



The special job of grandparenting

THE WORD "GRANDPARENT" MAY MAKE YOU THINK OF the image of a gentle, grey-haired person who bakes the best cookies and tells family stories. And, indeed, many grandparents do those things. But today grandparents play many roles in the lives of their families. Their special relationships with their grandchildren can be nurturing and enriching for all generations. Here are some things that are the special job of grandparents.

GRANDPARENTS CAN BE PLAYMATES

Grandparents often feel more open to getting down on the floor and playing with babies and toddlers. The jobs of disciplining, protecting and providing for their grandchild can be assumed by their adult children, giving grandparents the opportunity to provide one-on-one attention. They can once again marvel at the astounding process of development in a child they love, and can provide patient enrichment and guidance for learning. If you are a grandparent, take opportunities to learn about child development and age-appropriate ways to play. The good time you have will be priceless for both of you.

GRANDPARENTS CAN BE FAMILY LEADERS

Relationships in families can be strained sometimes. Grandparents can provide leadership to develop the best relationships possible with their adult children. Respect the responsibility adult children have to parent their own children, knowing that there will be differences and similarities with the things you did as a parent. Be kind and considerate, while being clear about the role you want to play in your grandchild's life.

GRANDPARENTS PASS DOWN TRADITIONS

Grandparents remember how and why traditions are celebrated within the family. They can sing favorite songs and tell stories of celebrations passed. Telling



stories of the past, even if it's recent, communicates your cultural practices and beliefs. Be intentional about sharing your family's history and culture with your grandchildren from the time they are very young. It's rewarding to see children grow in the knowledge of who they are, where their family came from, and what their family stands for.

GRANDPARENTS CAN BE CAREGIVERS

Many grandparents care for their grandchildren. This commitment can range from occasional babysitting to being the legal guardian and primary caregiver. As a grandparent, you may face tough decisions about caring for your grandchild. How much time are you willing to commit? Does your grandchild's situation make it necessary for you take legal responsibility for him? If you have legal custody of your grandchild or he is living with you, there are many places to get help with this challenging job. You may be eligible to enroll in Parents as Teachers and receive personal visits and guidance in finding assistance in your community. It's easy to feel isolated when you are a grandparent raising a grandchild. Know that you are not alone and that Parents as Teachers is able to help you. ❖

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