

FOUR GENERATIONS OVERCOMING ADDICTION

Conversation Guide: Older Adult to Teen

It's hard to accept that the grandchild you adored no longer has the warm relationship with you as he or she once did. Sometimes this separation is the normal result of adolescence, as teens strive for independence in preparation for adulthood. But if you suspect this distance is outside the range of normal due to alcohol or other drug addiction, it's time to speak up.

You may feel it's not your place to say anything; after all, this is not your child. The truth is your grandchild needs to hear from you. Your grandchild needs to know you're aware of what's going on, that he or she is not alone, and that there is help.

If you suspect your grandchild has a problem with alcohol or other drugs, the following steps can assist you in getting that difficult first conversation about addiction 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
 - [Families Anonymous](#): Support for family members of addicts and 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 grandchild:
 - Remember, it is not their fault. Addiction is a disease and it runs in families. It is not a moral issue.
 - Be concerned, caring and non-judgmental. Keep in mind you are starting a conversation—a two-way conversation with your grandchild. Take a deep breath and let your grandchild have his or her say—without judgment or condemnation on your part.
 - Manage your expectations. This will likely be the first of many conversations you will have 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 yours' or another family member's experience with the disease.)
 - ◆ I'm afraid for you.
 - ◆ You are loved and I want to see you get better.
 - ◆ When you're ready, there's help available.

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 grandchild gets angry, remind him or her of your love and willingness to be there when they're ready to get help.
6. **Know where to go for help:** If you think your grandchild 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.

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

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