

Conversation in the cards for inventive mom and daughter

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Impressed by her mother's success as a game entrepreneur, 9-year-old Kate Daniels offered up an idea of her own. Mom Beth Daniels ran with it.

Beth Daniels, founder of Around the Table Games and creator of Family Talk and Grandparent Talk, added Buddy Talk, Camp Talk and Teen Talk -- a series of 50 conversation cards (\$7.99 each set) that initiate *verbal* interaction between friends and family -- to her existing line of conversation games.

Kate Daniels came up with the concept for Buddy Talk, geared for tweens. She also came up with the questions for Camp Talk after a retailer suggested it would be a fine addition to the line. Kate took a hands-on approach to creating the questions for both games, soliciting help from school friends, members of her Girl Scout troop and soccer teammates.

Buddy Talk is for the tween BFFs of the world. Questions include conversation starters such as "What's your favorite thing about summer break?" and "If you could have picked your own name, what would it be?" and "What is the funniest trick your pet can do?"

Camp Talk features questions such as "What's the funniest or most unusual nickname for a counselor you've heard?" and "If you wrote your own campfire song, what would it be about?" and "Name a place you feel you can really be yourself." These cards are recommended for age 7 and up.

"It makes me so happy everyone is having fun with the game," Kate said.

Daniels' 16-year-old niece Emily Wallace developed the concept and questions for Teen Talk. It addresses more serious issues with questions like "What is one thing you couldn't live without?" and "What influences you the most?" and "Do you think guys/girls act or talk differently online than they do in person? Why?"

Beth Daniels' award-winning Family Talk and Grandparent Talk games (enhanced versions of both games are also new to the 2009 line, \$19.99), on which the company was founded, also serve as platforms to inspire the lost art of conversation.

"I originally created the games for family and friends to bond, never thinking it was enhancing verbal skills," Daniels said.

Daniels, an occupational therapist and mother of two, realized today's families -- including her own -- lacked sufficient time to connect.

"It started as a dinner-table game and has taken off," she said.