

newsworthy trends

Help With A Growing Trend: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

(NAPSA)—It may come as a surprise but grandparents and other relatives are the primary caregivers for nearly six million children—and the numbers are growing. In fact, 75 percent of all nonparent care of children in America is now provided by grandparents.

“Parenting is hard enough, but parenting the second time around can be even more of a challenge,” says Herbert E. Mandell, M.D., medical director for the national children’s crisis charity KidsPeace and the KidsPeace Children’s Hospital. “A lot has changed since today’s grandparents raised their own kids and there are stresses on both sides that would have been hard to imagine just a generation ago.”

Fortunately, help is available from a whole range of news and nonprofit organizations, including KidsPeace, which helps children and families overcome crises and challenges. With many tips, its Web site www.kidspeace.org helps parents (and grandparents) lead children through such problems as: bullying, depression, traumas, and challenges of growing up. It also runs www.TeenCentral.net, a free, anonymous, clinically screened site to give older children and teens a place to go when grandparents know youngsters need sound advice but may not come to them first. [TeenCentral.net](http://www.TeenCentral.net) can be a valuable first step for opening a dialogue on anything from peer pressure to drinking.

There are other resources, as well. Those visiting the KidsPeace Web site can find a link to GRAND, a helpful new publication aimed at helping today’s grandparents, which offers useful ideas such as these:



Many grandparents raising their children’s children these days may be glad to know about places to go for help and advice.

- Give your full attention. Make direct eye contact and screen out as many interruptions as you can. When your grandchild is ready to talk, turn on your answering machine or take the phone off the hook.

- Try not to dominate. At least half of any conversations with a grandchild should be spent listening. Resist feeling that you should answer all questions. It may be more fun to search for answers together so the child can share in the joy of discovery.

- Try to be available to talk when the child wants to. If that’s impossible, find time as soon as possible. A child reaching out offers you precious moments that may not come at a “more convenient” time.

- Schedule “do-nothing” time. Take a walk together, bake cookies or pursue other unhurried activities. When hands are busy with a joint activity, words may flow.

- Ask older grandchildren for their opinion on current issues such as politics, drugs and violence. Listen carefully and question them about what they say so

they learn to process thoughts from start to finish.

“In many cultures, grandparents are revered for their experience and wisdom,” says Christine Crosby, a national grandparenting expert and founder of GRAND magazine. “Today, grandparents are not only getting more involved with their grandchildren to enrich their lives, but are also stepping in to fill a void left by two-worker families, family crises and other reasons. We have to give grandparents tools to help children and make their own lives fuller, happier and more rewarding.”

Helping the Helpers

All these tips can be more than handy—they can be lifesavers—for grandparents and grandkids alike. However, all the advice in the world is not going to succeed unless those helping their grandchildren also know how to help themselves cope with their “new” role. “You’ve got to take care of yourself if you want to help your grandchildren fully,” says KidsPeace President & CEO C.T. O’Donnell II. “You’re older than you were the first time around and in many ways, raising a child is tougher than ever before, even for young parents. It means huge financial demands, lifestyle changes, giving up free time and making sacrifices. You need to take proper physical care of yourself, watch your diet, get enough rest and exercise regularly. You also need to know places to turn when complex legal, financial, educational and emotional problems inevitably arise and that you’re not alone in facing them.”

Good advice, resources and links to grandparenting (and general parenting) issues can be found at www.kidspeace.org.