

The best way to involve children in the care of a grandparent



Coming to terms with a serious illness diagnosis or sudden life-changing injury can be hard, but breaking the news to your loved ones can be even harder – especially when it comes to the littlies in the family. You may want to shelter them from the pain of knowing their Nan or Pop is sick, but according to psychologist [Kerry Howard](#), keeping the news from them can have some negative consequences. “It is never okay to keep this information from them as it sets up a lack of trust when the ‘lie’ comes out later.

“It is important to tell young people and children as soon as possible, once everyone else knows,” Howard tells *Over60*. “The reality is that children pick up on the energy shift in the adults around them, so they are aware that something is wrong, even though the adults may be trying to reassure them that everything is fine.”

Given that children can have a tendency to blame themselves for what has happened, Howard says it’s essential to give them plenty of support and answer all the questions they have to ensure a clear understanding of what’s going on.

Even visiting their grandparent in hospital, though confronting at first, is an important step. “Discretion needs to be used if a person is hooked up to many machines and drips, etc., but even in this scenario, it is easier to explain the situation clearly and prepare them for it than to keep them out of the situation all together,” Howard explains. “Children see so much on television today that there is very little that they cannot be prepared for.”

Keeping the channels of honest communication open (and regularly checking up on their mental health) is the key to preventing children from holding onto the trauma of seeing their loved one in pain. Even rather difficult questions like, “are you going to die?” shouldn’t be shied away from. “The best response is to be honest and be prepared for these types of direct questions, and don’t scold a child for asking them.”