

Being A Grandparent May Be Your Greatest Legacy

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Once our adult children become parents, we naturally want to develop and nurture healthy, loving and enjoyable relationships with our grandchildren. Grandparenting can be our second chance to give what we missed giving the first time around. What greater legacy could there be than leaving one of love for our grandchildren? Grandparenting experts Tim and Darcy Kimmel, authors of ***Extreme Grandparenting*** have said, "We are the link to the past, the anchor to the present and the bridge to the future."

A few years ago, my husband and I read ***Doing Life With Your Adult Children--Keep Your Mouth Shut & The Welcome Mat Out*** by Jim Burns and we have discovered a great deal of wisdom throughout this book on topics such as:

- Your role as a the parent must change

- Unsolicited advice is usually taken as criticism
- Discover the difference in the culture of these emerging adults
- Your job is to help them move from dependence to independence

One of the most interesting chapters for me was "Being a Grandparent May Be Your Biggest Legacy. I especially enjoyed the suggestions on connecting with and influencing our grandkids. The list below is adapted from Chapter 9 of Jim Burns' book.

- **Be present. Be fun. Be generous:** Our presence as grandparents matters whether we live nearby and can take them to the park and attend their activities or we keep in touch virtually. Be the grandparent who sends a text to say hi or tell a joke. Make a weekly or monthly time to connect in person or on zoom. Find a way that works for you to read regularly with your grandkids. Keep a stash of books at your home or in a bag in the car for when you visit them. Go to the local library together. Here is a link with a load of suggestions for reading in-person or virtually and it includes book suggestions for different ages and by genre: imaginationssoup.net/tips-grandparents-grandkids-read/
- **Make lifelong memories and traditions:** If your children & grandchildren live close, have a weekly meal or outing together. Plan an annual vacation together. Create a special closet, shelf, drawer or corner in your home that has things just for grandkids to play with. How about a special trip with you and your grandchild when they become a teenager? For more ideas on things to do and talk about: www.coachmyrna.org/blog/questions-to-ask-your-child-or-grandchild or www.coachmyrna.org/blog/tell-your-story
- **Offer grace--constantly:** Our job as grandparents is not to give advice but to praise and support. Offering grace is more powerful than pointing out mistakes. This can be especially healing if we look back on raising our own children and realize that we were sometimes too tough on them.
- **Celebrate everything:** Look for opportunities to acknowledge important days in the lives of our grandchildren--birthdays, graduations, first day of kindergarten or a new job, school or work promotions, etc. Again, Jim Burns says it beautifully, "As you celebrate and recognize the rites of passage in your grandkids' lives, you weave a beautiful memory into your heart and theirs; a memory that you were present and cheered them on."

- **Recognizing your role as a mentor:** We have experiences and wisdom that our grandchildren cannot get from anyone else. When we are present in their lives, we can be a safe and secure place that allows our grandchildren to be themselves and offers support, comfort, hope and perspective.
- **Keep supporting your adult children in their role as parents:** Jim Burns says, "Your relationship with your adult children is the single most important gateway to your grandchildren." We have to let our children raise our grandchildren their way, even if we think that it is wrong. It is important to let go of thinking that we have all the answers and offer our adult children the grace that they need to be confident parents. Consider giving them **7 Gifts to Give Your Child: Parenting That Will Touch Their Future** as a present to allow them to discover more wisdom for themselves. www.coachmyrna.org/7-gifts-to-give-your-child.html

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