Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Taking Care of Yourself

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Goal: To provide grandparents raising grandchildren ways to take care of themselves.

Raising your grandchild can be a difficult task, but with the appropriate coping skills, you can meet your family's needs while also maintaining your own health and well-being. Several key steps can help: Take time to relax and re-energize, recognize and share your feelings, maintain a positive outlook on life, seek support from others, and problem-solve.

Take Time to Relax and Re-energize

You might be thinking there is barely enough time to take care of your grandchildren, let alone to re-energize yourself! However, it is essential to meet your personal needs to handle life's challenges. Do you remember a stressful time when you were tired and overwhelmed? Most likely, you were less patient and tolerant. Perhaps using some of these coping strategies will ease some of your stress:

- find a peaceful place to relax;
- take a walk;
- take up a hobby;
- practice mindfulness;
- let go of the problem, and come back to it later;
- exercise, rest, and eat healthy;
- practice stress reduction exercises for stress management; and
- keep a sense of humor.

Recognize and Share Your Feelings

Becoming a parent again can bring lots of joy and happiness. It can also bring other feelings, too. Many
Grandparents raising their grandchildren describe these feelings:

• worry;
• shame;
• guilt;
• happiness;
• anger;
• gratefulness;
• sadness;
• pride;
• frustration; and
• fear.

Remember you are not alone. Other grandparents experience similar concerns. The following are some reflections by grandparents raising grandchildren.

**Grandparents’ Reflections**

“I’m grateful I’m able to provide for my grandchild.”

“I feel guilty about where I went wrong in raising my own children.”

“I’m angry that I have to change my lifestyle and sacrifice personal needs and goals to care for my grandchildren.”

“I feel sad that my grandchildren have been neglected.”

“I am ashamed of my adult child’s failure as a parent due to alcohol and drug abuse.”

**Acceptance**

Identifying and accepting your feelings and finding someone trustworthy to talk with will help you feel better. It can also help you accept the things you cannot change.

**Maintain a Positive Outlook**

You have probably heard the expression, “The glass is either half empty or half full.” How we see the glass affects our coping skills. Everything in life depends on the thoughts we choose to hold in our minds. Having faith in yourself will strengthen your ability to tackle challenges. The following are some examples of seeing the glass as half full instead of half empty. It is important to realize that many of the skills will be more effective if you have a positive outlook.

**Seek Support from Others**

Everybody can benefit greatly from having friends, neighbors, and family to lend support. A circle of family and friends can help in the following ways:

• give encouragement;
• act as a sounding board to discuss ideas and challenges;
• cushion you against the stresses and strains of parenting your grandchild;
• assist you in scheduling time for yourself; and
• provide additional adults who can make your grandchild feel special.

So, you may ask, how can you establish a support network? For starters, you can meet people by joining a support group or becoming more involved in the community, school, or religious activities. Opening yourself up to others will increase your chances of getting help. Do not be afraid to ask others for what you need.

**Problem-Solve**

Taking care of yourself also means taking action when there are problems. Stress builds up over time if you constantly try to avoid problems, or put off dealing with problems until later. By following these basic steps in problem-solving, you will be taking the appropriate actions to resolve your problem, reduce stress, and improve well-being.

• **Define the problem.** This may mean learning more about the problem by reading books on the topic or talking to others who are knowledgeable.
• **Think of possible solutions.** Often, there are many different ways to solve a problem. Try to identify two or three ways your problem can be resolved.
• **Weigh the pros and cons.** Think about the pros and cons of each solution and pick the one you think is the best.
• **Implement the solution.** In other words, carry out your plan.
• **Evaluate.** Did the solution work? If not, go back to a previous solution or start the process over again.

**Taking Care of Yourself**

Taking care of yourself by taking time to relax, recognizing and sharing your feelings, maintaining a positive outlook, seeking support, and problem-solving will not only affect your well-being, but it will also lead to a better relationship between yourself and your grandchildren.
For More Information


References


Table 1.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Half-Empty Glass</th>
<th>Half-Full Glass</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This task is too difficult for me. I give up. I feel overwhelmed.</td>
<td>I will do a little each day until I get it done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My grandchild talks too much and asks too many questions.</td>
<td>My grandchild is curious and eager to learn. I can listen a little longer. Or, I can say, “Let’s talk about that in 5 minutes after I finish making dinner” (and stick to your promise).</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is impossible to find time for myself.</td>
<td>I will find at least 15 minutes to relax today.</td>
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