

Talking to Grandchildren about their Parent's Use of Alcohol or Drugs

Children see, hear and wonder about everything. Talking to your grandchildren about their parent's substance use is not an easy conversation to have. Many families are impacted by addiction and children need to know that they are not alone.

Give the basics, keep it simple & be honest.

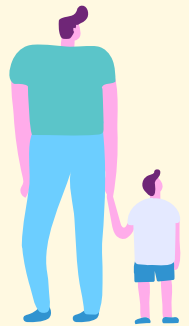
1. Your parent has an illness.
2. It's not their fault.
3. The adults in your life are trying to help mom/dad with this problem.
4. You will be safe and taken care of until mom/dad are better.



Keep the door open for questions and revisit the conversation.

Children need to know they can ask questions about their parents and their substance use. Always answer questions as truthfully and age appropriate as possible.

Children may not share their thoughts so it's helpful to revisit the conversation multiple times. "I was thinking about what we talked about yesterday."



Be non-judgmental about their parent.

It can be upsetting to see how your grandchildren have been impacted by substance use.

Try to be aware of your tone, word choice and general demeanor when having discussions with grandchildren.



Teach the 7 C's

1. I didn't Cause it
2. I can't Cure it
3. I can't Control it
4. I can Care for myself by Communicating my feelings, making healthy Choices, and by Celebrating myself



Help your grandchild identify their feelings.

Encourage children to express their feelings & reassure them it's okay to have them. Use simple language and solicit concerns, questions and feelings. Reassure them they're safe and the adults are working to make things better.



Take care of yourself.

Discussing this topic is hard - ask for help. Support groups, friends, clergy, social workers or your own counselor can all be helpful. Taking care of yourself is also important.

