

Being a grandparent is so much fun!

Providing unconditional love and support to your grandchild can make such a difference now and in the future. While the role of a grandparent is different from that of a parent, it does not mean that it is without responsibilities and rules.

If you are a grandparent that visits a couple of times a year and has only limited contact with your grandchild then “spoiling and pampering” for a short time will not have many lasting ramifications.

But if you are fortunate to be able to spend a lot of time with your grandchild then you will need to have more discipline and constraint. Your role is much more involved and “spoiling and pampering” frequently may lead to problems with behavior. No one wants a child they love and care about to become a “spoiled brat”, but that can easily happen if discipline is not present consistently.

When a child has special needs or behavior difficulties it is even more important that discipline is consistent. The child should not be able to manipulate or “play” family members against each other by saying things like “Nana, does not make me go to bed at 8” or “Papaw lets me have any snack I want.” Raising a child with extra needs takes a lot of work and a supportive, caring family system can be very helpful.

Here are some ways in which you can be helpful to you grandchild.

You do need to understand your grandchild’s diagnosis. You need to help you family adhere to any treatment plans including medication and discipline.

Certainly as a grandparent you do not want to contribute to the problems of your grandchild. That could be as simple as allowing more snacks between meals and contributing to a weight problem. So be very informed as to what and treatment plans have been given by your grandchild’s doctors. Help the entire family follow the plan.

Enforce rules that are given by parents.

Give medication as prescribed when your grandchild visits.

It can be exhausting to parent a child with special needs or issues. Offer your babysitting services to tired parents.

Show your support and attend events like soccer games, dance recitals, and school performances.

Read with your grandchild and encourage your grandchild to read.

Offer to work with your grandchild about any skills that are not yet mastered like learning ABC's or math facts.

Buy books instead of excessive amounts of toys if you feel the need to give lots of gifts.

Start a savings account for future education.

Save special treats for special occasions like birthdays so that there is not an expectation for a treat at every family outing.

Be knowledgeable and use good parenting techniques with your grandchild. Treasure them without spoiling them so that you can contribute to their success in life.

If you are fortunate enough to spend large amounts of time with your grandchild, you would be welcome at our office with the parental permission to help you better understand your grandchild.

Your experience in raising your own children can be invaluable to your grandchild. Remember that with time we all know more, so just because something was recommended 20 years ago, it may not be the best method based on what we know today. Also children with special needs do require parenting that is adapted to those needs and that may require extra effort in learning what that method should be.

Enjoy being a grandparent! You and your grandchildren deserve a good relationship, so nurture that relationship and cherish the time that you are able to spend with them.

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