



Age: Parent/Caregiver and Teenager +

## Defuse the Time-bomb - Parents and Teenagers

Activity

### “They Say, I Say”

**Duration:** ~25-30 minutes  
**Participants:** 1 or 2 parents/-  
caregivers and a teenager

**Materials:**

- Pen or pencil and a sheet of paper
- Glass jar or plastic container with lid to serve as a time capsule

### Objective

After completing the activity, parent and teenager will be able to recognize points of commonality between one another, and will understand the other person’s point of view, even if they don’t necessarily agree with it. Both parent and teenager will feel more comfortable and open to discussing contentious issues in the family, thus developing a better sense of connection within the family.

### Description

You’re in a tense conversation with your teen. Again. Both of you are firmly set in your opinion and you know compromise is not a likely outcome. An exhausting, scream-filled argument is imminent. Instead of preparing yourself for slammed doors and “you just don’t

understand,” this is the perfect opportunity to try a fresh, calm approach that will not only diffuse the tension, but also enable you to come to a harmonious agreement for the topic at hand.



# Directions

## Part I: Activity (10 min.)

1. Each person gets one sheet of paper and makes two columns.
2. Make one column, "*I Say*" and the other column, "*They Say*."
3. Under "*I Say*," each person writes down his/her 3 main points/views that are relevant to the current discussion.
4. After each person writes down their 3 points, exchange papers.
5. Next, choose at least 1 view of the other person that you feel is reasonable, that you understand, and that you might even agree with. Write down your response in the column "*They Say*."
  - For example, you might write, "*I understand where you're coming from,*" or, "*I agree with this point,*" and then expand on why you understand or agree.
6. Next, choose 1 view that you disagree with and/or don't understand. Write down your response in the column, "*They Say*." Write something practical or meaningful, as opposed to a derogatory comment, like "I think it's stupid," or, "I don't get you."
  - For example, you might write, "*I disagree with this point because you should trust me. I've never given you a reason not to.*"
7. After you write your comments, exchange papers again.
8. Now, take a few minutes to read the responses and reflect silently on what the other person has written down before moving on to Part II.



# Directions

*(continued)*

## Part II: Connection Circle (10 min.)

1. The discussion should be held according to the practical Rules of the Roundtable which will turn any discussion into one where compromise can be found and balance can be restored.
2. Each participant in the circle answers a question before moving on to the next one:
  - a. Why is this issue so important to you?
  - b. On which viewpoints do you share common ground?
  - c. Now that there is a better understanding of each person's perspective, how can you compromise on this topic to reach a solution?

\* Note: Each person may answer this question more than once, until a solution is found. Remember to always follow the Rules of the Roundtable.
  - d. What can we do when we use our heightened emotions to attack each other rather than genuinely listen to one another and work together for a solution?
3. Each person expresses at least one thing they appreciate about the other person.
4. For future reflection, place the pieces of paper with responses in a jar that will act as a time capsule (see Time Capsule toolkit).



# Supplementary materials

## Clips to play before/during/after the activity:

- Rules of the RoundTable
- The Power of Compliments

## Quotes:

- *Resolve to be tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant with the weak and wrong. Sometime in life you will have been all of these.*  
--Dandy Lion
- *Wise to resolve, and patient to perform.*  
--Homer
- *There's one sad truth in life I've found  
While journeying east and west -  
The only folks we really wound  
Are those we love the best.  
We flatter those we scarcely know,  
We please the fleeting guest,  
And deal full many a thoughtless blow  
To those who love us best.*  
~Ella Wheeler Wilcox



# The Science Behind it

- Improving Parent and Teen Conflict Resolution. Skills: Evaluating the Effectiveness of the "Family Reunion" Crisis Intervention Program

*"Interaction and student cognitive engagement are critical for constructing new understanding and knowledge."*