



INTERGENERATIONAL CONVERSATIONS

Intergenerational conversations are an important aspect of both understanding climate change and helping inform others about how their practices may affect our planet. They allow the sharing of ideas and information across groups with differing generational perspectives, educational backgrounds, and personal experiences. And as youth-led climate movements are rising, they stand on the shoulders of many generations who have led the way.

Why intergenerational climate conversations are important:

- ▶ **Younger generations have a powerful voice in demanding justice** but may need help with the monetary, legislative and institutional power to elicit change in systems that have existed for many years. Therefore, conversations with older generations can inform the success of youth-driven climate movements on a local and global level.
- ▶ **Alternatively, older generations may often feel comfortable in their ways, thus resistant to large systemic change.** It's crucial for younger generations within the family setting to encourage their parents and grandparents to act in greater urgency on climate issues that will evidently affect themselves and future generations.
- ▶ **Younger generations have a track-record of having high moral ground** on a wide-array of social-justice issues, so many feel there's a responsibility to remind others of the intersectional aspect of climate change and how it disproportionately affects communities.
- ▶ **Older generations tend to have more experience in understanding and managing complex institutional systems.** Young people need their guidance and leadership to inform their movements on how to most effectively enact positive social change.
- ▶ **Older generations run the large news outlets and determine widespread media coverage,** of which the young require to amplify their movements or causes. In contrast, the younger generations have found ways to create movements via other media platforms like social media, which could be a valuable tool for adults to utilize in their own organizing efforts.
- ▶ **Intergenerational conversations elicit cross cultural and cross educational solidarity,** and therefore strengthen communities.



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Here are some ideas on how to have these hard conversations with those you love, who may have different generational perspectives or educational backgrounds:

- ▶ **Know everything there is to know on your topic:** Many people are going to automatically assume that you as a young person don't know what you are talking about --which means you have to become an expert. Be overprepared (Jamie Margolin, [Youth to Power](#)). At the same time, acknowledge when you have more to understand and make that a collaborative learning experience.
- ▶ **Defy stereotypes and expectations of your immaturity and irresponsibility:** People may expect you to be impatient, immature, reckless and rude. Be the most patient, mature and polite person in the room. (Jamie Margolin, [Youth to Power](#))
- ▶ **Address the elephant in the room:** If someone is really testing your limits or being overtly rude or dismissive of you as a young person, don't be afraid to bring it up. Say, 'If I were twenty years older and asking the same question, would you talk to me in the same way you're talking now?' The adult might get defensive, but just keep holding them accountable for their behavior and pointing out the truth. Speak your truth to power! Always, always, always. (Jamie Margolin, [Youth to Power](#))
- ▶ **Provide your audience with an emotional or personal connection to the issues of climate action and climate justice.** Explain why you're passionate – others should understand how and why this crisis affects you, your community, and future generations.
- ▶ **Be patient and be respectful.** You don't want your passion to be mistaken for misdirected anger or misunderstanding. Not everyone may share the same perspective of you, but that could in part be because they were raised in a different setting or time, or have a different educational or cultural background. You want to inspire others to get behind you!

Know what you're up against:

- ▶ Patronizing and invalidation
- ▶ Lack of trust in your ability
- ▶ Systemic silencing of your voice
- ▶ Lack of funding & resources