

Problems such as substance abuse, catastrophic illness, teen pregnancy, incarceration, unemployment, family violence and divorce have caused an increasing number of grandparents to assume full-time parenting responsibilities for their grandchildren. Grandparents often must make numerous changes in their daily routines and lifestyles when raising their grandchildren. The following information from the Texas AgriLife Extension Service may be helpful

### Take Care of Yourself

As the primary caregiver to your grandchildren, you need to feel confident and be healthy. There will be new stressors relating to demands on your time, energy and family resources. How will you manage these? Try to give yourself time alone or with a friend to get physical exercise. It's healthy to cultivate interests outside your family responsibilities to keep you feeling emotionally balanced. One way you can gain relief from stress is to meet with other grandparents who are parenting again. Offer and accept support from others when needed. You could help organize a support group in which you each share your concerns and solutions to problems with each other. This type of support group will help you realize your own personal and parenting strengths.

### Parenting

- **SET GOALS:** It's vital that you have a sense of purpose in setting child-rearing goals. Talk about what you think is important. One of your main goals will be to help your grandchildren grow in self-responsibility and in their feelings of significance in the family.
- **GUIDE:** Guide your grandchild by modeling appropriate behavior. Children will learn more from what you do than from what you say. Praise and encourage their good behavior, and, as much as possible, ignore their bad behavior. Use more "yes" than "no."
- **DISCIPLINE & TEACH:** Set limits that fit the age of the child. A two year-old cannot be expected to stay in an unfenced yard unsupervised, but a well-trained five year-old probably can. Work with the child to agree on reasonable limits (protections). Children need limits to help them feel secure. An important part of discipline is teaching. Providing children with ways to learn responsibility that is right for their age. Teach and show fundamental values (honesty, respect) that you want your grandchildren to practice. Talk with them about why you feel these values are important.
- **DETERMINE & MONITOR:** TV can teach your grandchildren many good things. But, you must also consider the risks. Many shows are more violent and show more sex than when you were rearing your children. Even the news and commercials may speak of things you don't want your grandchildren to hear.
- **NURTURE:** Express affection and compassion. Hug and kiss your grandchildren. If they don't like hugging, they will let you know. Don't force it upon them – there may be reasons they don't like hugging.
- **LISTEN & SPEAK:** Attend to your grandchildren's feelings and ideas. Children need to feel that it's okay to express their feelings, no matter if they are feelings of anger, resentment, hate or hurt. Tell them that you understand. Talk through their feelings and why they may be having them.
- **PROVIDE:** You will now be the person who offers shelter, food, clothing, health and safety needs. Plan to celebrate special events. As much as possible, maintain important routines that the children are used to having before they came to live with you. Help the children feel connected to your family history and cultural heritage.

To obtain more tips and resource information, go to the Texas AgriLife Extension Service website, <http://grandparentsraisinggrandkids.tamu.edu/grandparents.htm>, and AARP's Grandparents Raising Grandchildren website <http://www.aarp.org/family/grandparenting/>.