

PARENTING ON CUE

with **Queenie Tan**



POC 135 : How to start meaningful conversations with your child about their day?

Hi! Queenie Tan here and welcome to another episode of the Parenting On Cue Podcast. Now today, I'm going to teach you how you can start conversations with your children so that you can help them figure out what happened that day. The situation is, a lot of parents, they tell me things like "oh, I always ask my children what they learned today at school, and they say nothing; I ask them if they're okay, and they always say they're okay; I ask them if they learn anything today, and they say they didn't learn anything today."

So yes, there is a right way of asking questions, and not so appropriate way. Because you have to understand that a lot of times, we as adults, we know the context of these questions but young children haven't quite figured it out yet. They may have learnt responses like if you ask them if they're okay, they say "yes, I'm okay." They may have learnt responses so that they can participate in this conversation with us and not leave us hanging. Because if we ask them if they're okay and they don't reply, we would get really worried, right? But I think that a lot of times, because we're adults and we understand the context, we are able to tune in what others are expecting of us when they ask us certain question.

But the thing is that a lot of children don't get this yet, so I'm just going to give you of few things that you can think about so they can do a little bit differently. Just try it out, there's nothing to lose. And then let me know if it works. Also, I heard of parents who say things like "I asked my child who they play with yesterday and when they were at school, they say "I can't remember." "Seriously, I can't remember what I have for lunch today if not for the picture that I posted on Instagram about it." That's just today, let alone yesterday. Children have short-term memories and so getting them to recall things is going to be a little more tricky. So I'm going to give you a few suggestions you can think about.

I think it will be great if we can ask them questions that are open-ended, where there's no right or wrong, yes or no answer, where they can choose to answer however they want to. It may not be factual because the children may not remember all the details. They may not have really good memory yet. And as such, if they can't recall or if they make something up, and then they have found out later on, there's a lot of pressure for them to get the details right. And I think, putting them under that pressure is not going to be helpful.

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So it would be really good to ask them open-ended questions such as "can you tell me one thing really fun that you did today?" or "I wonder if we made any new friends today." So these are open-ended. They could answer however they want to. They could have spoken to someone that they have never spoken to before but it may not be their friend. I mean, they could have done a lot of things that day but didn't feel any if it was really fun to them. So these are all open-ended questions. I think it would be really good to have these conversations with them. They might say "No, I didn't do anything fun today, I can't remember anything fun, but I did remember that one time where Wendy trip over herself, she didn't fall, she caught herself, it was so funny because she did like this weird dance, and we all laughed." So it may not be fun to a lot of people but according to our child, they think that's fun.

So ask them open-ended questions. Another one that we might want to think about is to ask some questions about their feelings. So the problem is we live in our intellectual brain all the time that we don't really take the time to connect with our emotional self. Certainly if we're not connected with our emotional self, it's really kind of hard to help our children connect with the emotional self. So instead of asking them how is their day today, ask them "did you remember a time where... you felt really sad, or you felt happy, or you felt angry, or you felt jealous, or you felt... so it's really good to throw out some of these feeling words. And that leads me to my third point or third suggestion about us talking about our day. And I think it is a really good icebreaker when we talk about our day, and then slowly transition to their day.

And when you're talking about your day, as much as possible, try to be open-ended, try to connect with how you felt that day or what are some of the events and what you feel. You may not necessarily be talking to your child, you may just be thinking out loud which is really helpful because I think at the end of the day, we try to internalize and compose all our experiences, maybe something that we learn or different feelings that we've had, some are extreme, some are scary. You may be fluctuating in a really weird way, and just being able to talk about it with our children, allows them to use their time to see how we are connecting with ourselves and with the people around us.

So three things, ask open-ended questions, so there's no right or wrong, there's no information to verify. Secondly, talk about their feelings, ask them about how they felt that day. And this only works if you talk about your feelings so that they get all this vocabulary from you. And when it's

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their turn, they'll know how to use it. So that leads me to my third point which is to make sure that we also allow ourselves to talk about our day, and to be as open-ended as possible, and to be able to connect with our feelings and to express our feelings.

So thank you for listening. And I certainly hope that that would give you something think about the next time you want to have the conversation with your children after a long day of not seeing them. And when you reconnect with them, and you just don't want to use the same "how are you doing today," "anything interesting happened?" So I hope that helps.

So until next week, remember happy and confident parents have happy and confident children.