

Role of Grandparents

Grandparents can be puzzled about their role. Many want to be helpful to their grandchildren, but they are uncertain how to fit into the modern family. The following are some points to consider as you decide what kind of grandparent you want to be.

* **Accept that parents have the final responsibility for your grandchildren.** Unless you care for the grandchildren day after day in the absence of their own mother or father, parents should have the final word on how their children are to be reared. Grandparents should never disregard family rules in the child's home.

* **Do not undermine the authority of parents** in matters of discipline. Grandparents sometimes want to be more lenient than parents.

* Establish your house rules. Children's misbehavior in the grandparent's home places more responsibility on grandparents. This is particularly true if the parents do not take action. House rules should be established and communicated to grandchildren and their parents.

* Be willing to let each generation of parents make its own mistakes. Families differ in their ways of child rearing. It's hard to stand by and watch young parents proceed on a course destined to end in unhappiness. However, unless advice or assistance is requested, the grandparent must be willing to allow freedom--even the freedom to make mistakes. Grandparents should recall that they seldom listened to their own parents, and that they also made mistakes. The important elements in the family are love and mutual respect.

* **Do not compete for the loyalty and love of your grandchildren with their parents. It's dangerous and unkind to come between children and their parents. Do not turn grandchildren against their parents or try to recast them in your image. If you find your life centering too much on your grandchildren, develop interests and friendships outside the family.**

* Live your own life. Being a grandparent is not a full-time career. Continue to live a separate life of your own. Keep up with your old friends and make new ones. Pay attention to your appearance. Cultivate personal interests: reading, music, a course of study, crafts, club membership, volunteer service, a paying job, or community projects.

* Keep up-to-date. Don't tell children how much better things were in the "old days." Make an effort to keep up with the ways life has changed or even

improved. Try to understand the world as experienced by your children and grandchildren. Avoid being judgmental.

* **Earn respect by contributing to the well-being of the family.**

Showing favorites can create a problem in the family and between siblings. When you do something nice for one, do something nice for the others.

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