



Dad-Daughter Date #47

Questions on Making Amends for Hurtful Words You've Spoken

by Dr. Michelle Watson Canfield

As you *bravely delve into hearing from your daughter* regarding what she has experienced from you, you will be giving her an opportunity to disclose any hurtful words you've spoken to her. Some words you'll probably remember and some you may have forgotten. Upon hearing from her, you may not agree with her interpretation of the "facts" (*as per your recollection*), or you may believe that she misheard you, misquoted you, or misunderstood your intentions.

I acknowledge that this will require the patience of Job and the wisdom of Solomon to ask questions and then listen to her responses here. Yet it's vital to remember that you're seeking to validate how *she is holding hurts from you, not the other way around*. This is the first step in the process of making amends for your hurtful responses so that healing can happen.

- This set of questions will equip you to lead this conversation as you ***humbly listen without defensiveness and seek to win your daughter's heart rather than the argument.***
- Because this may be a difficult conversation to have, *especially if you've responded to her with anger or rage in the past*, your daughter may only feel safe sharing her thoughts with you in writing, not in person. If so, you can invite her to write her responses to these questions and send them to you electronically or through regular mail.
- Here's a way that you could bring up this topic with her: *"Hi Honey...I recently heard a quote that hit me hard: 'words when spoken and hearts when broken are the hardest to repair.' I want us to have an honest conversation about how my words have impacted you through the years, both positive and negative words. I'm extremely thankful that you're willing to be open with me because I know it takes courage to have this kind of authentic dialogue. Please know up front that I want to understand you by hearing your heart and your hurts so we can have an even better relationship. I promise that I won't get angry or defensive. Would you be willing to*

have a conversation like this with me? But if it feels like too much, would you consider writing out your responses and then sending them to me?"

1. Can you remember any specific words I've spoken to you that have stuck with you that have made you feel *better* about yourself?
2. How did my positive words cause you to *feel* about yourself, then...*and now*?
3. Can you remember any specific words I've spoken to you that have stuck with you that have made you feel *worse* about yourself?
4. How have my negative or hurtful words caused you to feel about yourself, then...*and now*?

5. Can you think of a time or times when I failed to say something to you that you wished I would have said, and what message did I give to you by *not* responding positively to you?

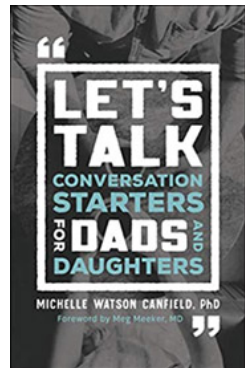
6. Dad, if this reflects your heart, tell your daughter: *"I admit that I don't always talk to you in ways that truly reflect my love for you, and sometimes I react to you more than respond. But my heart desire is to invest in you in ways that build you up rather than tear you down. I am sorry for...[be specific in stating individual hurtful words when asking forgiveness.] Will you please forgive me for...[again, be specific.] Here is my commitment to you as we go forward..."*

Dad-Daughter Date #48: Questions on Her Father Wounds...*from You*

- This set of questions provides a template for making amends for any wounds you've caused that still may be lingering for her. Even if you think things are solid and good between you, it never hurts to check in just to make sure everything is clear.
- Some daughters are innately wired with a tender heart, gentle spirit, and less forthrightness, which could result in holding back her real thoughts and feelings so as not to see you upset or hurt. Others are conflict avoiders, sometimes due to fear of repercussions, such as seeing you angry or sad. If your daughter is hardwired in any of these ways, she may prefer to write out her responses since face-to-face interactions might be too overwhelming to her.
- If you're genuinely remorseful upon hearing what your daughter shares with you, **make amends on the spot after each response**. You don't have to wait until the end of your dad-daughter date to ask for forgiveness. Look into her eyes *without defensiveness* and simply say, *"I'm so sorry for... Will you forgive me for..." [be specific based on what she's disclosed.]*
- Here's a way that you could bring up this topic with her: *"Hi Honey...Dr. Michelle says that some daughters hold back from telling their dads how they've been hurt by them, either because they're*

This is excerpted with permission from Dr. Michelle Canfield's book, [*Let's Talk: Conversation Starters for Dads and Daughters.*](#)

This book will help you close the communication gap with your daughter and build a stronger bond with her. [Find out more about the book here.](#)



afraid of a negative response or because they don't want to cause hurt feelings. I'm hopeful as we talk about this topic of father wounds that if there's anything I still haven't heard from you about how I've wounded you that you'll tell me about it, whether in person or in writing. And if you don't remember something now, but remember it later, would you be willing to tell me about it then? And at any point if you've had enough or don't want to tell me what you're thinking, just let me know and we can always take a break and continue our conversation at another time. How does that sound?"

1. Let's start by talking about our relationship now. Are we as close as you'd like us to be? If so, I'd love to hear more. If not, why do you think we're not close?
2. What do you wish was different in how we relate to each other?
3. What is one of the *best* memories you have with me?
4. What is one of the *hardest* (or *most painful*) memories you have with me?
5. Do you remember any times when *I hurt your feelings* by what I said or did to you? I want to know what I've said or done so you don't have to carry those wounds anymore or believe lies about yourself that are tucked inside those hurts. And then I can make things right with you too.
6. Can you recall any times when *I missed something or didn't do something* that was important to you? (e.g., *not attending an event or failing to see how I'd hurt you by my response or not seeing how much you were hurting about something?*)
7. I would love your honesty on this question: What is one way that I'm *not* being a good dad to you *right now*?
8. What is one thing I need to understand about you that would help me be a better dad to you?

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[Dr. Michelle Watson Canfield](#)

At the National Center for Fathering, Dr. Michelle plays a leading role in our efforts to encourage and equip [dads of daughters](#). She regularly writes insightful articles and co-chairs NCF's Father-Daughter Initiative with her husband, Dr. Ken Canfield. Dr. Michelle is a licensed professional counselor of more than 25 years, founder of The Abba Project, a 9-month group forum for dads of daughters (ages 13 to 30), and author of two books for dads of daughters. [Find out more about Michelle and her books and read more of her articles for dads here.](#)

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