

## The importance of grandparents

Written by Timothy Houston  
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It the next few days my 3rd granddaughter and 10th grandchild will be born. She will come to us as a gift from God, and her parents are anxiously awaiting her arrival. As I look forward to this grand and auspicious occasion, I cannot but help reflect on my role as the grandparent. I will have a very important part to play in her life as I do in the lives of her cousins. When it comes to the grandkids, I am determined to be a positive influence in their lives. They know this as well, so all my grandchildren call me granddad because I am like a dad but only “grand” (bigger and better). Here are a few things that “grand” parents should do.

First, grandparents should reinforce parental authority. Beyond giving the child a piece of forbidden candy, grandparents should support what the parents are teaching their kids. This helps the child to know that you are both on the same page. If the parents feel that they are not being supported, they may seek to limit the time the child spends with the grandparents. This is a lose-lose resolution. When the grandparents reinforce what the parents are saying, the child cannot choose sides and the grandparents become a part of the parental support system.

Secondly, grandparents should correct bad behavior. All parents need help in developing good behavior, and grandparents can be a good source of help. The parents should understand that the grandparents are not undermining their authority and should willingly accept constructive advice. Because the grandparents are a second set of eyes, they will also be able to help the child develop good habits that the parents may not know they are lacking. Grandparents who ensure that the child makes his or her bed, take their plate off the table or pick up after themselves are helping to develop behavior improvements that the parents will welcome and appreciate.

Thirdly, grandparents should provide relief for the pressures at home. There is nothing like a

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weekend or summer getaway for the child to the grandparents to provide parents the space to reset. Parenting is 24/7 so breaks are necessary. When the child is at the grandparents, the parents get the opportunity to center themselves, and the child gets the opportunity to be the center of attention. These visits relieve pressure and provide a safe place for the child to spend time away from their parents and maintain a healthy relationship with their grandparents.

Finally, grandparents should serve as secondary parents when needed. There are times for multiple reasons that the people are not able to parent their children, and the grandparent may need to step in. It is in this role that grandparents are most needed. I had a personal situation where I had to parent my grandson for 6 months. It was not easy, but it was a part of my role as a grandparent. Many successful members of our society were raised by their grandparents. Although this should be the exception and not the norm, it is too important a responsibility not to mention. As I welcome my new granddaughter, I welcome the responsibility that comes with it.

Grandparents are an important part of the family structure, and they can help to ensure that children are respectful members of society. As I welcome my new granddaughter, I remind her parents that they have my support, and on behalf of grandparents everywhere, please know that we are like a second set of parents, but only "grand."

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