



Families ... generations of strength

Family Life Month Packet 1998
Family & Consumer Sciences
Campbell Hall
1787 Neil Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43210

Benefits of Grandparenting

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Approximately 75 percent of Americans over the age of 65 have grandchildren. Most grandparents begin their grandparenting role during their middle age. The average age of becoming a grandparent is between 49 and 53 years; however, because of the increased teen pregnancy rate, more and more parents are becoming grandparents in their thirties.

Many grandparents are very busy, active people. Many are employed and often at the peak of their careers. They may be involved with the care of their parents as well as their own grandparents. They may also be going through many changes, including midlife stresses such as a career change, divorce, widowhood, remarriage, health problems, and/or depression.

How well the parent and grandparent interact has a great influence on whether the relationship with the grandchildren is close or distant.

Grandparents who live near their grandchildren are needed to contribute and help in the care of their grandchildren. Grandparents need to remember they should respect the parent's way of doing things.

Benefits of Grandparenting

The benefits of being a grandparent include:

- Being involved in your children's and grandchildren's lives and their many achievements.
- Providing extended family support, encouragement, and/or companionship.

- Being a better grandparent than perhaps you were a parent, due to years of experience.
- Continuing the family line.

Benefits to Grandchildren

Grandchildren also receive important benefits from grandparenting, which may include:

- Developing positive attitudes toward aging.
- Learning about their families' origins, culture, and customs or traditions.
- Developing life skills and leisure-time activities.

Being a "Good" Grandparent

Grandparents generally want to develop a "good" relationship with their grandchildren. Consider these suggestions in developing your style of grandparenting:

- Listen to your grandchildren. By tuning in to them, you may be able to tune out some of your problems.
- Talk with your grandchildren. Keep these tips in mind:
 - ✓ Get to the point and stick to it without rambling or repeating.
 - ✓ Be prepared to talk about lively and interesting subjects.
 - ✓ Avoid complaints. Stay away from such subjects as health or minor everyday gripes.

- ✓ Avoid concentrating on I, I, I, or me, me, me. Do NOT monopolize the conversation.
 - ✓ Maintain eye contact to determine if the listener is really hearing what is said or is bored.
 - ✓ Be enthusiastic and excited about what is being said.
- Remember you are the GRAND-parent. You do NOT have the right to take away a mother's or a father's right to do their own parenting.
 - Discuss discipline with parents and discipline only when you are in charge. Strive for consistency between what is permitted by parents and grandparents.
 - Express your feelings by laughing when you are happy and crying when you are sad.
 - Babysit only when you want to, feel up to it, and are not being inconvenienced.
 - Be aware of the example you are setting, because the grandchildren and your children will learn much about love from seeing and feeling it.
 - Love your grandchildren for what they are, not for what you think they should be.

Have Fun with Your Grandchildren

Most grandparents pursue their roles out of a strong desire to have fun.

Take the time to be with your grandchildren and build a lasting wonderful relationship by spending time with them on holidays, developing hobbies, going on outings

together, giving gifts, writing letters, and/or sending electronic mail.

Long Distance Grandparenting

Many grandparents do not live geographically close to their grandchildren.

To develop a special close relationship when you are miles apart, try some of these ideas:

- Exchanging books and music cassette tapes/compact disks.
- Mailing newspaper clippings, pictures, school newspapers, and artwork.
- Recording (audio and/or video) special events at school, church, or extracurricular activities.

Whether your contribution is large or small to your grandchildren, what you do is important. When a close relationship is formed, this attachment is often developed for life. This attachment comes with the experience of being loved and accepted, a sense of security and warmth, and the gift of a role model grandparent.

The benefits of being a grandparent are very similar to the following famous quote by Helen Keller:

"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen, or even touched; they must be felt with the heart."

Adapted from: Lingren, H. G. (1986). Being A GRAND' Parent, HEG 86-210, NebGuide, Cooperative Extension, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.