

**HYPOTHETICALLY SPEAKING**

## **The Chatter Box Is Constantly Full**

453 words

Toy boxes, lunch boxes, book shelves. They each feature in the life of a child in the United Arab Emirates. However, it is the Chatter Box box that excites me most.

What is Chatter? The dictionary offers - talk, gossip, chat, conversation.

I love a good conversation - defined as a progressive interaction between two or more people - especially unplanned chats that carry the conversationalists on a journey of discovery, including self-discovery all the while cultivating connectivity between the conversation partners.

The best partners are those who are animated, knowledgeable and confident to share sentiments, observations, opinions and ideas; smart people, with character honed from a wonderful balance of cognitive and social skills. Indeed, bright, ethical, hardworking people who are excited about their shared role in conversation, and in society.

How powerful then if we as grown-up children – adults – made wonderful conversation partners for our children at every age, but especially for our under-fives, given that it is in these early learning years that our cognitive, emotional and social skills are first awakened.

Together in communication, we would take many a journey exploring what makes things tick, honing the art that is conversation to foster the dynamic interplay between

**HYPOTHETICALLY  
SPEAKING  
in the words of  
BADR AL-OLAMA**

cognition – which could be dubbed a commodity, and character – where true power is said to be, and so drive personal and economic prosperity.

Perhaps most crucially, we would be building a deep trust relationship, one borne from the true spirit of collaborative communication so that the child is comfortable to table all topics – the good, the bad, and even the ugly, ‘cos ugly does exist in the world, and in the playground.

Where there is dark there is light, and if our young children are encouraged to explore all aspects of life through healthy parental conversation, then I also see that our role as the child’s caretaker - as well as care giver - becomes easier because we would know what is going on in the child’s life away from home. And, knowledge is king.

Conversation is second nature to an Emirati and chatter between family and friends is generally quite passionate. However, small talk with our little people is really a different kettle of fish for all parents. But there is a knack to it.

Here’s Five Chatter Box Tips to nurture meaningful, magical and useful parent-child conversations so that we can have our ear to the child’s world – at home and away:

1. Talk about anything - just don't do all the talking!
2. Communicate more for enjoyable social contact than to get something done.
3. Comment and wait – any response the child makes is a ‘success’.
4. Always reply to your child's comments.
5. Think of talking as creative play.

**ENDS**