

Ask an Expert – Six Tips to Help Children Cultivate a Close Relationship with Grandparents

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A close relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is mutually beneficial when it comes to the health and well-being of both. Grandparents provide acceptance, patience, love, stability, wisdom, fun and support to their grandchildren. This, in turn, has positive effects on a child's well-being. A study by Sara Moorman and Jeffrey Stokes, Department of Sociology, Boston College, found that children who grow up with greater emotional closeness to their grandparents are less likely to be depressed as adults. For grandparents, a close relationship with their grandchildren can boost brain function, protect against depression and increase lifespan.

In today's world where many families do not live in close proximity, it's important for parents to help cultivate a close relationship between children and grandparents by encouraging frequent contact. Consider these tips.

1. Visit often. Grandparents should be invited to visit their grandchildren's home often. When grandparents live in a different town or state, planning a trip to visit them can fill a child with anticipation and excitement. Even if the visits are infrequent, they will help your child view the time with their grandparents as special.

2. Use technology. There are many options that can help children and grandparents stay in contact such as Zoom, Facetime, email, texting and social media. Grandparents can record themselves reading a bedtime story for their grandchildren, and grandchildren can send personalized messages and pictures.

3. Share photos. Place photos of grandparents in your home and point them out to your children often. You can also create a family photo album for them to look through. If your children are not able to see their grandparents frequently, they can still learn about who they are and feel of their importance in the family.

4. Write letters. Who doesn't love to receive a letter in the mail? Encourage communication via mail or email with both grandparents and grandchildren participating. Both will anticipate the regular communication and will be excited to receive responses.

5. Teach skills. Whether it is fishing or sewing, many grandparents have a hobby or skill they would love to pass on to their grandchildren. Teaching can be done in person or with technology. Provide children with the necessary tools and materials so they can learn from grandparents.

6. Climb the family tree. Ask grandparents to share family stories and ancestry. Perhaps they can help your children draw a family tree. Children of most ages enjoy learning about family history, traits they share with ancestors and the things that make them who they are.

More information and research references are available at <https://tinyurl.com/h2z7exuw>.

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