When in Doubt—Ask for Help

As you raise your grandchild, there may be times when you need some advice. You might think that your grandchild is having a problem, and you might not know how to help him/her. When this happens, be sure to reach out!

For education or other school-related issues:
- Talk to your grandchild’s school counselor or social worker. He or she will work with you or put you in touch with the right person at the school.

For health, emotional, or other wellness issues (including sexuality and/or substance abuse):
- Start with your grandchild’s doctor or nurse practitioner. He or she will either have an answer, or will point you in the right direction. You can also talk to a counselor or the school nurse.

For general grandparenting information, information on childhood behavior and/or mental health issues, or to locate other resources in your area:
- AARP Foundation Grandparent Information Center (GIC): www.aarp.org/grandparents, or toll-free at 1-888-OUR-AARP (1-888-687-2277)
  - Includes searchable information, state fact sheets, lists of support options, and a free quarterly newsletter
  - Has many good links for grandparents raising grandchildren, including links to state-level resources

FACT: 4.5 million children in the U.S. are being raised in the homes of their grandparents.

“I have found out that raising a grandson was very important for my own well being.

It is difficult at times because of the lower energy level that I have with him compared to raising his mom. However, his enthusiasm ‘fuels my tank.’ In fact, I enjoy my grandchild more than his mom as I get older.”

—Anonymous

RAISING YOUR GRANDCHILD
Tips for Promoting Positive Behavior ... Today and for the Future

You Are Not Alone!

Are you raising your grandchild? If so, you are not alone. There are 2.4 million other grandparents in the U.S. who are responsible for the grandchildren living in their homes.

As a grandparent caregiver, you may be facing new challenges:
- You may have health limitations.
- There may be new trends in education or technology that are less familiar to you.

Sometimes, you may miss being a “traditional grandparent.” That’s when time spent with a grandchild is fun and carefree, but you are not responsible for his/her upbringing.

But there is something very important to remember. You are nurturing your grandchild and providing stability. You are making the greatest difference in your grandchild’s life, for today and for the future.

And that’s what raising your grandchild is all about.
Raising Your Grandchild: Three Key Strategies

Raising a grandchild can be challenging. Here are three ideas for making the job a little easier.

1. Make Communication Your Main Goal

The key to any good relationship is communication. One of the most important relationships you have is with your grandchild. So don’t wonder what your grandchild is thinking about. Instead, just ask! For you and your grandchild, talk isn’t “cheap.” It’s priceless!

- “Model” good communications. Talk about your day first—both good things and bad. Describe how each event made you feel. Then, ask your grandchild to do the same. It may take some practice. But if you work at it, you’ll both get used to communicating your feelings.

- Cheer your grandchild on! When your grandchild makes a good decision, let him or her know how proud you are with a hug or a pat on the back. Seeing your positive attitude will help your grandchild feel good, too.

- Make ground rules clear, and stick to them. If your grandchild breaks the rules, question the behavior, not the child. Be calm in talking about what will happen now. Later, talk together about how different behavior could have led to a better outcome. Children crave stability, and clear rules help create it.

2. Be Consistent

Another word for “consistent” is “reliable.” Make sure your grandchild knows that he/she can rely on your stable presence. Your grandchild will feel safe, and you’ll be building your grandchild’s character, too.

- Provide supervision. Make sure your grandchild knows that he/she can rely on your stable presence. Your grandchild will feel safe, and you’ll be building your grandchild’s character, too.

- Develop a household schedule. Plan for chores, homework, meals, and fun! Have your grandchild help with the planning. This will teach him/her about what to do first and how to follow through on plans. But also be realistic. Sometimes you can’t get everything done. Make sure you and your grandchild focus on what is most important.

- Don’t avoid “sensitive” topics. Just as you talk about everyday events, you also need to tackle the “tough stuff.” This includes things like sex or bullying. It can be awkward for you, and your grandchild may resist these “personal” chats. But you need to carry through with “open communication” even when the topics are sensitive. So, make sure your grandchild knows that you are always ready to listen.

3. Foster Your Grandchild’s Success

Even though times have changed, the keys to setting your grandchild on a positive road are still the same. Create a setting of support—and enjoy watching your grandchild bloom!

- Promote good decision-making at home. Start by helping your grandchild to think and talk about smaller issues. Have him or her plan meals or get clothes ready for school. With practice, your grandchild will get better at thinking and talking about decisions.

- Talk about the future. What interests your grandchild? What hobbies excite him/her? Talk about how to learn more about these interests, and how they can fit in with schoolwork and other activities. Support your grandchild, but don’t push. If your grandchild is nearing college age, talk about options together. Meet with the school counselor, attend college nights, and find out about financial aid for college.

- Don’t confuse “success” with “perfection.” A happy home must have ground rules and open communication. But it must be flexible, too. Sometimes, you or your grandchild will have a bad day. Perhaps you will feel exhausted or overwhelmed. Or, your grandchild may have had problems at school. Know these road bumps will happen. Remind your grandchild that you are a family and you’ll get through things together. Remember—your grandchild’s success is a team effort!

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