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Anger Management: For Grandparents and their Grandchildren

Grandparents are an important part of the lives of their children and grandchildren, often providing emotional and financial support. At times they are faced with taking on the responsibility of providing full time care for their grandchild. This happens for many reasons:

- Incarceration
- Substance abuse
- Death or disability
- Abuse or neglect
- Unplanned pregnancy
- Domestic violence
- Divorce

Many times neither of the child's biological parents is available to offer the support needed, and the grandparent decides to raise the child. This may come at a time when the grandparents were ready to simplify their lives and slow down. Now they are faced with giving that up to take on the responsibility of raising their grandchild. This can create many emotions for both the grandparent and the grandchild: anger, loss, grief, resentment and even guilt.

Anger may surface when a grandparent realizes all the added problems that may arise in their new role as a parent. As a traditional grandparent, you do not have to set limits or boundaries: just love, nurture and support. However, as a grandparent raising grandchildren, you will have to enforce rules, boundaries, and set limits just as you did when you raised your own children.

It may be an overwhelming time for both you and your grandchild, but the feelings of anger and resentment are quite common. Here are some suggestions for dealing with the anger that may arise:

- You may see your grandchild exhibit anger or aggression and this can be completely normal. Offer substitute behaviors. When you see your grandchild starting to get angry, have him/her count from 1-10 or blow pretend bubbles. This is an easy way for the child to take slow breaths and calm down. Using real bubbles is another idea. Set aside time to practice this substitute behavior and talk about why it is important to control feelings of anger.
- Reward systems sometimes help with managing anger. You may want to sit down with your grandchild and figure out how to reward him/her for using a substitute behavior when feelings of anger arise. Give your grandchild a bead or a sticker every time he/she controls his/her anger using the substitute behavior; at the end of the week allow you grandchild to trade in the beads or stickers for special one-on-one time with you. You can offer to read a special story, or play a favorite game, or even cook a favorite dinner or dessert.
- Try to give your grandchild some examples of how you deal with you own anger. Talk about how it is normal to feel angry but that is it not okay to act out in a violent way. If you are feeling anger, take your own time out: find a quiet room to collect your thoughts, listen to your favorite song, or even take a walk until you feel better.
- Perhaps you can offer your grandchild safe solutions like hitting a pillow, pounding play dough or clay, or drawing a picture. These are all options that will not cause physical harm to either of you.



- Arguing occurs in all families and will most likely happen with you and your grandchild. Try to remember to be consistent with discipline. By being consistent with whatever form of discipline you choose (whether it is timeouts or taking away certain privileges like TV, playing with friends, etc.) you will remain in control of the situation. Remind your grandchild that there will always be a consequence for inappropriate behavior.
- Try to stay calm and don't let your anger take over, that will only show your grandchild that it is okay to act out.

Give your grandchild a hug and a kiss everyday. Provide the extra attention your grandchild needs during this transition to help him/her deal with the life change you are both experiencing. Share your feelings with them and pay attention to what they are saying. Help them understand that it is not always going to be easy, but together you can make it work.

Even though life as you know it will change, this can be an exciting, rewarding, and positive experience. As the grandparent, you can provide your grandchild what is needed most: stability, predictability, and a healthy role model.



To learn of programs in your community that support grandparents raising grandchildren, contact 2-1-1.