

CAN INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION HEAL US?

A Conversation Guide



The problems of social isolation and loneliness have been well documented.

We know that too many people, particularly young people and older adults, are suffering the mental and physical consequences. We also know how we got here (e.g. declining participation in membership groups, the growing influence of technology) and what some of the societal impacts are (e.g. a mental health crisis, premature death, growing polarization).

BUT HERE'S WHAT NEARLY ALL THE EXPERTS MISS: HUNDREDS, PERHAPS THOUSANDS, OF ORGANIZATIONS FIND IN YOUNGER AND OLDER PEOPLE BOTH A LONELINESS PROBLEM AND A SOLUTION.



A new report from CoGenerate shines a light on these organizations, summarizing insights gleaned from a cohort of 167 leaders looking to adopt or scale intergenerational strategies for reducing social isolation and loneliness plus in-depth conversations with 41 leaders, experts and program participants working in this space. The report outlines 9 key findings and concludes with 5 things needed to support this nascent and promising field moving forward.

We encourage you to read the report and use it to prompt conversations with older and younger people in your life. Use the questions on the next page to get started.

READ THE
REPORT



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For Individuals

1. Which part of the study did you find most interesting or provocative?
2. What was the most memorable anecdote or quote?
3. Did anything cause you to bristle or feel resistance?
4. Did the study leave you feeling inspired? If so, how?
5. Are you friends with anyone much older or younger than you?
6. If so, how did the friendship(s) develop? Did you have to overcome any initial awkwardness?
7. What do you think is special about intergenerational friendships?
8. Are there public spaces in your community where younger and older people naturally come together? (ex. public libraries, farmers' markets, community centers, parks, etc.)
9. Are you aware of any nonprofits or groups in your community that intentionally bring generations together?
10. What kind of cogenerational initiatives do you feel your community needs? What kind of group would you want to be part of? Jot down some ideas and get involved!

For Organizations

1. Does your organization bring younger and older people together for social connection? If not, do you see any opportunities for doing so?
2. In your organization, do you use the language "social isolation and loneliness"? Does that resonate with your program participants or turn them away? Are there other ways you talk about your work (like "social connection")?
3. How does your organization support age-gap friendships? Do you see them naturally occurring? If not, what do you think are the barriers?
4. How do you help participants get curious about one another? For example, one of our favorite conversation prompts is "What does it feel like to be your age in the world today?" Do you have prompts that help participants reveal themselves?
5. What ground rules do you use to promote safety and trust? How do you effectively get group buy-in to these commitments? What do you do when a ground rule is broken?
6. Have you used art or creativity to bring youngers and elders together? What worked well?
7. What does it look like when youngers and elders are experiencing conflict in your program? (ex. Lack of engagement, polite conversation that doesn't go deeper, one group dominating conversation, etc)

*** If you aren't aware of any organizations in your community that are bringing generations together, check out our list to get started!**



**EXPLORE
OUR MAP →**

TALK ABOUT THIS REPORT AT...

- A book group
- A family dinner
- A meeting with a mentor, colleague or friend
- A team meeting or lunch conversation at work
- A neighborhood association meeting
- A condo or homeowners association meeting
- Anywhere, actually!
- A meeting of your congregation or spiritual group

FURTHER RESOURCES

- [Can Intergenerational Connection Heal Us?](#)
- [150+ organizations that bring generations together](#)
- [Cogenerational Social Healing](#)
- [Making the Most of the Multigenerational Moment](#)
- [How to Live Forever: The Enduring Power of Connecting the Generations](#)
- [10 Ways to Cogenerate](#)



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READ THE REPORT AT cogenerate.org/loneliness

GET IN TOUCH WITH US AT info@cogenerate.org