

Take Time For Self-Care

Identify and Come to Terms with Your Feelings Feelings are neither good nor bad, they simply are. Feeling sadness, anger, guilt, depression, or shame are normal in your new situation. Let yourself grieve the loss of your family members and the life you had or were planning to have. When you are ready, seek out friends, a peer group, or a professional counselor and talk about your feelings.

Don't Ignore Stress Stress can creep up on you and, if left unattended, can cause physical and emotional difficulties. You can manage your stress more easily by asking yourself—and writing down—these questions: *What are my warning signs of stress?*
What are my sources of stress?
What can I change? What can't I change?
What action can I take?

Try to take time each day, or at least each week, to de-stress through exercise, meditation, relaxation, journaling, or simply socializing and laughing.

Seek Support Support groups are a wonderful way to share and experience a sense of belonging. You can also seek support from a professional counselor, your friends and family, your clergy, or a community organization. Seek out community activities and educational opportunities for both you and your grandchildren to make new friends and learn new skills. Check with your local Extension office, public library, schools, community organizations, and churches for these opportunities.

Get To Know Your Grandchildren

Brush Up on Your Parenting Skills A lot has changed in the fields of child development and discipline in the past few decades. Seek out parenting classes and workshops that will introduce you to new research and techniques and better understand your grandchildren and their needs, no matter their age or developmental stage.

Be Involved Get to know your grandchildren's teachers, doctors, counselors, and friends. Actively participate in all appointments and school meetings and ask questions and communicate clearly your grandchildren's needs. Volunteer at their school, read to them every day, share mealtime, monitor their electronic device usage, and know their friends.

Listen and Talk Encourage your grandchildren to talk about their missing parents and/or siblings. Depending on their ages, help them understand their parent's behavior and why they are not in their lives or able to keep their promises. When appropriate, help them understand why a parent may be incarcerated, in a hospital or rehab facility, or just not in their lives. Seek out a child psychologist or counselor to work with your grandchildren.



Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

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The Montana State University Extension is an ADA/EO/AA/Veteran's Preference Employer and Provider of Educational Outreach.

