



Nurturing Grandparent Relationships: Everyone Benefits!

We all need to belong to a family-our family. It provides us with a sense of connection, community and legacy. From the first moments we are born we are seeking that connection with the people who gave us life. Even when our family connections are not successful we still long for the connection and mourn the loss. An important part of this family connection is the relationship between children and their grandparents. Even when grandparents have died children need a sense of connection through pictures, stories, family values and traditions. It is the role and responsibility of grandparents to pass on family legacies and provide children with a strong sense of continuity. Grandparents are not in competition with parents but a wonderful addition to the family adding a special and unique dimension to children's understanding of the family values and legacy.

We suggest that relationships between grandparents and grandchildren might be nurtured through these activity options

- Regular forms of communication through online visits (Skype, "Facetime") phone calls, letters, and cards
- In person visits as often as feasible based on circumstances
- Story telling by grandparents orally or in writing
- Sharing of family traditions through activities and passing down of items, recipes and events
- Sharing of pictures by grandparents, parents and children (current and older pictures)
- Commitment by parents to ensure that communication and visits occurs especially when children are younger.
- Modeling of compassion and caring for others by parents/grandchildren toward grandparents
- Teaching family values to children by grandparents and parents
- Caring for grandparents, their homes and gravesites by parents/grandchildren

To foster strong relationships between grandparents and grandchildren the grandparents and their own children must be committed to a positive relationship by forgiving past hurts, respecting each other's roles, communicating effectively and appreciating the importance of all relationships for the benefit of the grandchildren and all family members.