that you can do as the parent to get the conversation started and keep the conversations going.

THE DON'Ts

Avoid lecturing or criticising:

When they share something that concerns you, try not to lecture or criticise. Instead, ask questions to show you're interested in understanding their perspective. For example, if they tell you about a challenging situation with a friend, ask, "how did you feel when they did that?" or "what would you have wanted to say?"

Strong reactions:

When they share something vulnerable or unexpected, avoid strong reactions, which can cause them to shut down and filter themselves in the future. Try to focus on staying calm and offering a safe space for them to continue sharing.

Belittling or dismissing their concerns:

It's important to make them feel as though their feelings are important and valid. Acknowledging their emotions and showing empathy even if their worries seem small can be helpful in maintaining trust and open communication. While the situation they are talking about might seem trivial, it's likely to be compounded by the stress of their sibling's eating disorder.

Making it about you:

While it's natural to want to share your own experiences, avoid turning the conversation into a one-sided talk about your life. Make sure the focus is on your child and their thoughts.



THE DOs

Create a safe talking environment:

Make sure your child knows that they can come to you to talk about anything, without fear of judgement or punishment. It might be particularly useful to acknowledge that while you are supporting their brother or sister, you still have space and time for them.

Active listening:

Focus on what your young person is saying without interrupting or jumping to conclusions. Use minimal encouragements such as nodding or saying things like "uh-huh" or "yeah". Sometimes, they just need to be heard.

Open-ended questions:

Instead of asking questions that have a yes or no answer, ask questions that require more thoughtful responses. By doing this, you are encouraging them to talk openly about their thoughts and feelings in more detail. Some examples are:

- "How did it make you feel when"
- "What do you think about ..."
- "What was the best part of your day..."

Be honest yourself: Show them the kind of openness that you would like from them by modelling it to them. You can do this by sharing appropriate aspects of your life, such as your feelings or challenges. This shows that it's okay to be vulnerable, and it can also help break the ice during tough conversations. For example, you might share that even as an adult and parent, you also sometimes find it difficult to share your feelings or deal with their sibling's eating disorder.

Pick the right time:

The time you choose talk to your young person matters – don't try to force serious conversations when either of you are tired, distracted, or when emotions are heightened. Having a conversation while driving or walking together can make the conversation feel a little less pressured.

Respect their privacy:

Show your young person that they can trust you. It is important that you hold what they say with kindness and respect and don't share what they have said with others (unless there's a safety reason to consider).

Encourage regular conversations:

Making regular check-ins a habit - not just when there's a problem - can make it easier for your young person to open up to you when needed. Regular, low-pressure conversations help keep the lines of communication open.

Be patient and let them lead:

Sometimes young people need time to open up, and that is okay! Be patient and don't push them too hard. Give them space to share at their own pace and don't rush the conversation.

Encourage emotional expression:

Help them put words to their emotions by encouraging phrases like, "it sounds like you're feeling frustrated", or "that must have been really exciting". This helps them to understand their emotions and be more open about expressing them.

Stay consistent:

Building trust takes time, so be consistent in your efforts to maintain open conversation. Even if they don't seem to engage right away, it's likely that they'll remember your approach and may open up over time. Show up even when it's hard, and they will learn that you are reliable and they can come to you anytime.



How can young people support meaningful conversation?

THE DOS

Create a safe talking environment:

Sometimes it's helpful to let people know that you want to talk to them. You could try something like "I need to talk about something, but I'm not sure how to start." This can help show them where you're at and helps them be ready to listen.

Pick the right time:

If something feels off when you're trying to have an important conversation, you can always say something like "Can we talk later, when I'm feeling more up to it?" It can also be helpful to ask your parents to let you know when they're free to talk, try saying something like "I'd really like to have a chat to you, can you let me know when you have time."

Sometimes it can help to have a conversation during a relaxed moment, like when you're in the car or on a walk together. This way it can feel a little more casual and less pressured.

Privacy:

If you're sharing something personal, you could say something like "Please don't share this with anyone unless it's important." By doing this, your parent will know that what you're sharing is private.

Be patient:

Sometimes, parents may need a little time to process things that you're talking about – this can often be because they really care about you. If they're not responding right away, don't take it personally. Try to give them a little bit of time and space to think and then share when they're ready.

Active listening:

When your parent is talking, make sure you give them the attention that you would like them to give you. Simple things like nodding or asking little questions like "what happened next?" helps show them that you're listening and care about their thoughts too.

As conversations are a two-way street, there are also some helpful things that young people can do to help have meaningful conversations.



CONVERSATION CARDS FOR PARENTS

Talking to your young person, especially about tough topics, can be challenging. Similarly, it can also be quite tough for young people to express their thoughts and feelings, especially to their parents.

These communication cards are here to help start meaningful conversations between you and your child. They help to create a safe space where your young person can express their feelings without worrying about how to start the conversation, interrupting during a busy time, or fearing judgement.

These cards can help alleviate built-up tension in the home by allowing yourself and your young person to communicate more openly. At a time where you likely feel like you are spread too thin, these communication cards can help facilitate emotional connection.

It's common for children and adolescents to feel isolated or disconnected from their parents while their sibling is struggling with an eating disorder

or going through treatment. Using these conversation starters shows that you care about connecting with them and want to better understand their needs.

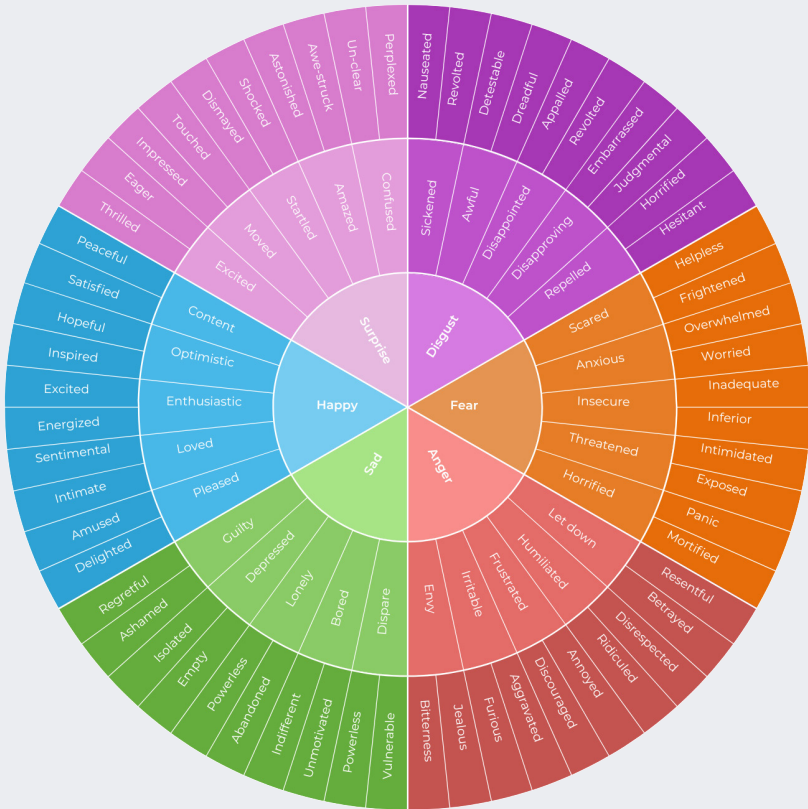
Some questions are light-hearted, while others provide a space for vulnerability and depth. Both are important – just choose the card most suitable for where you're at. You can pick them randomly and see where the conversation leads. We have also left blank cards so that you can add questions of your own!

Tip: It's best to set aside time and create a comfortable, distraction-free space for conversation. Put away phones and make eye contact to show that you're fully present, ready to listen, and supportive. You don't have to solve their problem or cheer them up, you simply need to listen. By using minimal encouragers like "mmhmm", "yeah", or "okay" you can show them that you're listening without judgement. Doing so will help keep the conversation going and encourage them to be open.



THE FEELINGS WHEEL

We have included a Feelings Wheel to help your child identify how they are feeling for the relevant cards.



How are you feeling right now, and can you find a word on the feelings wheel that matches your mood?	Is there anything that you feel like you don't understand about your sibling's illness or treatment that you would like me to help explain?	Who's someone you really look up to and what do you admire about them?
Is there a recent time when something made you feel upset or sad? What happened?	How would you describe the way you feel about our relationship today? Can you find a word on the feelings wheel that matches this?	What's something you've been thinking a lot about recently?
What's something that made you feel really happy recently?	Is there something you wish were more present in our relationship?	Do you have any hobbies or activities you'd like to try or get better at?
How does it feel when you are stressed, anxious, or frustrated?	What has been the hardest thing about having a sibling with an eating disorder?	What's something you're excited about in the next few months?
Is there something you wish that I understood better?	Have you ever felt like I haven't supported you when you needed it? Can you share what happened?	If you could change one thing about school, what would it be?
Can you think of any times recently that you've felt stressed, anxious, or frustrated?	What's your favourite subject in school right now, and what makes it enjoyable?	What's something you'd like to teach me, or that you think I should learn?
What's one thing that you are proud of right now?		

CIRCLE OF CONTROL

A circle of control is a tool that can be used to easily see the areas of your world in which you do and don't have control. Having a visual image of this can be helpful to understand your world a little better. It can help you focus your energy in the areas in which you have control, and be less impacted when you see that something is completely out of your control.

THINGS YOU CAN CONTROL:

These are things that you can influence or change, such as your actions, responses, and your attitude.

THINGS YOU CAN'T CONTROL:

These are things that you have very little or no control over, such as things that happened in the past, and other people's emotions and actions.

HERE'S WHY DOING THIS TOGETHER IS BENEFICIAL FOR BOTH PARENTS AND TEENS:

1. Improved Communication:

It opens up a healthy conversation about what each person can control in a situation. Parents may find that their teen has concerns or frustrations they weren't aware of, while teens might realise that they have been stressing over things outside their control.

2. Empathy:

It allows both parties to see the world from each other's perspective. Parents might better understand their teen's concerns, and teens can see that their parents are also trying to manage things beyond their control.

3. Stress Reduction:

When everyone understands where their focus should be, it can relieve anxiety. Teens often worry about things they can't control, and the Circle of Control encourages them to focus on what they can change, which is empowering.

4. Encourages Responsibility:

It teaches teens that while they can't control everything (such as other people's behaviour or outcomes), they can control their own responses, behaviour, and effort. It helps foster a sense of accountability and self-reliance.

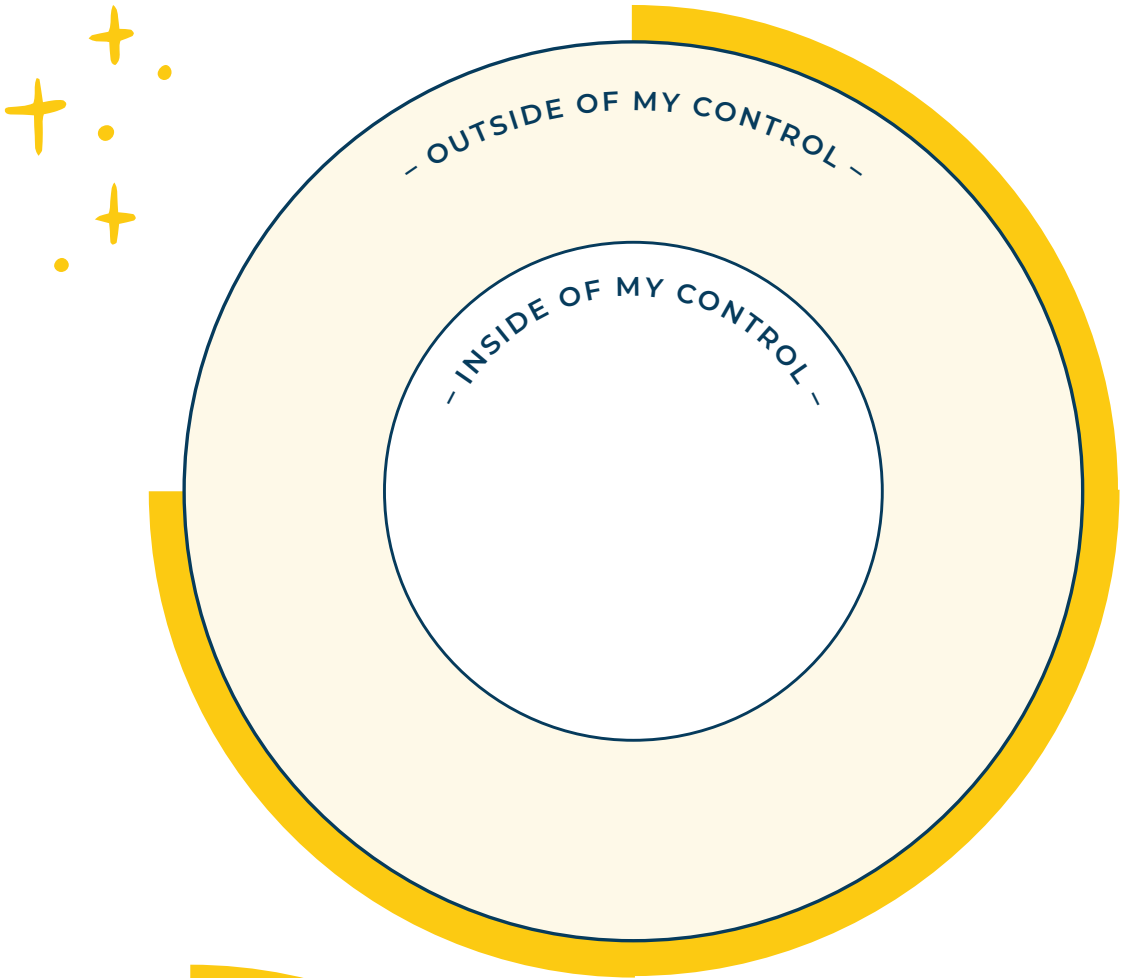
5. Problem-Solving:

The exercise can be a tool for parents and teens to work together to address challenges. By identifying which aspects of a situation are within their control, they can better strategise about how to handle problems.

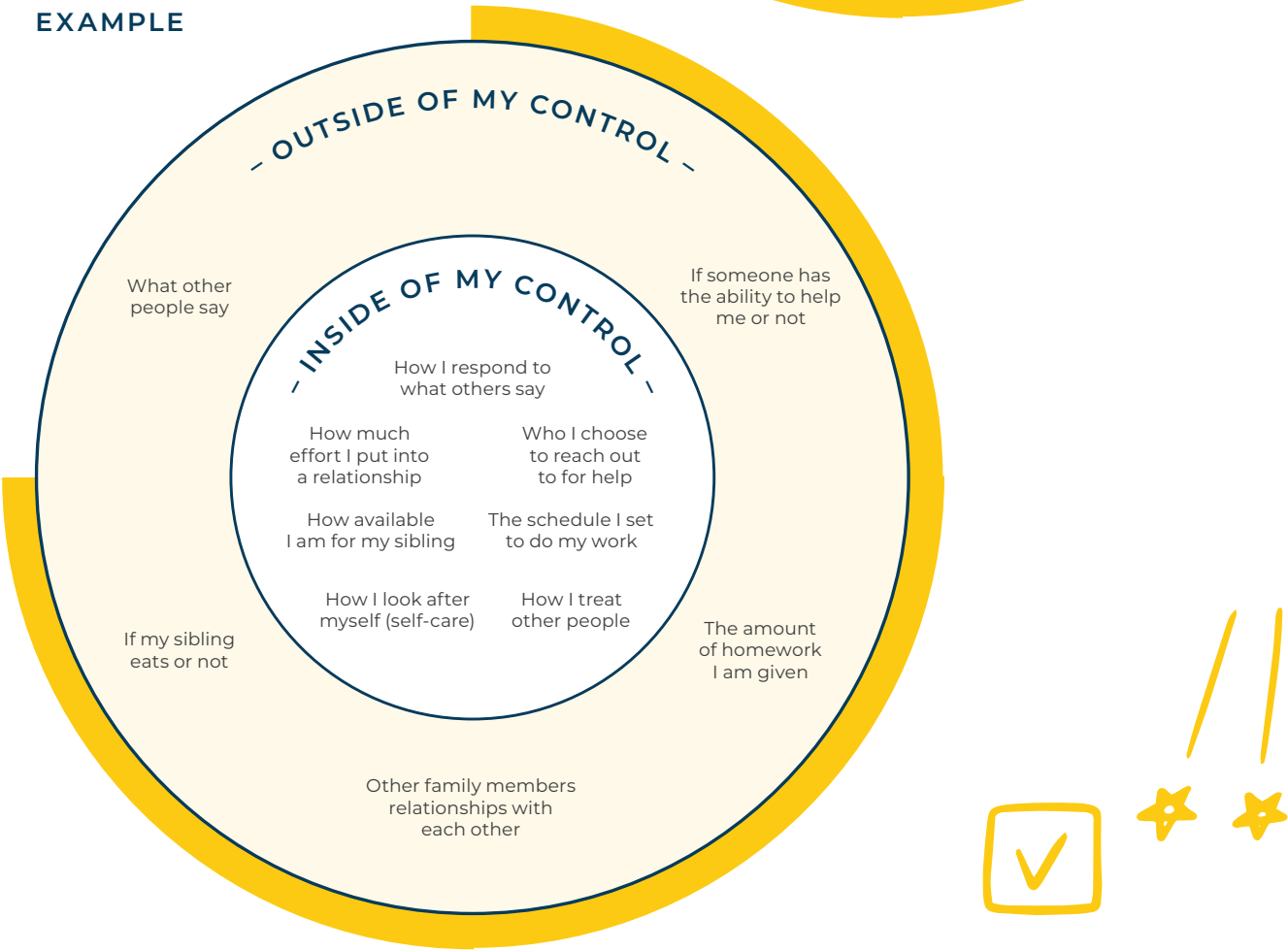
6. Setting Boundaries:

Teens often feel a lack of autonomy, and this exercise can clarify areas where they have power and areas where they need to respect boundaries set by others (like their parents). It also helps parents understand where they might need to give their teen more independence.

By using the Circle of Control together, parents and teenagers can create a balanced approach to handling stress and making decisions, which encourages mutual respect and understanding in the relationship.



EXAMPLE



DIY tie-dye clothing activity

Tie-dyeing is a fun and creative way to transform plain clothes into vibrant, unique pieces of wearable art! It can also be a great way to transform old and long-forgotten clothes into new and exciting items. Better yet, it's a great activity for some family fun – no two pieces will ever be the same.

Whether you like bold and bright swirls, or a more subtle design, tie-dyeing is an easy and enjoyable way to express your creative side.

What you'll need

- White cotton clothing (T-shirts work perfectly, but socks and jumpers work as well)
- A tie-dye kit with various dye colours (you can find these online or at places like Kmart and Big W), or individual bottles of fabric dye
- Rubber bands to hold the fabric in place
- Plastic squeeze bottles for applying the dye
- Rubber or plastic gloves to protect your hands from dye
- Plastic or metal containers to mix the water and dye
- Plastic or wooden spoons for stirring the dye
- Water to mix with dye
- Plastic drop cloth or old towels to rest the dyed items while they dry

Step 1: Prepare your workspace

- Lay down a plastic tablecloth, an old sheet, or something that will protect your surfaces from dye stains.
- Have your towels or plastic drop cloth ready to place your clothes on them for drying
- Make sure you are wearing old clothes or an apron – tie-dye can be messy!

Step 2: Prepare the clothing items

- Wet your clothing with water, then wring it out so that it's damp but not soaking
- Lay the clothing item flat on your surface

Step 3: Mix the dye

- If you're using a tie-dye kit, follow the instructions to mix the dye colours. Usually, this will require adding water to dye powder in each squeeze bottle.
- If you're using separate fabric dye, follow the instructions on their packaging for how to mix the dye and water.

Step 4: Create the tie-dye patterns

When dyeing your clothing make sure you put some gloves on to protect your hands!

There are a variety of ways to create different tie-dye patterns. Here are some common ones:

Spiral

- Pinch the centre of the fabric (e.g. the middle of a T-shirt) and twist the fabric into a long roll. The area where you are pinching will then become the tip. Then roll the fabric into a spiral shape, like a cinnamon roll.
- Use approximately 4-6 rubber bands in a crisscross pattern to secure it.
- Apply the dye in a circular motion, starting from the centre of the roll and working outwards.

Zig-Zag fold

- Lay the fabric flat and fold it in a back-and-forth zigzag pattern (like a pleated skirt). This works best if you fold from top to bottom rather than side to side (but feel free to be as creative as you like and give each a try!)
- Once you've arranged the folds, secure the fabric with rubber bands to create a series of stripes.
- Apply the dye onto the fabric. You can do this as just one colour or a range of colours across the fabric.

Bullseye

- Pinch the fabric in the middle of the clothing item and pull it upwards into a long tube shape.
- Secure the fabric in the tube shape with several rubber bands placed down the length of the fabric, creating rings.
- This pattern works best when you apply a different dye to each section (between each rubber band) starting with the centre (the tip of the tube) and working back from there.

Crinkle

- Crumple or scrunch the fabric using your hands into a loose ball and secure it with 2-3 rubber bands. This will create a random, crinkled effect on the clothing item.
- Apply dye randomly around the fabric.

Step 5: Wrap and wait

- Once you have applied the dye, wrap the clothing in plastic wrap or a plastic bag. This will help set the dye, creating a richer effect.
- Let the fabric sit like this for 6-8 hours, or overnight if possible. The longer it sits, the more vibrant the colours will be.

Step 6: Rinse and dry

- Once the fabric has had time to set, it's time to rise.
- Making sure you're wearing gloves, hold the fabric under cold running water to rinse out any excess dye. Keep rinsing until the water runs clear.
- Gently wring the fabric out and lay it flat to dry on a clean surface or hang it outside

Step 7: Final touches

- Once your tie-dye clothing is completely dry, it's ready to wear.
- You can now enjoy your beautiful, unique creations!

EXTRA TIPS

Mixing colours: to avoid colours blending into each other too much, try letting the first colour dry a little before adding the next colour.

Experiment: don't be afraid to try different folding techniques or colour combinations. Tie-dyeing is all about being creative and experimenting!

Care Instructions: To maintain your tie-dye creations and to protect your other clothing, wash them separately for the first few washes.



Home Made Facial

Making and using a home-made facial with your child is an excellent way to combine self-care, mindfulness, and connection. If creating your own facial isn't your style, then feel free to use skin care you have at home.

If a home-made facial is your style, here's what you'll need:

Equipment

- 5 small bowls or cups
- 4 cotton balls or makeup remover pads
- A knife to cut the fruit
- A towel or headband to help keep hair off the face (optional)
- Spoons and a fork or hand whisk for mixing
- A kettle to boil water
- A face washer
- Curiosity
- Humour

Step 1: Cleanser

- 2-3 grapes, crushed

Why? The inside of the grape pulp contains tartaric acid that helps shed dead skin.

Instructions: Rub the crushed grapes onto your face. Leave for one minute and wipe off with a wet cloth.

Step 2: Toner

- 1 tablespoon of apple cider vinegar

Why? Apple Cider Vinegar can help rebalance the skins PH, it is an astringent, and contains a number of vitamins and minerals.

Instructions: Dip a cotton ball or makeup remover pad into the apple cider vinegar. Rub along your face. Leave for one minute and wipe off.

Step 3: Exfoliate

- 2 tablespoons of full fat natural yoghurt
- 1 tablespoon of sea salt
- 1 tablespoon of ground cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons of coarse raw sugar

Why? The lactic acid in these ingredients softens skin, is antibacterial, and the glycolic acid helps to dissolve dead skin cells.

Instructions: Mix the ingredients in a small bowl. Apply to your face and neck using your fingers or a cotton ball. Leave for one minute and wash off using a wet cloth.

Step 4: Mask:

- 1 egg yolk
- 1 small ripe banana
- 1 tablespoon of honey
- 1 tablespoon of acai powder (optional)

Why? Egg yolk contains Vitamin A to help regenerate skin. The Vitamin B in banana and avocado helps moisturise and nourish the skin, Acai is a natural antioxidant, and honey is antibacterial and nourishing.

Instructions: Mash the banana first, and add the remainder of the ingredients, mixing in a small bowl. Apply to your face and neck using your fingers or cotton ball. Leave for 2-3 minutes and wash off using a wet cloth.

Step 5: Second toner:

- 1 green tea bag

Why? Green tea is anti-inflammatory and helps to cool the skin

Instructions: Add the tea bag to boiling water and leave to brew for 1-2 minutes. Remove the tea bag from the water and rub along your face and neck. This doesn't need to be washed off.

Step 6: Moisturiser:

- 1tsp of Cacao Butter or warm Coconut Oil

Why? Both cacao butter and coconut oil help to soften the skin and prevent the loss of moisture.

Instructions:

Apply the cacao butter or warm coconut to your face and neck. This doesn't need to be washed off.

Creating a Vision Board

A vision board is a collage of images, words, and phrases (and anything else you like!) that represent personal goals, dreams, and aspirations.

For both parents and young people, making a vision board together can help facilitate open communication and promote a shared sense of hope and positivity during difficult moments. It can also be a good reminder of personal values, achievements, and the support that you can give each other while navigating tough situations.

What you'll need

Keep in mind that everything listed below are suggestions. If there's anything you think will work better for you, follow your instincts.

- A large piece of cardboard, poster paper, or corkboard
- Magazines, newspapers, or printed images (anything with pictures, words, or phrases)
- Scissors
- Glue stick, tape, or push pins
- Markers or pens
- Stickers and decorative items

Step 1: Set an intention

Before you start, have a chat about the purpose for your vision board. It could be to reflect personal goals, family dreams, or things you'd like to feel more connected to. Alternatively, you could choose to just see what comes and build a vision board that reflects your hopes.

Step 2: Collect images and words

Pictures, words, and phrases that resonate with you can come from anywhere. Magazines, the internet, or your camera roll are great places to start. Try to look for things that inspire you, make you smile, or fulfil you.

Step 3: Prepare your board

Lay out your cardboard or poster board and decide if you want to create one big vision board as a pair, or if you'd like to each create your own board.

Step 4: Cut and arrange

Cut out the images, words, and phrases that you've collected for your board. Lay them down on the board and stick them down. You can overlap images or leave space between them – whatever feels best for you! This is where you might like to add a personal touch with pens, markers, sequins, or glitter.

Step 5: Reflect and share

Once you've finished creating your vision board, take a moment to reflect on it. Discuss what each person has chosen and why. This provides a great opportunity for open conversation about what each of you hope for and how you can support each other, especially during tough times.

Once complete, find a special place to hang or display your vision board!





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