



Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Partnership of Wisconsin

Intergenerational summer fun: When kids and grandparents get together

Madison - Summer brings new opportunities for families to get together. Family reunions and weekend visits are a chance for grandparents to build on their relationships with grandchildren. According to Mary Brintnall-Peterson, University of Wisconsin-Extension program specialist in aging, research shows that 95 percent of adults will someday be grandparents. And one of the most important parts of being a grandparent is sharing the family history with younger generations.

Time spent together also fosters understanding between the generations. Kids learn about the aging process and learn to look past their stereotypes of older people, and older adults are persuaded to adjust their perceptions of kids and teens.

“The time grandparents and grandchildren spend together is a chance to learn about each other as individuals,” said Brintnall-Peterson. “You’ll gain a better understanding of each other as you create new memories for the children to carry through their lives.”

“Conversations should be geared to the age of the grandchild and around interest areas of the grandchild,” Brintnall-Peterson said. “This is an opportunity to get kids to talk about what is important to them and what they are thinking. Ask them to describe their experiences and talk about their feelings.”

Passing along the family stories is just one way for grandparents to build their relationships with grandchildren. Brintnall-Peterson has the following recommendations for making the most of time spent between grandparents and grandchildren.

- Visit where grandpa or grandma grew up.
- Share a favorite hobby and talk about how you first got interested in it.
- Take short outings in your neighborhood, such as to parks, museums or the library.
- Take a walk and learn about something. For example, go walking on a windy day or just after a rainfall and observe the changes in weather. Visit the neighbors. Even daily errands to the bank, post office, hospital or gas station can be a learning experience.
- Play games that were played when you were a kid.

- Find out what the grandchild's school day is like. Talk about what school was like when you were young.
- If the grandchild is interested in sports, talk about what sports were like when you were young.
- Focus on what it was like to be the grandchild's age when you were a kid. Being 12 in 1940, for example, could include what foods you ate, what music you listened to, what your clothes were like, what kind of jobs people had. Explore that time in history by visiting the library, or going on the Internet. This can give kids a chance to show what they know about computers.
- Share some of your skills and interests, whether crafts like woodworking or knitting, or activities like bird watching or identifying constellations in the night sky. Find something new you can explore together.
- Create a family scrapbook that the grandchild can add to.
- Prepare something together from a favorite family recipe.

For more information about grandparenting, contact your UW-Extension county office or visit the UW-Extension Family Living Program web site on Grandparenting Today at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/grandparent>. Another good resource is the Penn State Extension Service web site on Intergenerational Programs and Aging at <http://agexted.cas.psu.edu/FCS/mk/menu.html>

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