

INQUIRING MINDS- FEBRUARY 4, 2022

BOB BARGER, MODERATOR

PARENTING, GRANDPARENTING, AND GREAT GRANDPARENTING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the correct ways and incorrect ways to deal with the divorce of an adult child or a grandchild?
2. How can you help a blended family navigate their new situation?
3. What are the do's and don't when you see the parenting style of your kids or grandkids that is not to your liking?
4. What are the most common issues related to kids or grandkids where you keep your mouth shut to avoid potentially unhealthy confrontations.
5. What are the do's and don'ts when your adult child or grandchild is living with someone they are not married to for years? What if they have kids together?
6. What are the do's and don'ts when your granddaughter decides she is trans, changes her name and wants you to accept her new identity when she is in middle school or high school.
7. What are the best ways to communicate with your grandchildren or great grandchildren using "curiosity" rather than being "critical"

The New Age of Grandparenting BY KATE STONE LOMBARDI

Jun 9, 2021 At [Goodhousekeeping.com/grandparent's role](https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/grandparent/s-role)

It's a good time to take a deep dive into modern grandparenting. As average lifespans increase, grandparents will be in their grandkids' lives for longer than ever before. And grandparents say they feel younger and more vibrant than their grandparents before them, meaning their role in their grandkids' lives is ever-evolving.

Recently, The Good Housekeeping Institute surveyed more than 1,500 people about grandparenthood today, asking them to weigh in on everything from childcare to social media. That survey also included parents, and uncovered a few growing pains in the relationship. Baby Boomer and Gen Xers may feel vibrant and full of wisdom, but their grown kids don't always see it that way — and many wish grandparents would keep their outdated advice to themselves.

Yet, grandparents don't think of themselves as old fashioned, stodgy or irrelevant. In fact, they see their generation as adaptable and open to changing times. Our research revealed that 68% of today's grandparents consider themselves "cooler" than their own grandparents. Certainly, Boomer and Gen X grandparents embrace multiculturalism — an AARP national survey on grandparenting found that a full third have grandchildren of a different race or ethnicity. The vast majority of the AARP survey respondents also say they would fully accept a grandchild who came out as LGBTQ+. In general, they are far more open to gender fluidity than previous generations.

.So what happens when parents and grandparents are out of step? Sharon Ralls, a Massachusetts grandmother of six, remembers her own mother's parenting advice always began with: "If I were you ..." Ralls modified her approach concerning her own grandchildren. "Mine is, 'You might want to consider ...' I give them an option and that's it."

Offering guidance or holding your tongue — that is the question. In her class, Sanchez reminds grandparents that they are in a new role — still parenting their child, but *not* the grandchild. With advice, she says grandparents must take care not to undermine new parents' shaky confidence. Swarts is more direct: "I call it 'Zip the lip. Bite the tongue.'"

What's more, Sanchez and Swarts emphasize that grandparents must respect their kids' parenting decisions. And many grandparents report doing just that, following parents' guidelines to the letter.

"Grandparents not respecting rules was one of the biggest complaints from parents in the GH Institute survey. "Some of my children's grandparents try to undermine my husband's and my decisions," one respondent said. "It crossed our boundaries of respect."

Multi-racial and multicultural families can also be new territory for grandparents, but they are adapting. The older generation in multiracial families tend to have strong connections to their own cultural roots, says AARP. Almost all (90%) of grandparents believe it's important that their mixed or different raced grandchildren understand the heritage they share. They also report strong connections to the parent of the other race and with their mixed-race children's other set of grandparents.

According to both the GH Institute survey and the AARP study, grandparents wish that parents were firmer, particularly when it comes to manners, respect and learning the value of money. Grandparents are baffled by the “democratization” of the household, where kids are given a large say in decisions. And they worry that their grandchildren don’t know how to play outside in an unstructured way or solve problems without looking at their phones.

As much as this generation of grandparents appreciates the technology that keeps them connected to their grandchildren, they also worry about the impact of all these electronics on children.

“I try to pull the younger ones away from their technology and then it’s together time,” Ralls, an assistant principal at an elementary school, says. “It’s either ‘Chutes and Ladders’ or dominos or making cards or cooking in the kitchen. It’s those times I really feel like a grandmother.”

Boomer and Gen X grandparents are also surprised by how deeply involved parents are in the minutia of their children’s lives. They don’t remember so closely monitoring their own children’s sleep, food or social life. One used the expression “snowplow parenting” — to describe parents trying to remove every obstacle in front of their kids.

The good news is that grandparenting is good for your physical, cognitive and emotional health. The AARP calls grandkids “the elixir of life,” and their study determined that the greater the emotional support grandparents and grandchildren receive from one another, the better their psychological and physiological health.

“There’s a kind of magic about having those moments with these tiny human beings who are part of me and yet their own stunning individuals,” Dr. Rufaro says.

While they sometimes struggle to keep up, today’s grandmas and grandpas love their roles.

“There are a lot of grandparents now being faced with stark realities that are different from what they had thought the world would look like,” Bryant, the AARP researcher says. “But in the end, love triumphs.”

Generational differences chart rev 2019

[West Midland Family Center](#)

	Generation X	Millennials	Generation Z
Birth years	1965-1980	1981-1997	1998 and after
Dealing with money	Cautious, conservative, savers	Earn to spend	Impulse purchasers on line, values money and saving money
Work is	A contract, just a job	A means to an end, fulfillment	To fit into life
Work ethic	Balance, no long hours, want structure and direction	Multitasking, entrepreneurial, ambitious	
Work life balance	Focus on clearer balance between work and family	Flex time, job sharing, balance work life and community involvement	Want balance between work and personal life
Preferred work	Fast paced and flexible	Collaborative, highly creative	Need flexible hours and remote work, time off for personal needs
Core values	Balance, entrepreneurial, lack organizational loyalty	Bounce from job to job, techno savvy, high morals, self-confident	
Attributes	Anti-establishment, helicopter parents, fiscally conservative	Diversity focused, achievement oriented, not afraid to Question authority	In the moment, activists, social media junkies, cynical
Family experience	Latchkey kids, dual income families	Coddles kids- a trophy for passing kindergarten	First generation to expect a lower standard of living than parents
Spiritual values	Is it authentic- live it out	Is it good- does it make the world a better place	