

Conversation Starters for Intentional Dialogue With Parents and Grandparents

1. Tell me about the street and neighborhood where you grew up.
2. Did you live in one place for a long time, or move often? What stories can you share about how your family at the time ended up in the places that they did?
3. What is your earliest memory?
4. What other early memories stand out for you, good or bad, that defined you and shaped your early life?
5. What information can you share/what is the first thing that comes to mind when you think about your family of origin?
6. Tell me about any traditions that you had in your family growing up. Are there traditions that we engage in now that have a backstory from earlier generations?
7. What losses have shaped your life? How did you respond to them? What did you learn from them?
8. Do you have any hobbies from your past that I don't know about?
9. What have been your sources of satisfaction and joy at different stages of your life?
10. What has been your greatest struggle in life? Is it still a struggle, and if so, how do you view it? If you overcame it, what led to your success?
11. How do you feel about the career(s) that you chose in life? Would you do anything differently if you could do it all over again?
12. How do you feel about the anticipation of, or current experience of, retirement?
13. What historical events occurred in your lifetime? Tell me about what you remember about them and their personal effects on you.
14. Have you had any experiences with ageism?
15. What thoughts do you have about current public policies related to aging (Medicare, Social Security)? Have your views on these types of issues changed over time?
16. Tell me about any areas of difficulty that you have experienced in your older years or as you have aged (medical, transportation)?
17. What positives do you see about getting older?
18. Talk to me about how your spirituality and values have changed over time.
19. What are your current fears or concerns (finances, crime, health)?
20. Do you have any regrets?
21. What are your thoughts about death and dying?
22. Do you have any preferences about your funeral?
23. What would you want your family/us to remember most about you?
24. What would you want your family/us to know?
25. How do you view our relationship?
26. Tell me about best and worst parts of growing older.
27. What words of wisdom would you give to mine and other younger generations?