



### KEY POINTS

#### PROGRAM SUMMARY

Today, America's "life expectancy" figure stands at 76 ½ years. Since 94% of persons who become parents ultimately have grandchildren, this results in an extraordinary number of "three-generation" units in existence! This program is dedicated to the presentation of useful tips for "effective grandparenting."

During the program we meet two sets of grandparents who discuss some things today's children seem to need from the older generation. In addition, the concerns of today's grandparents (many of whom are far removed from their grandchildren because their own children's jobs are in distant parts of the country) are how to become "grandparents by phone and letter." Then, when grandchildren do arrive to visit, it's sometimes for a lengthy stay...occasionally, for years.

How do you best nurture children that are two generations removed from your own, whether by phone or in your home?

#### MAJOR MESSAGE

Grandparents must deliberately discuss the best steps to take to be most supportive of their grandchildren in whatever situation best describes the child's life and needs at each stage of development. This requires the closest possible ongoing communications both with the child and the child's parents (one of whom is "their own child," now grown up). The grandparent(s) must stay ready to adjust, and must be thoughtful and serious concerning their best role with grandchildren.

#### WHILE VIEWING

Consider suggestions as they are mentioned: take note of one or two that you think are especially important.

#### REFLECTIONS

After viewing the program, think carefully about grandparents who, in late life, "inherit" the task of raising a child (or children). Then, by yourself or with a group, decide on three to five things that would present *major changes* that the grandparent(s) would have to face. List them.

Research shows that a grandparent's interactions with a grandchild can be critically important support to the child's ongoing development and sense of security.

- (1) stay in touch (if only by phone/internet/postcard);
- (2) keep a list of things to talk about;
- (3) send more "notes and letters" than gifts;
- (4) keep in touch *constantly*;
- (5) indicate you'd like to have info about the child's progress, problems, report cards, "adventures," cute sayings, and so on, and express interest frequently;
- (6) do research about new developments that relate to childhood: keep yourself "up to date" on "today's children."



If grandchildren come for an extensive stay - perhaps even involving school attendance - here are some suggestions:

- (1) remember that youngsters need lots of sleep
- (2) make visits memorable by involving lots of "tasks" around the house, *done together*, which often provides the opportunity to *talk* as well as work together
- (3) before the visit, check safety concerns such as guns, unlocked doors, stairways, furniture with sharp edges, unlatched windows, unsecured cabinets, potentially dangerous materials/poisons, plastic bags, and so on.
- (4) check out Internet sources such as [www.kidsafe.com](http://www.kidsafe.com)
- (5) plan a few outings, as well as designing a few "battle plans" for various problems that might occur (imagine a few possibly-disastrous occurrences)
- (6) libraries and other such sources tend to have brochures listing current activities and opportunities for children of different ages: check them out as you plan for the visit.
- (7) if children will be with you for a school term, visit the school early-on: talk with the guidance counselor and others, and learn about school procedures, expectations, and schedules
- (8) find out if there is a local "grandparent support group" - or organize one yourself!! Talk with other grandparents who have grandchildren for lengthy stays.

If you have a serious need to correct a grandchild, consider these tips:

- talk privately
- get down to the child's eye-level
- stay positive (don't preach)
- express unconditional acceptance of the child and be willing to talk calmly
- use a "problem-solving" approach...



- (1) define the problem
- (2) discuss possible solutions
- (3) encourage child to think of solutions
- (4) make a plan (with the child)
- (5) review the plan to assure understanding
- (6) stay supportive

Overall, when grandchildren are with you, don't let things just be "fun for a few hours"; try to foster respect, trust, and bonding. Support the child - without spoiling the child.

Grandparents can facilitate "love and concern" among three generations, *to the benefit of all*.