**Grandfathers: Leave a Lasting Legacy**

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Every child needs a dad. And children also benefit from the wisdom and influence of other men, over and above what their father can supply. So, your grandkids will profit from the distinct advantages that you bring to their lives, which complement what your son or son-in-law can give them. Your work isn't done, granddad. It's just become more enjoyable.

According to the Proverb, "Children's children are the crown of old men." Grandfathers have a keen sense that they are leaving a legacy, and that can be very motivating and energizing. For many men, grandfathering is one of the most joy-filled roles they have ever had.

**A UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP**

Who can explain what happens between a grandparent and grandchild? The grandfather sits down with his grandchild and tells stories no one has heard before-or stories everyone has heard many times, but they still enjoy the telling. Or, a child asks to see that trick where Grandpa somehow pulls his thumb apart, then puts it back together again. Others can try, but no one can do it quite like Grandpa.

Earlier, Grandpa complained that his back was acting up after he dragged thirty pounds of garbage out to the curbside. But now, he can hoist his granddaughter up for a hug without a second thought, without the slightest pain, almost effortlessly. Blake wants to go try to hook that big catfish in the creek, but he wants to wait until Grandpa can come, because only he knows where the "old monster" lives.

How do you explain it? You don't. You just enjoy it.

**RELATING TO GRANDCHILDREN**

As a grandfather, you bring a wealth of wonderful resources for your children to enjoy. What are the nuts and bolts of a relationship between a grandfather and his grandchild? At the risk of taking something magical, breaking it down and robbing it of its charm, here are some practical ideas:

***Make Time***. Time is one of your secret weapons as a grandfather; it sets you apart from most of the other influences in your grandchild's life. You can be a reminder that there are worthwhile, memory-building pursuits that don't happen in a hurry: chess, reading, just sitting and talking, evening walks, breakfast out on Saturday mornings, or sitting on the porch swing and watching the sunset. Your hobby may be the key that unlocks a point of connection with your grandchild. Find the magic and mystery of a pocket knife or a pocket watch. Bring to life those features that make you the granddad that you are.

***Do Little Things***. Some of the best grandfathering comes in cards and letters that you send, maybe with a newspaper clipping or a small trinket that made you think of your grandchild. There are hundreds of little ways to communicate, "You're special to me." Consistently recognize your grandchild for good grades, or the ways she is showing her personal character. Reward her just for being the great kid that she is. Send an e-mail just to see how her day is going.

***Inspire and Motivate***. Your grandchild will have many teachers, coaches, and friends. There will be new challenges and risks around every corner. He will succeed in many ways, but he will also fail. He'll need comfort, sometimes advice, and always someone to be positive and believe in him, no matter what. You can be a consistent, long-term source of encouragement through all the changes that come with growing up.

***Be a Living Library***. There's a saying: "When an elderly person dies, a library burns down." Your grandchildren need a sense of family history. They need to hear your stories about what it was like growing up, about your grandparents, about what your sons and daughters (their parents) were like, about that old Chevy you used to drive, about "the good ol' days." When you tell stories about aunts and uncles, cousins and grandmas, you convey to them: "You are part of this family."

***Transmit Values***. The world in which your grandchild is growing up probably has different-or at least changing-definitions for concepts like commitment, sacrifice, respect, honesty, responsibility, work, faith, even love. Passing on values can be one of your grandest roles as a granddad. A child will often feel pressure to behave or an ongoing power struggle with her mom and dad. But with you, she can relax a little more. She may listen better and ask more thoughtful questions, like, "Grandpa, when Daddy was seven, was he like me?" "Did he have to clean up his plate?" Or maybe, "Why did Aunt Julie get a divorce?" She's trying to learn about her world, including school, her family, and relationships in general. You may have a unique opportunity to help shape her young mind. You may also see a chance to support her parents by pointing out all they do for her, as well as reinforcing their established limits and routines.

**THE EXTRA MILE**

During a National Center for Fathering essay contest, a nine-year-old named Jordan wrote this about his Grandpa:

"Four months before I was born, my real father left my mommy. My Grandpa drove 400 miles to come get my mommy. He took care of her until I was born. When I came home from the hospital, there was a cradle that Grandpa made just for me. Someday, my kids will sleep in the same cradle."

"When I was a baby I cried a lot at night. Grandpa would walk me around and around the kitchen table. He rocked me to sleep and he was my first baby-sitter. Now I'm nine years old and Grandpa is my best buddy. We do lots of things together. We go to zoos, museums, and parks. We watch baseball games on TV and we have Chex Mix together, just the two of us."

"When I was four, my Grandpa spent a whole summer building me a playhouse with a big sandbox underneath. He made me a tire swing and pushes me lots of times in it. He pushes me real high, way up over his head. Now he spends all his extra time building new rooms on our house so that Mommy and I will have our own apartment."

"My Grandpa is really patient. When he is busy building things he always takes time to start a nail so that I can pound it in. After he's spent all day mowing our big lawn he is really tired but he will still hook my wagon up to the lawn mower and drive me all over the place."

"Sometimes people on TV talk about kids from single parent families. I'm not one of them because I have three parents in my family. My Grandpa isn't my Father, but I wouldn't trade him for all the dads in the world."

As a dedicated grandfather, you have a lot to offer children in need. With the number of broken homes in our society, chances are good that you'll find that child right in your own family. But even if you don't, there's still a lot you can give to other single-parent families, abandoned children, or a family whose grandparents live far away. All of your grandfatherly assets can apply to children outside your family as well.

Granddad, building a lasting legacy is about investing in relationships with those who will be the leaders of the next generation-your children and grandchildren. They represent your greatest legacy, and one of your most significant contributions to the future.

This article was adapted from [Leaving a Lasting Legacy](http://www.fathers.com/dadstore/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=2_13&products_id=43), the sixth in the 6-book [Adventures in Fathering series](http://www.fathers.com/dadstore/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=2_6&products_id=25) by Ken Canfield.