

# Conversation starter toolkit

In partnership with the  
American Academy of Pediatrics



# Conversation starter toolkit

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Resources for talking with pediatricians and health professionals, teachers, and others if you're concerned about your child's challenges.

## What's inside:

- Tips for talking with pediatricians and other health professionals
- Conversation starters to use with teachers
- Tips for talking with your child about signs you're seeing
- Conversation starters to use with friends and family members
- Take N.O.T.E.
- Wunder
- Understood Podcast Network
- More resources to help you understand and support your child





## Conversation starters

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Exploring learning differences can be confusing. It can also feel scary and isolating. Your child's pediatrician is a great source of information and support, and a key ally in getting your child the right help. So is your child's teacher. Friends, relatives, and other people can also offer insight and support.

Talking about challenges and concerns isn't always easy. This toolkit can help you navigate these conversations. It's full of scripts, tips, tools, and other resources for talking to the people who can help you get answers and who are involved in caring for and supporting your child.



# Tips for talking with pediatricians and other health professionals



## 1. Reach out early.

If you don't know what your child's signs and patterns mean, you might wonder if they're "serious enough" to bring up. Pediatricians are experts in child development and know what's typical for kids your child's age. So, call your pediatrician right away – don't wait until your regular visit to bring it up. The sooner you start getting answers, the sooner you'll know how to help your child.

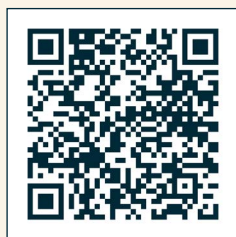
## 2. Find a way to connect that works for both of you.

Pediatrician offices can work with families and caregivers to find the best way to connect. Many pediatricians connect with families in person, by phone, and through video. They may also use secure messaging through various apps.

## 3. Be ready to talk about what's happening at school or childcare.

Your pediatrician will want to know what's happening with your child in school or childcare, as well as at home. If you haven't already talked with your child's teachers and caregivers about your concerns, see if you can do that first. Gather any schoolwork, tests, notes from teachers on their observations, or report cards that might give the doctor a better sense of what your child is struggling with.

### Get more tips for having the conversation:



<https://www.understood.org/articles/how-to-work-with-pediatrician-child-struggling>

### Explore more resources: Why pediatricians want to know how your child is doing in school



<https://www.understood.org/articles/why-pediatricians-ask-about-child-school-performance>

### Explore more resources: Specialists who work with kids with learning and thinking differences



<https://www.understood.org/articles/specialists-who-work-with-kids-with-learning-and-thinking-differences>



# Conversation starters to use with teachers

Approaching teachers to talk about concerns can be difficult. Knowing what to say makes conversations easier and more productive. These conversation starters can give you an idea of how to word things at every step – whether you’re asking to talk, asking for help, or finishing the conversation.

Here’s an example for kids with focus challenges. There are conversation starters for other topics, too.

**Asking to talk:** “Hi. I’m Jordan’s grandmother, Claudia. Jordan lives with me, and I’m worried he’s having trouble with focus. I’d like to set up a time to talk about it.”

**Following up on answers:** “Can you give me an example of what distracts Jordan in class? What does he do?”

**Asking about help:** “What can help Jordan with focus? Are there things you do in class when he stops focusing? Can you suggest strategies we can try at home?”

**Finishing the conversation:** “Thanks so much for your help. Can we check in after I’ve had time to think about this to talk about what happens next?”

## Get more suggestions for talking with your child’s teacher:



<https://www.understood.org/en/articles/conversation-starters-to-use-with-your-childs-teachers>

## Explore more resources: Conversation guide: How to connect with teachers when your child is struggling.



[https://mcusercontent.com/13729e5d5c510f41fa1e35b47/files/1c6ab215-011f-e34a-78b6-81b5734ba7b6/Talk\\_\\_How\\_to\\_connect\\_with\\_teachers\\_when\\_your\\_child\\_is\\_struggling\\_Understood.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/13729e5d5c510f41fa1e35b47/files/1c6ab215-011f-e34a-78b6-81b5734ba7b6/Talk__How_to_connect_with_teachers_when_your_child_is_struggling_Understood.pdf)

## Explore more resources: 9 tips for making the most of your parent-teacher conference



<https://www.understood.org/en/articles/tips-successful-parent-teacher-conference>



# Tips for talking with your child about signs you're seeing



## Jot it down.

Before speaking with your child for the first time, write down exactly what you've been noticing. Jot down a few examples to mention during your talk.

**Example:** "I've noticed that you seem frustrated when you have math homework. Can you tell me what part of math is difficult?"

## Use empathy.

If you're noticing that your child is struggling, your child probably notices it, too. Empathize and let your child know that everyone struggles with something.

**Example:** "We all have some areas that are tricky for us. And that's OK. We all have strengths, too."

## Be your child's partner.

It's common to not have the answers right away. Be honest and tell your child that you'll find the answers *together*.

**Example:** "Let's talk to your teacher and find out what's been happening at school. Maybe there are things we can all do to make it better. How does that sound?"

### Get more tips for having the conversation:



<https://www.understood.org/en/articles/talk-to-child-about-signs-learning-differences>

### Learning and thinking differences:



<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/learning-disabilities/Pages/Learning-Disabilities-What-Parents-Need-To-Know.aspx>

### Explore more resources:

Download: Feelings wheel



<https://www.understood.org/en/articles/download-feelings-wheel>



# Conversation starters to use with your partner, family members, and other caregivers

When your child is struggling, it helps to talk about it with other people who spend time with your child. A key person is your parenting partner. (You may also want to talk to extended family members or other caregivers.)

Talking about challenges with your partner may not be easy, though, especially if you're not on the same page. Here are some conversation starters to help.

**Asking to talk:** "I've noticed some things going on with Jesse that I'm confused about. Can we talk after the kids are in bed tonight?"

**Starting the conversation:** "I want to tell you about the things I've seen happening with Jesse. I don't know if they mean anything, but I'm a little concerned."

**Sharing information:** "You know how angry Jesse's been lately? I've noticed that the outbursts usually happen after homework, particularly math work."

**Getting your partner's input:** "Thanks for listening to this. Are you seeing these things, too? If so, when do you notice it?"

## Get more suggestions for talking with your partner:



<https://www.understood.org/en/articles/how-talk-about-child-with-partner>

## Explore more resources:

How to talk with other caregivers about signs you're seeing in your child



<https://www.understood.org/en/articles/how-to-talk-with-caregivers-about-child>

## Explore more resources:

8 tips for talking with family members about your child's challenges



<https://www.understood.org/articles/8-tips-on-how-to-talk-with-family-members-about-your-childs-issues>





## Continue the conversation

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Being able to share your concerns is key to getting support for your child – and for you, too. Talking with health professionals, teachers, and other families may be uncomfortable at first. But the more you do it, the more confidence you'll gain. And the easier it will be for you to discuss your child's challenges.

The resources below are designed to let you connect and communicate with the people who can help you find answers. Learn more about them.





# Take N.O.T.E.



## Are you wondering why your child is struggling?

If you're seeing your child face challenges at home or at school, you might not know what to do next. That's why we're here to help.

## Make your journey easier with Take N.O.T.E.

It's a simple step-by-step tool to help you figure out if the struggles you're seeing might be signs of a learning and thinking difference.

Step 1

**N**

**Notice** if there's something going on with your child that's out of the ordinary.

Step 2

**O**

**Observe** and keep track of patterns.

Step 3

**T**

**Talk** with other people who can help support your child, like pediatricians, teachers, and other caregivers.

Step 4

**E**

**Engage** Engage your child to get information and explore options for what to do next.



Take N.O.T.E.

<https://www.understood.org/take-note>



# Wunder

Join a free, first-of-its-kind community app for parents raising kids with learning and thinking differences, like dyslexia and ADHD.

## Find your community:

Connect with parents going through similar experiences

## Engage with experts:

Ask a team of credible experts your questions

## Discover helpful resources:

Access resources tailored to your interests



### **“I found a community I could lean on.**

*I joined Wunder when my son was diagnosed with ADHD and instantly found the support I needed from a community of empathetic parents and experts.”*

**- Parent on Wunder raising a 6-year-old with ADHD**



**Wunder**

<https://www.understood.org/wunder>



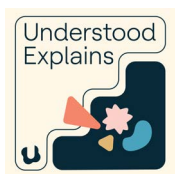
# Understood Podcast Network

You may not know much about learning and thinking differences when you first start looking into your child's challenges. You may also feel alone and worried about the future. Our podcasts feature real talk and personal stories from parents, experts, and people who learn and think differently.

The Understood Podcast Network features five podcasts (with more on the way). They cover a very wide range of topics. Our podcasts include:



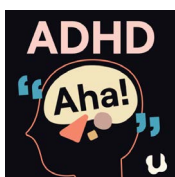
**In It:** Explores the ups and downs of raising kids who learn and think differently with real parents and experts



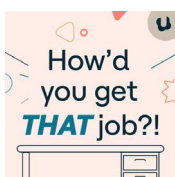
**Understood Explains:** Delves into a different key topic every season, like school evaluations



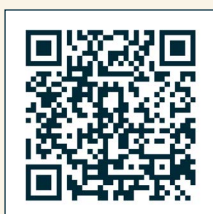
**The Opportunity Gap:** Provides tips and insights for parents raising kids of color who learn and think differently



**ADHD Aha!** Shares personal stories about how ADHD symptoms show up in kids and adults



**How'd You Get THAT Job?!** Shares personal stories about how people with differences got the jobs they love



**Podcast network**

<https://www.understood.org/en/podcasts>





## More Understood resources

[Download: Anxiety log to find out why your child gets anxious](#)

[Download: Log to find out why your child gets frustrated](#)

[My child is falling behind in school. Now what?](#)

[What causes trouble with self-control?](#)

[ADHD symptoms at different ages](#)

[A day in the life of a child with dyslexia](#)

[A day in the life of a child with slow processing speed](#)

[A day in the life of a child with sensory processing issues](#)

[A day in the life of a child with executive function challenges](#)

[A day in the life of a teen with dyscalculia](#)

[What is an evaluation for special education services?](#)

[6 common myths about learning and thinking differences](#)

