

Building Relationships Across Generations

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What reminds you of your grandma or grandpa? It might be working in the garden, baking (or eating) in the kitchen, fishing, tractor rides, music, or talking while eating ice-cream. Studies show most youth feel excitement when they think of their grandparents. The excitement turns to respect and appreciation as the grandchild ages. Grandchildren look to grandparents for the link to their heritage and this increases their sense of identity.

Research shows that children have less emotional difficulties, better social behavior, and fewer adjustment difficulties when they have strong relationships with their grandparents. Grandparents also benefit with longer life expectancy, better memory, less depression, and better physical health.

Sometimes it is a challenge for youth to acknowledge the wisdom of grandparents and equally as challenging for grandparents to know how to relate and build relationships across generations. Time and effort are important tools in building relationships. Grandparents can share life lessons learned, provide support, and teach important skills.

Relationship building requires effort from both grandparents and grandchildren. Check out these ten tips for grandparents:

1. Text short notes and photos to grandchildren.
2. Email grandchildren. This can be as a group and also individually.
3. Video chatting has been found to be more effective with youth and adolescents than voice phone calls.
4. Open a social media account if your grandchild has one. Texting, emailing, video chatting, and social media might require grandchildren to assist you. This process can build your relationship.
5. Mailed cards or letters are still a great way to connect.
6. Share life experiences with one another including teaching personal skills and hobbies. Take turns being the teacher and the learner. Having grandchildren be the teacher is a role they will value and helps build trusting relationships.
7. Don't be afraid to be old-fashioned. Remember there are experiences you share with your grandchildren that they will not gain from anyone else.
8. Arts, crafts, puzzles, and board games may seem out of style, but will be welcomed by grandchildren. The interaction during these activities are an excellent way to build relationships and can add a new perspective for grandchildren.
9. Establish special traditions such as eating ice-cream, nature walks, fishing, or lunch dates.
10. One-on-one time with each grandchild is a special way to acknowledge them.

For more resources on grandparenting visit: <https://grandkidsmatter.org/>

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