



Wellness News

Parenting Your Grandchildren

by Connie Brase, MA

Most of us are ready to be grandparents whenever those darling little grand-babies come along. We've raised our kids--worried about them, provided for them, disciplined them, and watched them grow from babyhood to adulthood.

Some of us grandparents get into a situation where we must become the parents to the little ones, instead of the grandparents. This affects our lives in many ways: emotionally, mentally, physically, and financially.

Financially we adapt. There are services available to help us take care of the health and dental needs of the children. Physically, we'll adapt, too. It may take us a little longer to get things done, to the point we'll wonder how we ever stayed ahead

left the care of the children to you, no doubt you are going through a painful grieving process. It's difficult to take care of yourself while adjusting to the needs of the grandkids. Some people turn to their faith communities or grief support counseling. With help and support, you'll manage that, too.

Often, young parents are just not capable of being good parents yet. Maybe they have turned to abusing substances or gotten in trouble with the law. It's common for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren to have anger and feelings of guilt that their own kids "didn't turn out right." We look for reasons and explanations, struggling to find somewhere to place the blame. Grandparents raising their grandchildren can find themselves on a roller coaster of emotions that makes life totally confusing, and they may need the help of a counselor to sort things out. Sometimes there is no blame; there is no reason why. Most parents do the best they can with the resources they have at the time. And at some point, their children have to be responsible for their own choices.

Point number three is about acceptance. It can feel like an impossible situation to parent two generations--both your children and your grandchildren--at the same time. Eventually you have to accept the fact that the care and well-being of your grandchildren rests on your shoulders and is your primary responsibility. You are now in the parental role and those grandchildren will need your full-time attention, energy, and emotional



strength. It's up to you to help them deal with their emotional issues while they are trying to "grow up" and adjust to the new situation. At the same time, you have to hold your adult children accountable for their decisions, and encourage them to get the help they need to become mature, responsible adults. Sometimes you have let go of the responsibility and control of your own children to be able to provide full-time parenting to the grandkids. What a tough situation for you! It can be helpful to talk to someone who is neutral—a friend, a pastor, or a counselor. Don't worry about seeming weak or afraid; you need support to work through your many roles in the family. You need a confidential listening ear who can help you remember what you have already learned about being a parent, help you do some research and adjust to the situation. It's okay to ask for help. You Can Do This!

Here's to your Mental Wellness while being a parent the second time around!

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“Grandparents raising their grandchildren can find themselves on an emotional roller coaster...”

of the game with our own kids! Mentally we'll remember the needs of each age and stage the children are going through, and we'll adapt to that, also.

Emotional adaptation is by far the hardest part of parenting your grandchildren. For starters, you can't be the one who gets to spoil the kids. Being the grandparent is supposed to be complete enjoyment of the time spent with the grandkids. Nobody wants to play the "bad guy." That's the first struggle: being the disciplinarian.

Secondly, it can be rough dealing with the situation that got you here. If your own child passed away and

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