

Teach Kids How To Have Good Conversations With These 10 Rules

[Linda Stade](#) Aug 10, 2019



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Listening and speaking skills are sadly lacking in our kids, according to professional interviewer Celeste Headlee. Here are her 10 rules for better conversation.

Celeste Headlee has spent a lifetime having interesting conversations. She interviews people for public radio in the United States as a reporter, correspondent and radio show host. She doesn't like all the people she interviews, but she always manages to have an interesting conversation.

In her [TEDx talk](#) she asserts that conversation is a dying art. For many reasons, including reliance on digital technology, our children are not

learning the skills of how to speak and listen powerfully with another person.

Ms Headlee gives ten basic rules for good conversation that we should be taking note of and passing onto our kids. Remember, the best way to teach kids to have a good conversation is to have good conversations with them.

10 Rules For Good Conversation

- 1. Don't multitask.** Pay attention and be present with the other person. Be in or be out, but don't be halfway in or halfway out of a conversation. You don't have to remember to smile and nod to show you're paying attention when you are *actually paying attention!*
- 2. Don't pontificate.** If you want to express your opinion without interruption or push back, be a blogger. (Eeek) In a conversation, be there to learn something. Assume you have something to learn. Ms Headlee quotes Bill Nye when she says, "Everyone you will ever meet knows something that you don't".
- 3. Ask open-ended questions.** What was that like? How did that feel? Simple questions elicit interesting answers. Complicated questions elicit simple answers.
- 4. Go with the flow.** As you listen, let ideas come into your head and let them go out. Don't grab an idea and hold onto it, waiting for your chance to say it out loud. Let those ideas waft through, but keep listening.
- 5. If you don't know, say you don't know.** Err on the side of caution. You're not an expert at everything.
- 6. Don't equate your experiences with those of the person speaking.** All experiences are individual. It is not about you, so when someone tells you their story don't then jump in with something similar that happened to

you. Conversations are not just about telling similar stories. They are about connection and [empathy](#).

7. Try not to repeat yourself, it's condescending and boring. We do this with children all the time, so it is little wonder they learn to do it too.

8. Stay out of the details. Talk about ideas and feelings. Nobody is really interested in the names or dates, they are interested in you.

9. Listen. "If your mouth is open, you're not learning", Buddha said something like that! It takes effort to listen and it means giving up control, but if you don't, you're not having a conversation. Listen with the intention of understanding, not with the intention of replying.

10. Be brief.

Finally, Celeste Headlee ends with the greatest rules of all; ***Be interested in other people*** and, ***be prepared to be amazed.***

Watch it here...

You can watch Celeste Headlee talk about effective listening and speaking skills in the TEDx talk here. It was delivered in Savannah Georgia on 1 May, 2015.

Duration: 12 minutes, 6 seconds.

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Linda Stade has worked in various teaching and management roles in education for twenty-five years. She has worked in government and private

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