

Nobody Tells You How to Be a Grammy or Grampy

Neuroscientists used electromagnetic brain scans and heart-rate monitors to find out what makes people happy. They had participants do, look at, or listen to different things, and measured how happy it made them. The top stimuli for creating happiness was smiling.¹

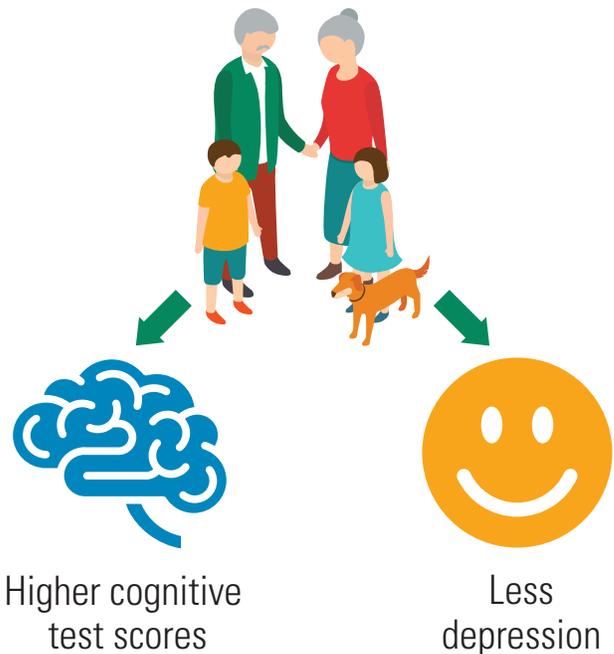
What could bring a bigger smile to your face than a giant hug from your grandkids? Is there anything better than seeing your granddaughter walk for the first time? Or your grandson's solo in the school play? But being a grandparent isn't always easy. We have some tips to help you get the most out of the grandparent experience, so you can keep smiling all day long.

Being a Grandparent Can Be Good for You

Being a grandparent is a blast, but it's also good for you. An Australian research study showed that grandmothers who spent time watching their grandchildren performed better on cognitive tests than those grandmothers who didn't, and better than women that didn't have grandchildren.²

A 20-year research study from 1985–2004 found that when grandparents had close, positive relationships with their grandchildren, both groups experienced fewer symptoms of depression. Additionally, this study found that the closer the bond, the less depression was observed.³

Benefits of Being a Grandparent



Source: The health benefits of grandparenting, Association of Health Care Journalists, 11/20/18. Most recent data available.

Having Relationships With Grandchildren Can Help Reduce the Risks of Isolation

More people live alone than ever before—about one-third of Americans older than 65 and half of those over 85.⁴ Loneliness can increase risk of premature death by 30%, making it as risky as obesity or smoking 15 cigarettes a day.⁴ As we get older, our social circles tend to shrink as our peers and relatives move away or encounter health problems.⁵ Spending time with grandkids can help decrease the risk of isolation.

Need to Know Social Media Apps



Learn about and use the social media apps your grandchildren are using. Snapchat and Instagram are likely favorites with grandkids.

6 Tips for Grandparents



Get active

Younger grandchildren only have one priority in life—playing. To be a fun player, you'll need to run, jump, lift, and get up and down from the floor. The better shape you're in, the more fun you'll have, and the more you'll be able to do with your grandchildren.



Be encouraging

Kids move towards those who encourage them and move away from those who discourage them. Grandparents with a positive, encouraging attitude who are determined to build strong and lasting relationships with grandkids are most likely to succeed.



Maintain good relationships with your own kids

They're the gatekeepers to your grandchildren. When you have close relationships with your kids, it's easier to have close relationships with grandkids.



Bond early

Focus on building strong bonds with grandchildren when they're young. Research found that grandchildren who felt their grandparents played an important role when they were young also felt close to them when they were older.⁵



Stay connected

Proximity is one of the closest predictors of a strong relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. If you live near your grandchildren, try to attend their sporting events, or participate in school activities like grandparents' day. If you don't live near your grandchildren, use technology to stay involved.



Play!

Have a bunch of ideas ready for playtime. Looking for ideas? Just google fun activities for grandparents and grandchildren.

Don't Overdo It

Many grandparents enjoy helping out their children and grandchildren, but they should be careful not to overdo it. Ninety four percent of grandparents provide some sort of financial support.⁶ Fifty three percent help pay for education, 37% help pay for living expenses, and 23% help pay for medical bills.⁷ Grandparent couples spend an average of \$2,383 on their grand kids every year.⁷

A 2015 study found that even though many like to help out, 30% of grandparents said providing so much help was "stressful," and 14% said they were being asked to do "too much."⁸

If you feel like you're doing too much, don't be afraid to say so. The family members you're helping probably don't want you stressed about because you're helping too much. Also, beware of helping them out too much financially and putting your own financial future at risk. Look for other ways you can help out, like helping with transportation or homework.

To summarize, we've covered:

- Being a grandparent is good for you
- 6 tips for grandparents
- Don't overdo it

Keep smiling

Being a grandparent can be one of life's greatest joys. It's not without its challenges, but by taking a proactive approach you can be an active, involved, and fun part of your grandkids' lives. And then everyone will have a reason to smile.

Can Grandparents Help Too Much?



94% Provide some sort of financial support*

53% Help pay for education**

37% Help pay for living expenses**

23% Help pay for medical bills**

\$2,383 Average amount grandparent couples spend a year on grandkids**

* Source: *Nearly All Grandparents Provide Money to Grandchildren*, AARP, 4/12/19. Most recent data available.

** Source: *The Generation of Grandparents Who Keep Their Grandchildren Afloat*, The Atlantic, 1/30/19. Most recent data available.

Next steps

1. Review and apply the six tips on the previous page.
2. Create a list of fun ideas for playtime with your grandkids.
3. Be aware if you're doing too much to help out your kids and grandkids.

Sources

- ¹ *Neuroscience Says Doing This 1 Thing Makes You Just as Happy as Eating 2,000 Chocolate Bars*, Inc.com, 8/29/17. Most recent data available.
- ² *Study: Close grandparent-grandchild relationships have healthy benefits*, The Boston Globe, 12/13/15. Most recent data available.
- ³ *The Health Benefits of Having (and Being) Grandparents*, US News and World Report, 9/13/17. Most recent data available.
- ⁴ *The Epidemic of Loneliness—and How to Combat It*, The Wall Street Journal, 4/18/18. Most recent data available.
- ⁵ *6 Factors of Grandparent-Grandchild Closeness*, verywellfamily.com, 7/17/20
- ⁶ *Money and the Modern Grandparent*, AARP, 2019. Most recent data available.
- ⁷ *The Generation of Grandparents Who Keep Their Grandchildren Afloat*, The Atlantic, 1/30/19. Most recent data available.
- ⁸ *Family Support in Graying Societies*, Pew Research Center, 5/21/15. Most recent data available.

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