



# Parenting Again



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# Parenting Again



The resource section at the end of this chapter gives you the locations, phone numbers, and/or Web sites of agencies where you can find help. For access to computers and assistance in reaching the information available on Web sites, contact your local public libraries, senior centers, community centers, or family resource centers.



This chapter looks at common parenting concerns of grandparents and other relatives who are parenting again. It is divided into three question and answer sections: Support for you as you parent your grandchild, which includes recent information in child development and support services for older adults; recreational activities for children; and a list of books, organizations, Web sites, and other information that will help you understand the special relationship that you have with your grandchildren and the adjustments you will need to make as you take on this special role.

## I. Support for Grandparents/Relatives Raising Grandchildren

### 1. **My daughter's two children have come to live with me. It's been a long time since I've had to care for young children full time. I need to know what to expect from these children as they grow and change.**

Taking on the responsibility for raising your grandchildren can seem overwhelming. What society expects from parents is different in some ways from when you were raising your children. Often children who come to live with their grandparents may have been through some difficult times and may behave in ways that make parenting them even harder. The following parenting tips will help you build your grandchildren's self-esteem and encourage healthy, happy behaviors.

- Praise your grandchild frequently.
- Accept and respect your grandchildren's individuality. Allow them to develop at their own pace.
- Encourage your grandchildren.
- Be consistent in setting and enforcing rules.
- Give your grandchildren opportunities to try new things, see new places, and meet new people. A child learns by watching and doing.

Four fact sheets toward the end of this chapter discuss the developmental stages for children in different age ranges (infant, preschool, middle years, and teens). These fact sheets are helpful because they give you a brief overview of the kinds of behaviors you can expect to see as your grandchildren grow and change. At the

end of each fact sheet, a Web site is listed that will give you more complete information about each stage of development. Keep in mind that there will be a period of adjustment when your grandchildren come to live with you.

**2. My grandson seems very afraid to let his friends know that he is living with his grandmother. What can I do to help him feel less worried about the situation?**

Help your grandson understand that many children are a part of families that are made up of different kinds of living arrangements. They are used to their friends having two homes, two sets of parents, same sex parents, and even living with their grandparents or other relatives. Your family is just one of the many forms families have today.

While he may not be ready to talk with his new friends about why he is living with you, that probably will change as he comes to know that he can trust you to be there for him. Your grandson also may be trying to cope with feeling that his parents have abandoned him or that he is responsible for his parents' not being able to take care of him. He needs to learn that he can trust you as the adult in his life. You can help build that trust by being consistent: stick to your word; if you make promises, keep them; pick him up on time or come back home when you say you will; and set a routine that he can count on.

The fact sheets at the end of this chapter can help you understand his developmental stage and what you can expect from him as he adjusts to his new living arrangement. The chapter also gives information about books, newsletters, Web sites and organizations that can be helpful as you parent your grandson.

**3. My son is in prison and his ex-wife is not able to care for their children. Though I have legal custody of my three grandchildren, I worry that I will not be able to raise them to stay out of trouble. What can I do to make sure that these children turn out well?**

While it's true that there are no guarantees that grandparents will not have problems parenting the second time, there are many things that you can do to learn to become more confident as you parent again.

- Think about what you want accomplish as you parent again. Write it down. Think about it again with each new stage you and your grandchildren go through. The fact sheets included with this chapter will be helpful.
- Learn all that you can about parenting education opportunities in your community. The resource list at the end of this chapter is a good place to start. There may be workshops where you can share your concerns. Some organizations offer newsletters or lend books and videotapes.

- See if there is a support group in your area for grandparents raising grandchildren. The Web site for the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Partnership of Wisconsin has information that will help you find out if there is a support group in your area:  
*<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/gprg/gprg.html>* The AARP materials and several of the organizations listed toward the end of this chapter can help you find a support group or start one if there isn't one in your community.
- Be sure to take good care of yourself. Take the questionnaire "Caring for the Caregiver" at the end of this chapter to check how you're handling the stress and challenges that come with being a grandparent raising grandchildren.
- This chapter also lists many books that are written by or for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. You may find what they have written about helpful to you as you parent again.

**4. I am having mixed feelings about having to bring my grandchild into my home. My daughter has been using drugs and disappeared again, leaving my granddaughter at my door. I feel as though my world is suddenly upside down. I love my granddaughter, but I am not sure that I will be able to take care of her.**

Though you love your granddaughter, your confusion about suddenly having to raise your grandchild is understandable. Taking on the job of raising a child after so many years is a big step. Talking about your feelings and understanding them can help you adjust to the challenges that are ahead. You may feel that your adult child has abandoned both you and her daughter, leaving you to cope as her parent, not her grandparent. It's normal to feel angry about losing the freedom you've had since your children left home, and now the extra responsibility of raising a child may keep you from doing the things you had planned on, such as retiring, traveling, and using your leisure time. Now your time, energy, and financial resources may be given to raising your granddaughter. Perhaps you even feel guilty because your child has abandoned her daughter and wonder what you could have done differently. It's helpful to talk with others who have gone through similar circumstances to help you see that what she did is not your fault. It is not unusual to feel very alone as you adjust to these changes, wondering if your friends will understand what's happened, if your family will be willing or able to help you, or if you can make the changes that are needed.

There are no easy answers to these doubts, but learning all that you can about where to find support for both yourself and your granddaughter and then tapping into that support will help you gain confidence as you parent again. With time, the relationship between you and your granddaughter can get past these feelings of confusion and loss. For her, you are the person she must come to trust, and you will learn to trust yourself to be the responsible adult in her life.

**5. I have heard about support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren. Why should I join a support group? What can I expect to find if I attend a support group meeting? What if there is no support group in my area?**

A support group is usually a small group of people who chose to come together because they share something in common—in this case parenting again. During support group meetings, you can expect people to talk about their experiences, their worries, and their successes as they raise their grandchildren. As members listen, they learn from and encourage each other. Members hear about what to expect as their grandchildren grow, and they share with others from their own experiences. Sometimes meetings may focus on special topics, such as how to discipline, legal or financial issues, or health concerns. At other times there may be discussions on topics that members in the group bring up and need to talk about such as managing the day-to-day responsibilities of raising their grandchildren, working with schools, or helping spouses and other family members cope with having children in the home again.

If you want to learn more about support groups in your area, check the resource list at the end of this chapter for groups in your area. Call and talk with the group leader, then visit the group that sounds best for you. If there is no group in your area, see what you can do to get one started. Contact social service agencies, schools, churches, and other organizations. Let them know you're interested in starting a group and ask for their help. You may be able to find a professional or another grandparent who is willing to help you plan or lead the meetings. Some of the books and organizations listed in the third section of this chapter and in the resource list at the end of the chapter can help you get started.

**6. I am raising a granddaughter who has special needs. Because she has moved from another state to live with me, I need to know more about what kind of help there is for us in my community.**

Children with special needs are those with physical or mental disabilities, emotional or behavioral problems, or who are at risk for developing disabilities. It's important to know what kinds of help to ask for as well as finding out what kind of help is available in your area. Do you need help caring for her at home? Help with transportation or special equipment? Respite care for yourself? Help from the school system? Depending on the kind of special needs that your granddaughter has, the resource list at the end of this chapter should point you toward finding the help that you need. In some cases, there are national contact numbers and Web sites given that may help you learn more about the special needs of your grandson.

**7. Where can I find information about services for older people in Wisconsin? I have agreed to care for my four grandchildren until my daughter is able to make a home for them again. I have been able to**

**get help in meeting their needs, but the extra work is hard on me. I need some help to meet my needs, too.**

In Wisconsin, there are many state, area, local, and tribal services available for older adults. Listed below are resources that can give information about a number of special needs or circumstances affecting older adults.

### **County/Tribal Offices on Aging**

County and tribal offices on aging are the first places to contact to find out about services for older persons and their families. These offices can give information on public and private benefits, housing, group and home-delivered meals, personal care services, and senior centers that help older adults. County and tribal aging offices may be independent agencies or part of county departments of human or social services. Contact your local phone book for the county/tribe office nearest you or contact the ElderCare Locator telephone line, 1-800-677-1116.

### **Area Agencies on Aging**

There are six area agencies on aging (AAA) in Wisconsin. Four serve more than one county and are located in Green Bay, Madison, Rhinelander, and Waukesha; the other two are county-specific: Milwaukee and Dane Counties. All administer federal and state aging program grants and assist county and tribal aging program staff. Area agencies on aging also are part of a national network that connects people with local assistance. This network can be reached through the ElderCare Locator telephone line, 1-800-677-1116. For more information on the agency in your area, please contact:

**AgeAdvantage**, Madison: (Serving Buffalo, Chippewa, Columbia, Crawford, Dodge, Dunn, Eau Claire, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jackson, Jefferson, Juneau, LaCrosse, Lafayette, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Richland, Rock, Sauk, St. Croix, Trempealeau, and Vernon Counties, and Ho Chunk Tribe) (608) 224-6300.

**Bay Area Agency on Aging**, Green Bay: (Serving Brown, Calumet, Door, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Marquette, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Sheboygan, Waupaca, Waushara, and Winnebago counties; Menominee, Oneida, and Stockbridge-Munsee Tribes) (920) 469-8858.

**Dane County Area Agency on Aging:** (serving Dane County) 608/224-3660.

**Milwaukee Area Agency on Aging:** (Serving Milwaukee County) 414/289-5950.

**Southeastern Area Agency on Aging, Inc.:** (Serving Kenosha, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha counties) (262) 821-4444.

**Northern Area Agency on Aging:** (Serving Adams, Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Clark, Douglas, Florence, Forest, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Polk, Portage, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, Vilas, Washburn, and Wood Counties; Bad River, Potawatomi, Lac Courte Oreilles, Lac du Flambeau, Red Cliff, Sokaogon Chippewa, and St Croix tribes.) (715) 365-2525.

## **Bureau of Aging and Long Term Care Resources**

The Bureau of Aging and Long Term Care Resources (BALTCR) is the state agency responsible for analyzing public policy, planning and funding services for elderly persons and people of all ages with physical disabilities, in need of protective services and community-based long term support. The BALTCR programs encourage older adults and disabled persons to remain independent and active in the community. For more information about BALTCR programs, contact:

Bureau of Aging and Long Term Care Resources  
1 West Wilson St., Room 450  
Madison, WI 53707  
Main Phone: (608) 266-2536  
Main Fax: (608) 267-3203  
Web site: <http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/aging>

## **II. Recreational Activities for Children**

### **1. I would like my grandchild to attend a summer camp program. How can I find one that is right for my grandchild?**

Many child-oriented agencies plan summer programs for school-age children that have recreational and special interest programs. These might be run on a part-day basis or a full-day basis for children who need all-day supervision. Some camps are also set up for children with special needs. The Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network refers families to summer camps in their area. For a referral of camps that serve children with special call Easter Seals at 1-800-422-2324. A Web site can be found at:

[www.wisconline.com/attractions/camps/alpha.html](http://www.wisconline.com/attractions/camps/alpha.html)

### **2. How can I get my grandchild enrolled in arts programs?**

Contact your school district to understand how and when your grandchild can enroll in band, chorus, orchestra, or drama programs (usually starting at 4<sup>th</sup>

grade). Some programs are during the school day, and some are after school or on Saturdays.

Call your community recreation program to see what after-school or summer arts programs there are for preschool, elementary, middle school and high school students.

For more information on arts programs for preschool, elementary, and high school students, contact:

Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education  
P.O. Box 180033  
Delafield, WI 53018-0033  
262-646-5144 (office)  
262-646-4948 (Fax)

Research shows that stimulation of sounds, movement, and images are very important to the development of a child's brain. Here are some ways you can help your grandchild make important emotional and developmental gains, even before enrolling her in an arts program:

- Sing to your grandchild, from earliest days, and teach her songs
- Read to your grandchild, from when she is very young; when she can read, read together 20 minutes every day
- Make it possible for your grandchild to learn a musical instrument
- Take a young grandchild's natural love of dance and enroll her in a dance class—whether folk, modern, tap, jazz, ballet, or hip-hop—it doesn't matter.

### **3. How much TV should my grandchild watch each day?**

It is important to limit the hours that your grandchild can watch TV. Homework, reading for pleasure, playing and being together with friends should be more important. Watch TV with your grandchild to see what kinds of programs he is choosing to watch and talk with him about what you are seeing.

Your grandchild is surrounded by media—not only TV, but also computer games, video, movies, CDs, and so forth. You can help him learn to view media wisely by sitting with him and:

- Encouraging him to remember that programs and games are usually imaginary; they're not "real life"
- Asking your grandchild what the sponsor or producer wants him to buy
- Asking your grandchild what values are (and are not) being encouraged in the program and game

- Learning to “see” how the media use light, shadow, music, animation, and cut to get the message across
- Questioning how teens, minorities, and women are (and aren’t) portrayed

By reading aloud the movie and TV credits, you can help your grandchild learn about the many careers there are in media: cameraperson, sound person, electrician, make-up artist, choreographer, and so forth. Talking with your grandchild about all of the people who work on making a movie or TV show can help him understand the make-believe world created by TV and movies.

### **III. Books, Organizations, Web Sites, and Other Information About Parenting Again**

#### **1. What is the AARP Grandparent Information Center?**

The AARP Grandparent Information Center (GIC) has been in operation since 1992. The Center works in partnership with the Brookdale Foundation Group to provide assistance to grandparent-headed families. Besides supplying information and referral, the Center works with state, local and regional organizations to expand and improve services for grandparent-headed families.

AARP Grandparent Information Center acts as a link between grandparents and the resources available to them, through publications and by answering individual questions from grandparents raising grandchildren. (Callers do not have to be members of AARP, over 50 year old, or even a grandparent to use this service.)

Grandparent Information Center  
 AARP  
 601 E St. NW  
 Washington, DC 20049  
 (202) 434-2296  
 E-mail: [gic@aar.org](mailto:gic@aar.org)  
 Web site: [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)  
 Publications: [http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/gic/gic\\_pubs.html](http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/gic/gic_pubs.html)

#### **2. What books can I read to learn more about being a caregiver to my grandchild or to find support while I parent again?**

*Effective Support Groups: How to Plan, Design, Facilitate, and Enjoy Them.* Fort Wayne, IN: Willowgreen Publishing. Miller, James E. (1998).

*Grandparents as Parents: A Survival Guide for Raising a Second Family.* New York, NY: Guilford Press. De Toledo, Sylvie. (1995).

Looks at the needs of the grandparents and grandchildren in their new relationship and gives ideas for how to work on specific problems. Walks the reader through

different kinds of assistance programs, explaining what should happen, what will really happen, and how to work through the system.

***Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: A Guide to Finding Help and Hope.*** The Brookdale Foundation Group.

Written for grandparents who have taken on the challenge of raising their grandchildren. This book talks about the needs of grandchildren, the problems of the parents, and the legal and social issues the grandparents face. To receive a copy, send \$3.00 for mailing and handling to: the National Foster Parent Association, 9 Dartmoor Drive, Crystal Lake, IL 60014 or call (815) 455-2527.

***Grandparents: Raising Our Children's Children.*** University of Idaho: Moscow, ID. Williams, Doris K. (2000).

This handbook is written for both grandparents and the professionals who advise them. For grandparents acting as parents, the author gives easy-to-use, informative, and realistic help. The book covers concerns such as: finances, legal issues, the ability to parent again, family relationships, and how to find help.

***Second Time Around: Help for Grandparents Who Raise Their Children's Kids*** Callendar, Joan. (2000).

A guide for grandparent caregivers. Callendar is a grandparent caregiver and interweaves many personal experiences with her practical advice. This book speaks directly to caregivers. Available from: Bookpartners, Inc. P.O. Box 922, Wilsonville, OR 97071 or contact Joan Callendar (503) 659-9052, Jcalland@Teleport.Com

***Unplanned Parenthood: The Confessions of a Seventy-Something Surrogate Mother.*** NY: Random House. Carpenter, L. (1994).

A humorous account of a 73-year-old grandmother raising her three teenage grandchildren.

### **3. Are there Web sites on the World Wide Web that have helpful information?**

#### **AARP - Grandparent Information Center**

601 E Street, NW

Washington, DC 20049

Phone: (202) 434-2296 or Fax (202) 434-6466

<http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/gic/a2004-01-16-grandparentsinfocenter.html>

Provides an extensive range of services including a listing of local support groups, newsletters, and useful publications.

**The Brookdale Foundation Group**

126 East 56<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10022  
Phone: (212) 308-7355 or Fax (212) 750-0132  
<http://www.brookdalefoundation.org/>

The Brookdale Relatives As Parents Program (RAPP) provides seed grants to support local and state agencies serving grandparents and other kin who have become the primary caretakers of their grandchildren.

**Family Living Programs**

University of Wisconsin–Extension  
<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/index.aspx>

Under “Home & Family - Parenting and Grandparenting” there are a number of newsletters related to specific ages and development of children. Especially recommended are the series “Parenting the First Year” and “Parenting the Second and Third Years” found under “Parenting Infants and Preschoolers.”

**First Signs**

<http://www.firstsigns.org/>

At First Signs, the mission is simple: to promote the best developmental outcome for every child. This website serves as “knowledge base for both parents and physicians regarding the early identification of and intervention for developmental disorders.”

**Together – Children Grow**

Wisconsin Child Care Information Center (CCIC)  
1-800-362-7353  
<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/ccic/>

An exceptionally well-done booklet is available on this site. It provides information for parents and child care providers on quality child care for special needs children. The booklet can be ordered from CCIC by calling the phone number listed above or it can be found on the website at:

[http://dpi.wi.gov/ccic/pdf/together\\_ch\\_g.pdf](http://dpi.wi.gov/ccic/pdf/together_ch_g.pdf)

**Generations United**

440 First Street, NW - Suite 480  
Washington, DC 20001-2085  
(202) 662-4283 or Fax (202) 638-7555  
<http://www.gu.org>

Offers information and advocacy relating to grandparent caregivers, plus a very good biennial conference.

In addition, Generations United has three fact sheets about grandparents raising grandchildren that were published in 2000. One has general information and statistics; another gives information about how to access educational services for children being raised by grandparents; and the third presents information about subsidized guardianship programs. These fact sheets can be accessed for no charge at: Replace Web site with: <http://www.gu.org/Search8191326.asp> or by calling GU at (202) 638-1263 or writing 122 C Street, NW, Suite 820, Washington, DC 20001.

### **Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Partnership of Wisconsin**

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

Offers grandparents raising grandchildren opportunities to share information, find answers to questions, and learn about resources.

### **Grandparents United for Children's Rights, Inc.**

137 Larkin Street

Madison, WI 53705

(608) 238-8751 or (608) 236-0480 Fax: (608) 238-8751

*<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Prairie/6866/>*

Gives the latest information that affects grandparents raising their grandchildren and how grandparents can protect their visitation rights.

### **The Child & Family WebGuide**

E-mail: [dfw@tufts.edu](mailto:dfw@tufts.edu)

*<http://www.cfw.tufts.edu/>*

WebGuide is an on-line resource for parents, child-care professionals, students, and others. It identifies, describes, and evaluates Web sites that provide child development information in six broad categories of information: family, education, health, typical development, child care, and activities. The last category, activities, which was added at the request of parents, contains sites with information about specific programs and things to do that are organized by region.



This chapter was developed by Maryanne Haselow-Dulin, MS, Editing Services; Mary Brintnall-Peterson, Program Specialist in Aging, University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension, with additional contributions by Mary Roach, Child Development Specialist, UW-Extension Family Living Programs; Barbara Robinson, Bureau of Aging and Long Term Care Resources, DHFS; Karen DeBord, State Specialist–Child Development, North Carolina State University Cooperative

Extension and Dena Targ, Associate Professor, Department of Child Development and Family Studies, Purdue University. Portions of the chapter were adapted for use in Wisconsin from the state of Delaware's *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Resource Guide* and the *Grandparents Guide: Helping to Raise Your Children's Children* from Beatitudes Center D.O.A.R., Phoenix, AZ.

This chapter is one of eight chapters included in the *Grandparents/Relatives Raising And Nurturing Dependent Children (GRAND) Resource Guide*. Other topics addressed in the resource guide include Child Care, Counseling, Education, Financial Assistance, Health, and Legal issues. They can be found on the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Web site at: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/grandparent/grand.pdf>

The University of Wisconsin-Extension presents the information in the *Grandparents/Relative Raising And Nurturing Grandchildren (GRAND) Resource Guide* as a service to those who are raising grandchildren or other kin or to those who are working with them. Although every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and reliability, UW-Extension and contributors to this resource guide make no warranty or guarantee concerning the accuracy or reliability of the content in the resource guide.



# Infant Development



## What Is Normal?

Perhaps it has been a long time since you raised your own children, and you may ask yourself “What is normal?” in looking for the changes that your infant grandchild will go through. It is important to remember that each child is unique and will develop at his or her own rate. Children of the same age may have very different skill levels. However, if you have any concerns about your grandchild’s development, talk with your health care provider. The areas of development to watch for in infants as you parent again are listed below.

## Social Development

- Relationships infants have now will affect how they relate to others in the future
- Use gentle touches and hold them in ways that will make them feel safe
- Respond to infant babbles and coos as if it is a conversation between the two of you

## Physical Development

- Infants grow very quickly and should be put in safe, childproof places
- Appropriate touch, activities, and toys can help babies develop their muscles
- Your grandchild should have regular doctor’s visits for shots and check-ups

## Cognitive Development

- Infants learn by seeing and touching the things around them
- Keep the same schedule so your grandchild can learn what to expect
- Give your grandchild a stuffed animal or blanket for comfort when you can’t be there

## Setting Limits

- Childproof baby spaces so your grandchild can explore safely
- Use single word phrases in a firm voice to warn a curious infant “no no”
- It will take many times before an infant understands what you say or mean

## Sleeping

- Expect a certain amount of fussing at bedtime
- Help your grandchild learn to comfort him- or herself at night

- Routines at bedtime will help prepare infants for sleep
- Sleep patterns can change if children are sick or if they are feeling other stress

## **Crying**

- Crying is normal and should be expected
- Crying is another way a baby can “talk” to others
- Talk with your health care provider if the crying seems too frequent or urgent



This fact sheet was adapted from materials by Karen DeBord, State Specialist–Child Development, North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension. For more information, visit the Web site <http://www.nncc.org/Child.Dev/grow.infant.html> or other resources listed at the end of this chapter.



# Preschool Development



## What Affects a Child's Development?

Each child is raised in a family that has its own cultural, religious, and social characteristics. No two families are alike, just as no two children are alike. Everything and everyone around growing children, including how children think, their own inner sense of right and wrong, and the media can affect how they develop.

## The Child as a Whole

There are several areas of development: Social, Emotional, Physical, and Intellectual

- Each area of development depends on the others
- The whole child should be encouraged to grow in all these areas

## How Do Preschoolers Develop?

- Infancy: They learn to trust the adults around them to take care of their needs
- Toddlerhood: They learn they are separate from adults and are able to do things themselves
- Early Childhood: They learn they can use their imaginations without worrying that they are doing something “wrong”
- School Age: They learn they can use their growing skills and become more self-confident

## The Body

- Children grow in spurts instead of at a steady rate
- Their level of physical skills can make a difference in how children feel about themselves
- By the ages of six to seven, most of the basic motor skills are developed
- Plenty of exercise and good nutrition helps healthy growth

## The Mind

- Learning ways to think develops in a pattern as children grow
- Children under age two have a hard time understanding what is real
- Children around age two cannot see things from another person’s viewpoint
- Preschoolers begin to learn to group similar things together
- Learning to use language develops in a pattern as children grow
- Children may know up to 300 words by age two
- Children will repeat what they hear over and over
- Reading and talking to children will help them to develop language skills

## Social and Emotional Development

- How children feel about themselves depends on what their “important people” think about them
- Children learn to be independent by trusting what/who is around them
- Toilet training should be started when a child is ready and interested
- Making a child feel bad about toilet training mistakes hurts how they feel about themselves
- Children around the age of seven or eight can better control their actions

## Moral Development

Moral development follows a pattern as children age

- First: They behave in a way to keep themselves out of trouble
- Second: They behave in a way that will be rewarded
- Third: They behave in a way that they feel is “right,” in spite of any rewards that may come from their actions

## Importance of Play

- Play is a child's way of learning
- Play helps children feel calm and to learn to get along with others
- Children discover new things when they play
- Creative play allows children to work things out through trial and error
- Parents, grandparents, or other relative caregivers can encourage children to work out problems found through play



Information on this fact sheet was adapted from materials developed by Karen DeBord, State Specialist–Child Development, North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension. For more information, visit the Web site <http://www.nncc.org/Child.Dev/grow.preschool.html> or other resources listed at the end of this chapter.



# Understanding the Middle Years



## Overview

Between the ages of six and twelve, your grandchild's world moves outward from the family

as he or she forms relationships with friends, teachers, coaches, caregivers, and others. Because they are having more experiences, many things can affect how children think and feel. Some situations can make them feel tense and affect how they feel about themselves. Middle childhood is a time for children to get ready for the teen years. Up to this point, your grandchildren may have looked up to you as the source of their information, but now they may judge you more and look at your actions differently.

## Social and Emotional Development

- There are signs of growing independence as children test their growing knowledge, possibly by talking back and being rebellious
- Common fears include the unknown, failure, death, family problems, and rejection
- Children are beginning to understand the point of view of others
- Children identify themselves by how they look, the things they own, and the things they do
- They can control their anger and handle frustration better
- They tend to be a “tattletale” to get attention
- Between six and eight years old, children may still be afraid of the dark and monsters
- They become attached to adults other than the ones who are taking care of them
- Their feelings are easily hurt and they can have mood swings

## Practical Advice to Promote Healthy Social and Emotional Development

- Encourage noncompetitive games to avoid comparing one child's skills to another
- Give children lots of positive attention and let them help make the rules
- Show confidence in their ability to make good decisions
- Ask, “How could you do that differently next time?” when they make mistakes
- Be aware of what your grandchild may be feeling but not able to talk to you about
- Give your grandchildren positive attention for the things that they do well
- Avoid criticizing or humiliating their skills or decisions

## **Physical Development**

- Growth is slower than preschool years, but steady, and their eating levels may change
- In the later stages of middle childhood, body changes show the start of puberty
- Activity may bring tiredness; children need about ten hours of sleep each night
- Muscle coordination and control are uneven and incomplete in the early stages, but children become almost as coordinated as adults by the end of middle childhood
- Small muscles develop quickly, making more difficult activities more enjoyable now
- Baby teeth with come out, permanent ones will come in, and overcrowded teeth are common
- Eyes reach full growth in middle childhood, and your grandchild should have an eye exam

## **Practical Advice to Promote Healthy Physical Development**

- Let both boys and girls choose from a variety of activities, not just the ones that are usually thought of as boy or girl activities
- Help children to balance busy time and quiet activity time
- Regular dental and eye check-ups are important at this stage

## **Mental Development**

- Children begin to think about their behavior and what may happen because of their actions
- Children begin to read and write early in middle childhood and do both well by the later stages
- Children learn best through “hands-on” activity
- Children usually can’t sit longer than twenty minutes for any activity, but their attention span gets better with age
- Children start many projects as they try new things, but rarely finish them
- Children can talk through problems and solve them
- Children begin to see themselves as “workers”

## **Practical Advice to Promote Healthy Mental Development**

- Be patient with the more difficult, rebellious behaviors children show as they learn to think for themselves
- Ask “what if” questions to help your grandchildren develop problem-solving skills
- Encourage your grandchildren to read books and to make up their own stories

- Think of ways to use daily activities as “hands-on” learning time
- Make sure to have one-on-one time with your grandchild to listen and talk

### **Moral Development**

- Moral development happens over time through the experiences children have
- Children want to feel useful and to have a sense that they are a help to the family
- TV violence can make children think that it is normal for people to act that way
- Children need to practice ways that show caring for others
- Love, caring, and positive relations play central roles in ethics and moral education

### **Practical Advice Promote Healthy Moral Development**

- Teach ways to show caring behaviors by treating your grandchildren with care and respect
- When you show you care for your grandchildren by listening to their opinions and showing that how they feel matters and is important to you, they then learn to be that way with others
- Show that caring for, responding to, and working to understand others is an important value in your family
- By your volunteer activities, you can show your grandchildren how to do “good deeds” for others, giving them practice and a feeling of pride in their kind actions
- Notice when your grandchildren act in kind and loving ways and tell them



This fact sheet was adapted from information by Karen DeBord, State Specialist–Child Development, North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension. For more information, visit the Web site:

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/human/middleys.html> or other resources listed at the end of this chapter.



# Understanding Teens



## Overview

Whether children you're caring for are toddlers or teens, getting ready to parent again is tough! The difficulty with teens is that their bodies are larger, they are more outspoken, and they are able to fight battles on a more adult level. They also may take more risks. The stakes in parenting teens are higher than at any other developmental stage to this point. Below are common questions about raising teens that grandparents or other relative caregivers may have.

### 1. Is peer pressure really is at its worst during adolescent and teen years?

Generally, adolescents choose friends with similar values and tastes to theirs; however, caregivers who are responsible for a teenager (e.g., parents, grandparents, or other relatives) still have the most influence over that teen's life. Research shows that relative caregivers, such as grandparents, who keep a close eye on their grandchildren can help prevent a number of risky behaviors, including alcohol use, sexual activity, delinquency, and other misbehaviors. By keeping track of your grandchildren, you're giving them the message that as they earn the right to have more independence, they also must take more responsibility for their actions.

Establish guidelines and limits for your grandchildren in order to keep track of what is going on in their world: where they are, who they're with, what they're planning to do, and how they will get there and back home again. While your grandchildren may complain that you "don't trust them," they feel safer knowing that you care enough to ask. Start supervising your grandchildren when they are young, and they will accept your caring about their activities as a part of life.

### 2. Why do my teens prefer their friends to our family?

As children begin school, they spend less time with family, and their friends become more important. Often teens who do not feel good about themselves or who feel anxious will look for a "quick fix" of approval from a peer group. However, if teens have been taught how to make tough decisions early in life, they will be able to make good choices now.

Take the time to talk and listen to your grandchildren. Know their friends, what's happening in their school, and what their world is like.

### **3. Why won't my teens talk to me? Why won't they open up?**

Teenagers like to talk, but they must have a willing listener. Teens will tune out if adults only listen halfway to what they say. They need a balance between routine chatter and deeper talk. Some of the things psychologist Tory Hayden found that teens wanted to talk about included: family matters (e.g., vacations, curfews, money matters); controversial issues (e.g., sex, drugs); the future (e.g., work, college, making plans for the future); current affairs (e.g., world and community happenings); and personal interests (e.g., sports, hobbies, friends).

### **4. If I don't get control of my child now, won't I be sorry later?**

While this may be true, *control* may not be the right word. Don't just say "no." Listen carefully to what your grandchild is asking and think about it in terms of how well you believe she can make decisions and handle the situation.

Respect your teen's point of view and be willing to discuss rules. Involve your teen in making the decision by talking it over without getting emotional. By letting your teen have some control, you are letting her know that she is important and that she can work with you in making decisions.

### **5. Why do teens seem so moody, rebellious, and never serious?**

Instead of believing the worst about your teen, look at the positive things about him. Teens are curious; they have great imaginations and many new ideas about the world. They are undergoing many physical, social, and emotional changes, and, with good practice, can learn to make sound decisions.

Teens are interested in information about relationships and their bodies. If they can't talk with you, they will turn to television, the Internet, or their friends. Since teens are ready to "try on" adult behaviors, it's important that you are a positive model for them. With teens, what you do may be more important than what you say.

### **6. Am I the only one, or does it seem that teens don't care about other people?**

To help teens grow up as caring people, it's important to show them how to be caring by practicing caring talk and actions yourself. Asking them open-ended questions (What do you think about . . .? How can we figure this out?) is good practice in understanding and listening to others. Let your teens know the good qualities you see in them and build their trust by showing respect for them. Teens mirror the caring behaviors they see you practice.



This fact sheet was adapted from materials developed by Karen DeBord, State Specialist–Child Development, North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension. For more information, visit the Web site <http://nccc.org/Parent/parent.teens.html> or other resources listed at the end of this chapter.



## Caring for the Caregiver



Caring for grandchildren or arranging for help through communities can be overwhelming for grandparents raising grandchildren. Feelings of frustration, depression, anger or guilt are not uncommon. There are ways, however, to recognize that these stresses are becoming serious and to find places that can help.

The following questionnaire will help you become aware of the pressures and stress you may be under.

I find I can't get enough rest.	SELDOM TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE
	OFTEN TRUE	USUALLY TRUE
I don't have enough time for myself.	SELDOM TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE
	OFTEN TRUE	USUALLY TRUE
I don't have time to be with other family members besides grandchildren.	SELDOM TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE
	OFTEN TRUE	USUALLY TRUE
I feel frustrated or angry.	SELDOM TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE
	OFTEN TRUE	USUALLY TRUE
I have more physical complaints.	SELDOM TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE
	OFTEN TRUE	USUALLY TRUE
I don't get out much anymore.	SELDOM TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE
	OFTEN TRUE	USUALLY TRUE
I have conflicts with my grandchildren.	SELDOM TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE
	OFTEN TRUE	USUALLY TRUE
I have conflict with other family members.	SELDOM TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE
	OFTEN TRUE	USUALLY TRUE
I worry about having enough money to make ends meet.	SELDOM TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE
	OFTEN TRUE	USUALLY TRUE
I don't have enough knowledge to care for my grandchildren as I would like.	SELDOM TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE
	OFTEN TRUE	USUALLY TRUE
I feel guilty about my situation.	SELDOM TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE
	OFTEN TRUE	USUALLY TRUE

Chart adapted from *Grandparents Guide: Helping to Raise Your Children's Children* from Beatitudes Center D.O.A.R., Phoenix, Arizona.

If the response to one or more of these areas is true, it may be time to begin looking for help in caring for your grandchildren and help in taking care of yourself. (The resource list at the end of this chapter can provide some assistance.)

