

The Difference in Being a Parent and a Grandparent

My husband (a brand new grandparent at the time) and a friend of his were swapping bragging rights over their new granddaughters. My husband's friend made this statement, "If I had known that grandkids were going to be so much fun I would have just skipped the kids and gone straight to the grandkids." Tis so true! But is just having fun with the grandkids all that we grandparents are supposed to do?

I have heard grandparents make statements such as: "My role is just to spoil them, give them whatever they want and send them back home to their parents." "These kids aren't my responsibility they're theirs." "I don't have to worry about that, they're not my kids." And finally, "With grandchildren, it's all care and NO responsibility." While many grandparents may make some of these statements in jest I'm afraid that there are some who are as serious as they can be. Is this really the attitude that we as grandparents are supposed to have?

Let me ask you? Exactly what do you think the role of a grandparent is? What do you think the role of a parent is? Are they similar or are they two complete and totally different roles? I think the answer can be "both".

As a parent I was completely responsible 100% of the time for the mind, body and soul of my children. It was my responsibility to raise them ie: to see that they had food to eat, clothes to wear, a roof over their heads and an education, both in academics and of things spiritual. This was my full time responsibility from the moment of their birth until they reached adulthood.

Now as a grandparent, or NaNa as I'm called by my grandchildren, I feel that there is only 1 phrase in this previous paragraph that does not apply to my role...."100% of the time". I do understand that with there being so many grandparents raising grandchildren that they do have this role 100% of the time and I do commend those grandparents, but I can only speak from what applies to me.

During the time that my grandchildren are under my care, whether it be as their babysitter while their parents work, or as their play date captain if they come to "visit", I am just as responsible for their minds, bodies and souls as their parents are. There are often times that I actually feel more responsibility as a grandparent than I ever did as a parent. I think that it's because as a grandparent I still have the responsibility of being a Christian example to my adult children as well as now being an example to their children. I know, too, that this is going to become even stronger for me as my grandchildren grow and begin to really notice my example both to them and to their parents.

I do know that the parent's role is very different and they have the *ultimate* responsibility to "raise" these grandchildren to adulthood, but I don't want to ever forget that as their grandparent that I, too, have a role in the molding of these children.

Did you know that there is only one place in the entire Bible that mentions a mother AND a grandmother together in one scripture? 2Timothy 1:5 “For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your **grandmother** Lois and your **mother** Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.”

Wow! Can you imagine what kind of examples BOTH of these women must have been to Timothy? Here is an example of faith that transcended three generations! Take a look at where this faith dwelt FIRST....with the GRANDMOTHER! Can you imagine making such an impact on your child and grandchild that your actual name would be mentioned in God’s Holy word? That thought just boggles my mind!

I was blessed enough to have had one of the Godliest grandmothers on the planet and I like to think that I am a product of her life and prayers. Although a generation was skipped between she and myself as far as me having a Christian parent, I often think of her example to me as a child. If I can only be to my grandchildren what she was to me then I will feel that I have succeeded in this role.

Now, as the title suggests, what differences are there though in being a parent and grandparent? Well, first of all I got to go to the hospital and wait for the arrival of my grandchildren without having to endure the pain of a labor and delivery. That part was wonderful!

I have to tell you that there is no feeling in the world that compares to that moment when your child has a child. The first time that my husband got to hold Faith, our first grandchild, he looked down at her and then looked at me and said, “Our baby had a baby.” That’s really how you feel, too, and until you experience it for yourself there are no amount of words I can type that can translate that feeling.

When you hold that grandchild for the first time and know that it is your blood that had a role in creating yet another life through your child it is very humbling. When that grandchild looks up at you with the eyes of their parent it is like a step back in time. The feeling that comes over you is almost like the love and devotion that you had for your own child has now, in the blink of an eye, been multiplied a thousand times over. It’s one of the hardest feelings to ever truly convey to someone else who has not experienced it yet. If you are a grandparent reading this then I know that you know exactly what I’m talking about.

Now let’s see, what other differences can I find?

1. When a parent stresses out and nearly has an coronary because their child has poured the entire box of Cheerios on the floor, a grandparent just smiles and says, “Oh, that’s okay. It’s not that big of a mess.”
2. When you’re out at a restaurant and the children are misbehaving very badly, as a grandparent you just brush it off while their parents look at you and say, “You would have never let us get away with that!”

3. When parents tend to use the words “Just wait a minute” or “I just don’t have time to do that right now” all too often, a grandparent tends to take advantage of every minute they have with a grandchild.
4. (One of my husband’s favorites) When your infant grandchild has a messy diaper and their parent asks if you could go change the baby’s diaper as a grandparent you can say, “Nope. I’m the grandparent and I don’t have to do that.”
5. When your grandchild is hurt, for whatever reason, as a grandparent you feel that pain twice as much when you see that it is hurting that child’s parent as well.
6. When you become a grandparent you are given a very special story telling gift. Rather than reading a book we have the ability to dig into the recesses of our memories and come up with the most wonderful tales of adventure that leave that grandchild saying, “Tell me another story, NaNa.”
7. As a grandparent chocolate is one of the 4 major food groups. As a parent.....not so much.
8. As a parent you can sit “criss cross applesauce” in the floor with the children and in an instant jump up to a full standing position and walk normally. As a grandparent you can’t jump up quite so fast and you walk a little wobbly until your hip joints get readjusted.
9. As a grandparent you have the ability to kiss the hurts of the grandchildren and in an instant make them all better. The parent can be in the same room, but the grandchild has a way of knowing whose kiss has more magic ability.
10. As a grandparent there is no other feeling to compare to when that grandchild wraps their arms tightly around you and nestles their little head in that “nook” between your head and shoulder. This is something though that I don’t feel is a difference between parents and grandparents because no matter the size of the child, be they an adult or a toddler, there’s just something about that “nook” and they just fit.

Blessings!
NaNa Paula