



# Polk/Burnett Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Newsletter

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## Managing Stress

Grandparents step in without hesitation to provide care and assistance to their grandchildren when they are needed. Often grandparents don't even think about the ramifications of assuming caregiving responsibilities because their first concern is the welfare of their grandchildren.

As grandparents become full-time caregivers they use skills, talents, and knowledge from other experiences to assist them as they encounter a variety of challenges and opportunities.

Sometimes they find they are not taking time for themselves and forgetting about their own needs. Forgetting about their own needs can lead to stress and in some cases, a decrease in their health.

Building on past experiences of stress, grandparents provide some of the following suggestions on how to reduce their own stress and remember to care for themselves as well.

Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren often find the burdens associated with the responsibility to be very stressful. Many are troubled by the financial costs involved in providing for their grandchildren. Still others are coping with the pressures of caring for grandchildren who are considered high risk due to drug exposure, child abuse, or health problems.

Grandparents often find themselves devoting all of their time to providing for their grandchildren and little, if any, time for their own needs. In order to reduce stress, grandparents must realize the importance of taking care of their own needs.

Here are 20 stress reducing suggestions for grandparent caregivers:

- **Keep up your own health.** Get regular checkups and follow your doctor's advice. Try to get an adequate amount of sleep and do not skip meals.
- **Walk or exercise three times a week for about 20 minutes.** This reduces physical tension.
- **Try to unclutter your life.** Prioritize. Eliminate all the non-essentials. Learn to say, "no."
- **Practice patience.** Let those you are caring for do as much for themselves as possible.
- **Accept reality.** See things are they are and not how you wish them to be.
- **Insist on a regular quiet hour.** Children can take naps or have a quiet time in their rooms. Teens can listen to their music through earphones. Learn to relax during this time.
- **Take time for yourself.** Look for events where grandchildren can enjoy time apart from you. There might be story hours at the library or activities at the YMCA, YWCA, 4-H or Boys and Girls Clubs. Some programs in your community may be free or low-cost.
- **Do something you enjoy.** Participate regularly in at least one hobby or activity.
- **Talk out your problems** with understanding friends or other grandparents.
- **Consider your religious community** and personal faith for strength and assistance.
- **Concentrate on the task at hand.** Don't dwell on the past. Looking too far ahead can also be overwhelming. If you can't take it a day at a time, try to accomplish one thing at a time.
- **Set limits** with grandchildren and stick to them.
- **Focus on the positive and keep your sense of humor.**
- **Let yourself off the hook.** Your adult child's circumstances are not your fault.
- **Eliminate hurtful thoughts and self-pity.** These negative emotions only drag you down.
- **Reward yourself.** Even small rewards will help your emotional well-being.
- **Avoid isolation.** Make an effort to maintain friendships, even if it is only by telephone for now.
- **Join a support group.** This is an excellent place to get information, ideas and emotional support.
- **Look into parenting classes** to learn new methods for helping children develop self-esteem, confidence, accountability and responsibility.
- **Don't be afraid to ask for assistance** from community agencies. Possible resources include financial help from Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), or Temporary Assistance to Needs Families (TANF) programs. You might receive food, clothing, transportation, and general aid from religious and charitable organizations, food pantries and clothing banks. Other agencies which can help you include your local mental health agency, Head Start, the YMCA, your county Agency on Aging and the University of Wisconsin - Extension office in your county.

#### Websites:

<http://www.AARP.org/getans/grandparents.html>

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/grgp>

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Sources: Adapted from *Tips for Grandparents who are Raising Grandchildren in Illinois*, by Cammy Seguin, Molly Hofer and Kay Mayberry, Family Life Educators, University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service  
 Published by *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Partnership of Wisconsin*, coordinated by Grandparents United for Children's Rights, Inc.; Bureau of Aging and Long Term Care Resources, State of Wisconsin; and University of Wisconsin Extension, Cooperative Extension, Family Living Programs.

See <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/grgp> for more information

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