



HOW TO...

have a good conversation with mom or dad

“Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable.”

David W. Augsburg

Many of us find ourselves in the privileged position of being the one people tell their stories to and talk to. However, sometimes we may get lost or involved in the complexities of people’s stories, feeling overwhelmed at the need to find a solution; and at times feeling a little out of our depth. The first thing to remember is you are not responsible to find the solution for mom or dad, but that the greatest gift you can give mom or dad is to build them up by supporting them in problem solving their own stories and finding a solution that works for them. God commands every Christ follower to have the kinds of conversations with each other that “build each other up.”



“So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11 | NLT

skills for effective conversations:

If we want to be effective in having conversations with mom or dad, then we need to learn the art of managing and directing conversations effectively. First, we do this by providing a safe place for mom or dad to share their stories, whilst helping them to take ownership of the role they play in their own story and pointing them back to a right relationship with God. We do this by offering grace and speaking truth.

Remember, truth without grace is mean and grace without truth is meaningless.

Often people are stuck in their stories and can get into a repetitive self-destructive cycle; so being able to ask good questions will help mom or dad do their best thinking and grow in their self-awareness. Look at our resource [Conversation Starters](#) to get some ideas of open-ended questions to ask mom or dad and have good two-way conversation. You could also try starting questions with [Why](#), How, When and What or use the [5 steps to problem solving](#) method to get mom or dad to do their best thinking to resolve their own problems or concerns that they have. It is also important to remember that the more secure mom or dad feel in their identity and relationship with Christ the more stable their emotional response to their circumstances will be. We can feel incredibly empowered and encouraged when we are aware of the things we can control, even whilst our circumstances may appear out of our control. Anchoring ourselves to Christ is something we all can do, so encourage mom or dad to do so. You could use the list of [Who I am in Christ](#) scriptures as a useful tool when encouraging mom or dad.

“Though good advice lies deep within the heart, a person with understanding will draw it out.”

Proverbs 20:5 | NLT

note: Please use wisdom and discernment as to whether a referral to counselling or a specialist is necessary. Mental health issues can be triggered either due to a genetic cause or an environmental experience. Regardless of the cause, if at any point you suspect that mom or dad is struggling with a mental health issue and is causing them to feel totally overwhelmed; professional advice **MUST** be sought. Please see our resources on [What if mom or dad are struggling](#) and [Useful contacts](#) for advice on where to refer. However, mom or dad may hit a “storm” or time of crisis and stress in life that could simply require having a listening ear to talk through and find ways to overcome the storm.

“Tune your ears to wisdom and concentrate on understanding.”

Proverbs 2:2 | NLT

remember: Encourage mom and dad to stand on a solid foundation – so when the storms in life hit, they can withstand them. Encourage them to have support structures around them to help them through tough times. Encourage them to read the word of God and what He says about how to build firm and strong foundations in Him.

Regardless of what causes the storm, we always have a choice on **how** we prepare for the storms of life and **how** we choose to respond to them. This is a tension we must learn to manage and prepare for, as well learn to teach others to learn to manage. We must take ownership of our spiritual growth – and as someone caring for mom or dad, it is important to let them take ownership of their spiritual growth and solving of the storms that hit. The biggest mistake people make when it comes to helping others is to **own** the journey instead of **aid** them on their journey. Many have become burnt out doing good because they owned other people's journeys. – do not own mom or dads' journey but encourage and aid them along it. To do this:

- Ask mom or dad to give you an overview of the story (storm) they are currently experiencing, highlighting the parts that are having the most **negative impact** on them – encouraging them not to vent about other people as this is fruitless and unproductive.
- Look at how they are processing things internally by asking questions on **what emotions** are being triggered, **what beliefs** are they telling themselves and **what behaviours** are they choosing to use to protect themselves. The reality is no storm in life has the power to define who we are. It is the story we tell ourselves that ends up defining us. Some examples of questions to ask .
 - **Story Question:** Give me an overview of the fight you had with your spouse last night?
 - **Emotional Process Question:** What emotions were triggered in you during the fight?
 - **Other process questions to ask:**
 - What emotions are you struggling with?
 - What are you feeling about yourself?
 - What are you feeling towards the other people in this story?
 - What or who has hurt you the most and why?
- All behaviour is driven by a need to connect or a need to self-protect. When we fear being hurt or rejected, we find ways to protect ourselves from feeling further pain. Or, when we feel unloved we seek ways to connect in order to have our needs met. HOW we choose to do that can either be constructive or destructive. Examples of questions to ask mom or dad to help understand their behaviour and how best to react in a situation are:
 - When you find yourself emotionally triggered how do you react to the situation?
 - Do you have a tendency to withdraw or get louder when you feel insecure?

- How do you find yourself behaving when you are scared or fearful? (Fight, flight or freeze?)
- Are you aware that how you choose to behave doesn't always impact your environment positively?

It is important to remind mom or dad that instead of trying to deny how we are doing, or escape from it, they must learn to stand firm. The best wisdom we can offer others is to show them who they are in Christ, and what a firm foundation looks like. We are not counsellors who can unpack the storms or solve the problems for mom or dad. We can simply point them in the right direction; and look to Christ.

"Get all the advice and instruction you can, so you will be wise the rest of your life."

Proverbs 19:20 | NLT

"I am fully convinced, my dear brothers and sisters, that you are full of goodness. You know these things so well you can teach each other all about them"

Romans 15:14 | NLT

"He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us."

Corinthians 1:4 | NLT

Adapted from: COFFEE CUP CONVO'S SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE CONVERSATIONS By Madz Deyzel. 2019. From: www.edify-buildingthesoul.com