

FOUR GENERATIONS OVERCOMING ADDICTION

Conversation Guide: Teen to Older Adult

Grandparents are supposed to be a fun, loving and supportive force in your life, but if your grandmother or grandfather is addicted to alcohol or other drugs, let's face it: they're not really available for you.

The truth is your grandparent may have a disease, a disease that runs in families. The good news is that the disease of addiction can be treated—and you can show your support by talking with your grandparent about what you see, what your fears are, and your willingness to help.

Talking about addiction is a scary thing to do, but the following steps can assist you in getting that difficult first conversation about the disease started. By taking the time to talk calmly and lovingly, your grandparent can begin to see how much you care and that there is help out there when he or she is ready.

- 1. Learn as much as you can beforehand** about alcoholism and drug addiction. Try the following resources:
 - [Alateen](#): Support for teens with alcoholic friends or family
 - [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 grandparent:
 - Remember, it is not their fault. Addiction is a disease and it runs in families. You wouldn't get angry at someone for having diabetes, so try to avoid getting angry with the older adult in your life for having this disease.
 - Tell your grandparent 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 grandparent. Take a deep breath and let your grandparent have his or her say. Listening is just as important as talking.
 - Remember, this may be the first of many conversations you will have about this topic. These are not easy talks 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.)
 - ◆ 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 grandparent 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 grandparent 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 grandparent.

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