

FOUR GENERATIONS OVERCOMING ADDICTION

Conversation Guide: Older Adult to Adult Child

It can be painful to watch—and difficult to accept—that the person you nurtured from birth to adulthood seems on course for self-destruction from alcohol or other drug addiction. You may feel it's not your place to say anything. After all, your child is grown up and can make his or her own decisions. The truth is that your adult children need to hear from you. They need to know you're aware of what's going on, that they are not alone, and that there is help.

If addiction runs in your family or you suspect your adult child may have a problem with alcohol or other drugs, the following steps can assist you in getting that difficult first conversation about the disease started.

- 1. Learn as much as you can beforehand** about alcoholism and drug addiction. Try the following resources:
 - [Al-Anon](#): Support for friends and families of alcoholics
 - [HelpGuide.org](#): Drug abuse and addiction: signs, symptoms and help
 - [Hazelden](#): Articles and resources for family members
- 2. Adopt the right attitude:** Here are some things to keep in the back of your mind as you talk with your grown child:
 - ✓ Remember, it is not their fault. Addiction is a disease and it runs in families. It is not a moral issue.
 - ✓ Tell him or her exactly what you are seeing and how it is affecting you.
 - ✓ Be concerned, caring and non-judgmental. Keep in mind you are starting a conversation—a two-way conversation with your adult child. Take a deep breath and let them have their say—without judgment or condemnation on your part.
 - ✓ Manage your expectations. This will likely be the first of many conversations you will have with your adult child about this topic. These are not easy conversations to have, and not all of them will go well. Remember, addiction treatment and recovery are a process and they take time.
- 3. Determine your key messages:** Oftentimes when chemicals and emotions are involved, conversations can have a way of getting off track. Choose a few key messages you'd like to convey and repeat them often. These messages could include:
 - ◆ Addiction runs in our family and it's nothing to be ashamed about. (This is where you may want to share a personal story about your or another family member's experience with the disease.)
 - ◆ You are loved and can come to me anytime without judgment.
 - ◆ There is help available when you need it.
- 4. Set the right stage:** These types of conversations need to come about in a neutral, unhurried environment.

5. **Leave it with love.** Not all conversations will go perfectly, but they can end on a hopeful note. Even if your adult child gets angry, remind him or her of your love and concern and reiterate your willingness to be there when he or she is ready.
6. **Know where to go for help:** If you think your adult child may be addicted to drugs or alcohol, there is help available. For more information on treatment or other options, contact Hazelden 24 hours a day at 800-257-7810 or online at hazelden.org.
- 7.

Print out this conversation guide and have it ready as a refresher when you are ready to sit down with your adult child.

Check for more information, content updates and inspiring new stories of addiction and recovery at www.fourgenerations.org