

Tips on How to Stay Connected to your Grandchildren

Your grandchildren are so lucky to have you in their lives and so lucky that you want to be such a strong presence in their lives. And they want you to be present in their lives. Here are some tips on how to make this happen.

Communicate with them WHERE they are

- Learn how to text and send your grandchild a short, loving message each day
- Get on Facebook. That is where you will find your grandchildren most often

Schedule regular TIME to be together

- Eat dinner together one night a week (Sunday?) as a family, if possible, or schedule a weekly lunch with your grandchild, at their favorite place.

Learn about WHAT's going on at their SCHOOL

- Watch the website at your grandchild's school. Look for announcements. Read the section for parents. Watch for events.
- Get a subscription to the school newspaper or enews, so you can keep up with what is going on at school.
- Read what they are reading in English, so you can discuss the book with them. Ask them what they are studying in History and Science and share your knowledge and expertise. Get conversations going on those topics. Ask them what they find interesting and why. Ask them about their teachers.
- Ask your son or daughter to send you the activity calendars of your grandkids' events. Even better, ask your grandchild to give you this information.
- Try to attend every game or concert or any event your grandchild is participating in. They love seeing you there to support them.
- Know what clubs they are members of so you can talk with them about what the clubs are doing.
- Attend other events at their school, even if your grandchild is not participating in them, like football games, basketball games, theater performances, choral or orchestra or band concerts, dance shows. You might see or re-connect with other grandparents while at the school.

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ASK for GRANDPARENTS programing at their school

- Work with the school to set up a Grandparents program. At Deerfield High School (DHS), they now publish a “Grandparents Connection” Newsletter with articles written by students and grandparents (and, of course, if there is such a program, volunteer to write articles.)
- Work with the school to set up a Grandparents Day or Grandparents Orientation, such as the Grandtimes program at DHS.

Learn about their WORLD and their INTERESTS

- Your grandchildren want to you be interested in what they are interested in. You might have to watch Glee and American Idol and The Voice. You might consider reading the book and then going to see Hunger Games or Twilight or whatever the latest teenage movie is so that you can talk about those things with them. If you can stay somewhat current with media, music and movies, that will give you more to talk with them about.
- When you want to engage in conversation with your grandchildren, there is a great secret you should know about. The key is to ask open-ended questions-questions that do not have a yes or no or grunt response. Tell me about....., please share with me....., you must be so excited about..., I heard about... Try to ask questions that will give you much more information and enable you to create more conversation with your grandchild.

This is a tremendous opportunity for you to continue to be an important and prominent person in their lives. Even though they start to run around more and get busier and have more activities and have more things going on, they are spending more time with friends and less time at home, they need your wisdom. They need you to be present in their lives. You have life experience to share with them and they need it. They value what you have to say even if they might not tell you so. They hear you.

You are such an important person in their life. Stay connected and don't give up.

Persistence and Constancy Pay Off: A letter from my grandson Benny

Dear Grandpa,

I am confused—but then again, so are you. I'm not sure if this letter is supposed to be about specific things—ideas, skills, bits of wisdom—that I have learned from you. Or if it is supposed to be about the way I watch you interact with the world and how I see those same traits in myself. And I don't think you know what you want the letter to be about either.

I think that your goal is for these letters to help build the family as a "Teaching-and-Learning community." If you want the family to be a vessel for leaning skills and ideas, then why does it matter what specifically I learned from you? Isn't the process the important thing to cultivate and propose to others?

The Family Meeting in which ideas are shared and discussed, the family book club, or just the planned lessons in a certain thing. But I don't really remember any one idea from a Family Meeting, I never read any of the books, and I would have learned to ride a bike or to play tennis on my own. The family does not act as the perfect vessel for education; the education acts as your tool through which to build a family.

So again, why does it matter what I learned from you? Isn't it only the fact that I did learn from you? And the understanding of that process and creating it comes not from my letter, but from yours.

That's why I think what really interests you is the way of being that you have passed on. But then why is that something that should be written and published? I have told you before, so I think you know. And how does it serve as a teaching tool?

You cannot change or craft your way of being to teach me. As I believe I have told you, "You don't get to choose what I watch and learn from you, it happens no matter what." So the family is a tool for teaching personality, intentionally and unintentionally, without a letter or a meeting or a plan.

Then I realize that I said this to you some five or six years ago. You have been playing with the same basic idea for ten years. You have changed the names, processes, theories, modes of presentation, but basically you have always been concerned with how the grandparent ensures that their essence is passed on either through a living legacy, teachable moments, or a family learning community.

It is that commitment to an idea that I have learned from you. I have watched you redefine your quest as you have been turned down, encouraged, and questioned. I have seen you take some criticism and ignore others. And I have learned how to explore an idea that you know has some inherent truth but that you are ceaselessly morphing and searching for the best way to define, understand, and present.

I don't know what my idea will be yet, but I hope I own it with the same conviction.

Love Benny (written at 17)