



The Grandparent Connection

The moment you become a parent, you automatically give your parents a new role: grandparents. Strong inter-generational connections can surround your child with the security of belonging to an extended family and help the passing on of culture and traditions. Of course, how your family defines the grandparent role will depend on your particular circumstances.

Degree of Interest

Grandparents vary in how involved they care to be. Some older people can hardly wait to have grandchildren and genuinely look forward to spending time with the little ones again. You may welcome their willingness to provide child care. Or, if you find they are a little too eager to participate, you may need to be clear of your limits and stick to them. Others consider their childrearing days over and now it's your turn. Some grandparents may keep their distance because they do not want to interfere with how you raise your children. Make the most of whatever interest your parents show, as it may change. When you respect your parents' limits, the grandparent-grandchild relationship can grow without resentments.

A Fresh Start

Your children's relationships with your parents will depend a great deal on your own relationship with them. Having a child can bring you closer; you now share the experience of being a parent. On the other hand, if you have had difficulties in the past, you may find you have different views on how to raise your children. This can potentially give rise to serious friction between you and your parents. Open communication is the key to working out these differences. You all probably have the best interests of the children at heart, even if you don't see eye to eye. If you continue to disagree, it is important to keep your children out of it. Let them make their own relationship with their grandparents, unburdened by your complaints.

An Enriching Bond

When the relationship is positive, children benefit from the widening circle of caring adults who continue to be present in their lives. Contact with grandparents exposes them to different environments and to points of view based on a long experience of life. If one parent is absent, a grandparent can also provide for a missing gender role model. Older people also gain by getting to know their grandchildren and continue to contribute to their family.

Activities to Share Across Generations

Tell Stories	Dance	Sing	Prepare Food	Gardening
Look at pictures	Drama	Read	Play Together	Games
Arts & Crafts	Puppets	Walks	Volunteering	Time

Adapted from an article by Betsy Mann, Canadian Association of Family Resource Centers



Community Resource Kit

Alaska Children's Trust 1-800-643-KIDS

Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network. akchildabuseprevention.org



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