

Let's Talk About It

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Grammy's Tired Today

This article is part 2 to last week's article entitled "When the In-laws Get in the Way." You can view that article and others on my web site www.soencouragement.org

Question: Dear Sir: I have a wonderful mother. She and my father are now retirees, each having worked for more than 40 years for the Government. My mother is always kind and helpful. She has a warm heart and gentle spirit. However, I've discovered that she finds it difficult to say no, especially when it comes to taking care of her grand children. Some of my siblings are taking advantage of her generosity by using her as their full-time baby sitter, which I notice makes her overly tired at times. At the age of 78, those energetic grand children are running around her in circles, leaving her breathless at times. I've noticed that she is more tired during the week than rested. But mom would not give up. Is this right? Should we over work our grand mothers? Should we use our grand parents as full-time baby sitters? I want my parents to enjoy their retirement to the fullest, but I believe that the baby sitting is getting in the way.

Answer: My first response to your question "Should adult children use their parents as full-time baby sitters" is NO; but situations are not always black and white, and we must evaluate each situation on its own merit.

It seems to be so obvious that the mothering instinct never to fades with age in most women. However, it is imperative for us to understand that after children become adults, parenting days are over. Too many grandmothers feel the necessity to always have children around them. Sometimes there is an emotional and psychological need for this to happen. They find a sense of purpose from the caring and nurturing for children. On the other hand, many grand mothers also have a constant need to control and have authority over others. This gives them a sense of power.

Some parents actually feel it is their God-given responsibility to provide baby sitting care for their grand children. Still other parents believe that no one else has the skill and right to take care of their grand children, but them. They want to direct the lives of their grand children as they did their own children.

CONFUSION IN THE HOUSE

Parents are the primary providers, nurturers, and educators of their children. All other individuals, including grand parents, are only to provide emotional support for this growing family. Supporters only give assistance when requested. They watch silently from the side lines, giving encouraging words.

When silent support turns into instruction and advice, confusion sets in. In other words, if grandma's baby sitting rules are different from mom's and dad's, the little children will become confused, miserable, and sometime angry. If grand father or grand mother acts as if their years of experience and knowledge as parents are superior to that of their own adult children, this will be reflected each time instruction or discipline is needed. Often the parents would give one instruction and the grand parent another, causing great confusion in the mind of the little child.

MISGUIDED FAMILY PLANING

Unfortunately, many parents actually tell their child before they get married and have children, that they will always take care of their children for them when they are too busy and at work. Therefore, the children plan their budgets, daily chores and activities with their parents in mind. In most cases this is an unhealthy decision. It shows that mothers and fathers do not value the importance of their own role as parents. It also is a sign of irresponsibility. It is a sign of laziness and poor family planning. It is also a poor example of parental leadership. What lessons are they teaching their children if grandma is the one who always makes the most important decisions in their growing children's lives?

DISADVANTAGES WITH GRAND PARENTING

Sadly, when grand parents find it difficult to say "no," especially to the request of their own adult children, they are often placing their own lives at risk. The little time-bombs of energy can quickly deplete a grand mother of needed strength to make it through the normal day's activities. Therefore they can become sick and extremely exhausted. They are unable to enjoy their quiet times alone or their retirement years to the fullest because all of their waking hours are packed with noisy two-legged creatures demanding their attention.

However, their adult children are equally as guilty. They should not take advantage of the willing spirit of their parents. They should find other avenues for baby sitting. Time with grand parents should be special, cherished moments selected to enrich the life of the growing child. It can be short daily periods or weekly visits. Or perhaps special baby sitting nights when mom and dad are out to a banquet.

Adult children it is time to stand up and stop taking advantage of your parents. They are growing tired and weak. Give them the opportunity to enjoy their retirement days in peace.

Although some may consider my thoughts harsh and cold. It is only a gently reminder that God's instruction to married couples "to leave parents and cleave one to another" extends to times of having children also. Too many only cleave to each other for a short time. When children come along, they reconnect to mom and dad again.

WISE GRAND PARENTS NEEDED

Certainly there is nothing wrong with grand parents volunteering and wisely providing some level of baby sitting for their grand children. However, their children must not plan their household with “maid-grammy” in mind.

On the other hand, thank God for loving grand parents who have been there for their grand children. There are many who are reading this article who can do better than taking advantage of their moms and dads. If you cannot afford a baby sitter and mom is the only answer, then be respectful and considerate about the times your parents need alone. Do not take advantage of their kind heartedness. Remember, you have the responsibility to parent your children not your mother and father. Please keep the children today because grammy is tired.

You can read this article and more on www.soencouragement.org Send your questions or comments to bbrennen2@coralwave.com, or call in your questions to 242-393 2818, or write to P.O. Box -896, Nassau, Bahamas.