

Ask BYFS

What is the Role of Grandparents in Family Life?

Parenting practices have changed over the generations but the one thing that has remained constant is the importance of talking, listening and playing with children. Grandparents are ideally placed to spend quality time interacting with children as most are free from the responsibility and stresses of parenting.

Being a grandparent is often thought to be better than being a parent because of the time grandparents have to enjoy their grandchildren, without the financial responsibility.

Grandparents are good parenting resources because...

- **Grandparents provide affordable child care and childcare** the value of which is over a billion dollars annually
- **Grandparents more importantly provide trust and affection.**
- **Grandparents play a valuable role in supporting parents** and children and providing lasting stability.
- **Grandparents are viewed by grandchildren as fun companions.**
- **Grandparents love hearing about their grandchildren's activities and concerns** and represent a listening ear for children and teenagers who come to them with problems and confidences.
- **Grandparents tend to visit more often after the birth**, and to help in taking care of the new family, providing support at a stressful time.
- **Grandparents who are retired can give their grandchildren quality time** by playing, talking and listening to their young grandchildren, playing a vital role in helping to develop their language and communication skills.
- **Grandparents are a tremendous resource for their grandchildren by sharing their past** through stories and songs - an important step towards literacy - and helping children discover their roots by sharing a native language or favorite family recipe.

If biological grandparents are not a resource in your family for whatever reason, consider surrogate grandparents in your neighborhood, school, community, or faith association.

(Adapted from National Literacy Trust, talktoyourbaby.org, 2006) in credits

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