Point out what you have in common: “We’re both worried about [Jessie’s cursing].”

Ask for help: “I need your input on [the cell phone] problem.”

Ask for advice: “What do you think about [Chris getting a weekend job]?”

Be honest about how you’re feeling: “I won’t say this doesn’t upset me, but I’ll listen to you.”

Be UNassuming: “Are you upset about [what the kids ate at my house]?”

Admit you got it wrong: “I misunderstood what you were telling me.”

Take responsibility: “I shouldn’t have said it that way.”

List what you CAN do and plan the rest: “I can deal with [curfew] now. Can we decide on the [driver’s permit when Jamie turns 16]?”

Acknowledge your responsibilities: “I know it’s my job to work out the [transportation], but can we discuss some details?”

Take a step back and reflect: “Why do you think we keep fighting about [Rory’s homework]?”

Melt the blame: “No one meant for this to happen.”

Don’t assume the worst of intentions: “I know you didn’t intend to sound [mean], but when you talk like that I get [sad].”

Brainstorm together: “What [bedtime] rules would work for both us and the kids?”

Admit the limitations: “We’ll never agree about [chores]; maybe we should each do our own thing.”

Drop the defense: “I know I’m not your favorite person.”

Recognize touchy topics: “I know it’s a sensitive issue, but can we discuss [how Alex disciplines Jordan]?”

Acknowledge how important the other person is: “What you say matters to me.”

Bring respect back into the mix: “I think you’re a good parent. I like the way you [talk to] the kids.”

Don’t shut down for good: “Can we talk about this Monday? I need to think about it over the weekend.”

Validate concerns: “I understand why [you worry] when [I don’t answer the phone].”

Name the other person’s value: “I know [honesty] matters to you.”

Name your own value: “[Being on time] is important to me.”

Use “I feel_________ statements” GENUINELY: “I feel [upset] when you [laugh at my cooking] because [the kids have been doing the same thing].”