



GRANDPARENTS PARENTING THE CHILD OF DIVORCE

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By Linda Ranson Jacobs

06/29/2012

One kindergartner says to a second kindergartner,

“Hey Taylor, your grandma’s going to be here in a minute to pick you up.”

Second kindergartner,

“How do you know it’s my grandma? Maybe it’s my mom!”

First kindergartner,



“Nope! You live with your grandma, and besides I saw her fuzzy head in the car window. Grandma’s have fuzzy heads so I know it’s her.”

Maybe the grandmas in our adult world don’t have fuzzy heads. However you view grandmas though, our society is experiencing a growing phenomenon – more and more grandparents are parenting the second generation of children. Often this happens at the expense of the grandparents own relationships and emotional well-being. Usually there is a crisis surrounding the transition of children from the birth parent to the grandparent’s home. Many of these grandparents are single themselves or in second marriages. This adds to the stress as well as the confusion.

The realization quickly sets in “Yikes, I don’t have the energy to do this again! And “We were never that age!” Many grandparents thought they were through parenting only to find themselves having to parent the second generation in their family. This can cause a lot of negative feelings because not only do adjustments in the home have to take place but adjustments in how they parent have to happen.

On top of everything else, many of these grandparents are single or they are in second marriages themselves, and the entrance of grandchildren into the home strains the second/blended family marriage. These grandparents might be showing up in your children’s ministries. Or possibly senior adults are suddenly showing up less and less. It could be they have had a grandchild show up on their doorstep.

What are you doing to accommodate grandparents parenting the second generation?





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In some situations, one of the parents may live with the grandparent but for the sake of this article let's consider the grandparent who is parenting without either birth parent being present in the home.

Here are some things to think about in assisting the new grandparent parenting their grandchildren.

- The first step is one of education. Think about finding a mentor to help the new grandparent who is parenting again. A lot has changed since their children were little. For example,
 1. Many don't understand the importance of "back to sleep" for a newborn baby.
 2. Others don't have a clue about diapers to use or monitors that are available.
 3. The rules and regulations on car seats can be very overwhelming and confusing.
 4. School rules, bus schedules, school conferences might new to some grandparents.
 5. Computers and social networking can be confusing.

Grandparents will need to create consistent routines and schedules. Schedules lend themselves to a feeling of safeness and knowing what comes next.

- Legal Issues: Encourage the new grandparent parenting again to obtain legal guardianship. Even if it is just temporary guardianship, it is important to do something legal. Your church also needs a copy of the guardianship papers in your files in case the parent shows up to pick up a child. You need to be able to prove who has guardianship.
- Available services: With legalized guardianship in many states grandparents can obtain access to social services for
 1. Housing subsidies
 2. Subsidized health insurance
 3. School enrollment
 4. And the ability to prevent an incompetent parent from taking the child away from the grandparent.
- Medical Issues: Medical insurance may not be offered through the grandparent's policy. Most hospitals will not treat a child without parental consent. Special needs assistance (mental health diagnosis; physical; speech therapy, etc.) can be very costly, so the grandparent may need assistance in this area. Another issue is that many of these children need counseling or therapy for behavior issues. This too is costly and sometimes not available to grandparents.





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Have you thought about how overstressed these grandparents are. Perhaps they want their grandchildren to be active in the children's ministries, but getting them to these activities can prove to be difficult. This is especially true if the grandparent is a working grandparent. Or it could be that the new parenting grandparent is simply exhausted. While they may love their grandchildren, they don't have the energy they once had. They may have been looking forward to retiring, but now with young children or teenagers in their homes, they can't retire.

I did a workshop one time on this subject and half way through the workshop a minister got the funniest look on his face. He said,

"You know now that I think about it, I know this has happened to several of our senior adults, but until now I didn't realize why they quit attending so many of the church activities. I didn't realize they are exhausted and have so many new responsibilities."

For more information about "Grandparents Parenting Again" go to <http://www.hlp4.com/node/21>.

For "Resources for Grandparents Parenting Again" see <http://www.hlp4.com/node/23>.

Next week we will discuss "When Grandparents Divorce, What about the Grandkids?"

I'd love to have your questions or stories about how you work with children, grandparents and divorce.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Linda Ranson Jacobs is one of the forefront leaders in the area of children and divorce. She developed and created the DivorceCare for Kids programs. DC4K is an international program for churches to use to help children of divorced parents find healing within the arms of a loving church family. As a speaker, author, trainer, program developer and child care center owner, Linda has assisted countless families by modeling and acting on the healing love she has found in Jesus Christ. More great articles about how to successfully minister to the child of divorce in your church can be found at Linda's website [Healthy Loving Partnerships for Our Kids \(HLP4\) \[http://www.hlp4.com\]](http://www.hlp4.com). Linda also offers support, encouragement, and suggestions to help single parents and those working with single parent children. She can be reached by e-mail at Linda@hlp4.com.

