

Initiating Life-Changing Conversations with Your Kids and Grandkids about Relational Wounds

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If you're a grandparent who has struggled to navigate your relationship with your children and grandchildren, these questions below are designed to help you lead conversations with them in the hope that amends can be made and healing can result. Sometimes the bridge between you may be damaged because of things you did...or *failed to do*...and now the relationship may be severed or significantly impaired. **Yet we believe that it's never too late to repair broken relationships and watch God work miracles.**

If we want to see the next generation *live from their hearts rather than from their hurts*, we as elders must be willing to initiate communication, take responsibility, own our part, ask forgiveness, and listen well. Despite our fear of the unknown and reluctance to enter into these deep waters, this is where we have to begin if we want to see relationships restored.

Without a doubt, these questions will take tremendous courage for you to ask. And though it may be extremely difficult to listen without giving explanations or making excuses, you must determine to come humbly with a goal to strengthen, restore, or rebuild the bridge to your children's and/or grandchildren's hearts. ***Make sure not to let telling your side of the story supersede hearing their side of the story.***

You may be emotionally flooded while hearing how you've impacted your kids or grandkids, and that's understandable. It will help to go into the conversation picturing Jesus there with you as your front guard (Deuteronomy 31:3) and rear guard (Isaiah 52:12), remembering that nothing touches you that has not already gone through His hands. Jesus will give you what you need to do what you cannot do in your own strength as you hold fast to the truth that apart from Him you can do nothing (John 15:5).

You will see that these questions provide a template for making amends for any wounds you may have intentionally or unintentionally caused. And even if you think things are positive between you, it's a good idea to check in just to make sure everything is clear. You may prefer to send these questions to them and invite written communication rather than a face-to-face conversation. Either is fine.

Then if you're genuinely remorseful upon hearing what your kids or grandkids share with you, make amends on the spot after each response. You don't have to wait until the end of your conversation to ask for forgiveness. Look into their eyes **without defensiveness** and simply say, ***"I'm sorry for . . . Will you forgive me for . . ."*** [be specific based on what is disclosed].

Your goal must be that of winning back their trust and their hearts rather than trying to win the argument.

For easier recall, here are your A-B-C's to ensure a higher likelihood of success in your interaction:

A---Ask forgiveness after hearing how you've caused harm, whether knowingly or unknowingly

B---Begin with listening more than talking

C---Commit to a stance of humility with openness and non-defensiveness

Here's a way that you could initiate this conversation:

"I just learned about the importance of having meaningful conversations with our kids and grandkids, especially about relational wounds. I want us to have the best relationship possible so that's why I'm inviting you to talk with me about any ways I may have hurt you. I don't want you to be afraid of a negative reaction on my part, which is why I'm letting you know on the front end that I won't get angry or shut you down as you share..."

My desire is to listen well and hear your thoughts and feelings. And if you don't remember something now, but remember it later, would you be willing to tell me about it then, whether in person or in writing? And at any point while we're talking, if you've had enough or don't want to tell me what you're thinking, we can always take a break and continue our conversation another time. How does that sound?"

Here is a list of questions you can choose from to fit your needs as you open up conversations with your children and/or grandchildren:

1. Let's start by talking about our relationship now. Are we as close as you'd like us to be? If so, I'd love to hear more about what that means to you. If not, why do you think we're not close?
2. What do you wish was different in how we relate to each other?
3. What is one of the best memories you have with me?
4. What is one of the hardest or most painful memories you have with me?
5. Dr. Canfield says that people who have been hurt remember what happened longer and with more detail than the one who caused the harm remembers those same events. Do you recall any times when I hurt your feelings by what I said or did to you? I want to know so you don't have to carry those wounds anymore or believe lies about yourself that are tucked inside those hurts.
6. How did my negative or hurtful words cause you to feel about yourself then? How about now?
7. Can you recall any times when I missed something or didn't do something that was important to you, perhaps when you wished I'd been there for you and I wasn't?
8. Do you remember any times I didn't fulfill my promise to you?
9. Do you remember any times when I didn't respond positively to you, when I missed hearing you or connecting with you?
10. Do you recall any times when you saw me treat another family member or someone else in a positive way while not treating you similarly—showing favoritism?
11. What is one thing about yourself that would help me be a better parent/grandparent to you if I understood it?
12. Is there any way that I can be a better parent/grandparent to you right now?