



Communicating with your Grandchildren: Using “I” Statements

Parenting is a tough job – and it can be even more difficult when you are parenting grandchildren. You may feel that you are not as in touch with today’s generation of young children and how to communicate with them. One communication technique that is often taught to parents and children today, is the use of “I” statements. The purpose of “I” statements is that you are able to express what the problem is, how you feel, and what you would like to see changed without blaming another person. The statement has four parts:

1. I feel ...
2. When ...
3. Because ...
4. I want you to ...

For example, if your 11-year old is consistently late getting to bed because he hasn’t finished his homework you might say:

1. I feel frustrated
2. When it is 9:00 p.m. and you are not ready for bed because your homework is not done
3. Because I am concerned that you get enough sleep, therefore
4. I want you to do your homework before watching television or playing on the computer each evening. This will be a new rule in the house.

In this example, a 10-year-old daughter leaves her coat and backpack on the floor near the front door everyday after school.

1. I feel disrespected
2. When I see coats and backpacks laying in the middle of the floor
3. Because I work hard to keep the house clean and looking nice,
4. and I want you to hang up your coat and put away your backpack after school. If this is not done, I will have you do some cleaning for me after school.

In this second example, the grandmother gives the daughter a logical consequence if she doesn’t comply with the request --- doing some cleaning after school.

I statements are much more effective than nagging or yelling. By owning the feeling and telling your grandchild what you want, you avoid blaming and model respectful communication. I statements may sound artificial at first, but after awhile you may find your grandchild using them too! Give them a them a try – what can you lose?

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April Motivation

"The best motivation is self-motivation. The guy says, I wish someone would come by and turn me on. What if they don't show up? You've got to have a better plan for your life than that." --Jim Rohn

"Don't let the fear of the time it will take to accomplish something stand in the way of your doing it. The time will pass anyway; we might just as well put that passing time to the best possible use." -- Earl Nightingale, speaker, author

"Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great." --Mark Twain

Playing With Our Grandchildren

"Play with me, Grandma." "Let's play, Grandpa." These are the best invitations we get as grandparents.

Follow Their Lead

We shouldn't worry about how to entertain our grandchildren. We don't have to make elaborate plans, or visit the zoo, or go to the movies, particularly with younger grandchildren. Simply follow their lead. They'll make up games, imagine all kinds of situations (weddings, for example), and turn our backyards or living rooms into forts or castles or ships. All we have to do is go along for the ride. When they get older, they may need more direction or enjoy more structured play. In the early years, however, they can show us more about play than we could ever show them.

Old-Fashioned Play Still Works

TV is a constant presence in the lives of grandchildren. Their TV is not our TV. It's brighter, louder, faster, and responsible in great part for the shortened attention spans of children today. DVDs of popular children's movies are available as often as a child or parent wants to play them, and today's toddlers know how to turn on a computer or a VCR long before they're potty trained. As grandparents, we can help balance the bombardment of sounds and images our grandchildren are exposed to every day with quieter, more thoughtful play activities.

Board games are a perfect example of old-fashioned play that still works. They teach children how to take turns, how to count, and how to focus. Dr. Lillian Carson describes "classic games such as 'Candy Land,' 'Memory,' 'Hi Ho! Cherry-O!' and 'Chutes and Ladders' as 'perfect' activities for grandparents and grandchildren to do together. These are easy, fun games that succeed in putting everyone on an even playing field and open up a host of opportunities for social interaction."

And since the playing field is even, make sure your grandchild doesn't always lose-or win. I watched what happened one evening when I let my four-year old grandson win "Hungry Hungry Hippos" too many times. He strutted around the room, pumping his arms in the air, looking like a mini-version of Rocky after his championship bout. After that, I made sure he won enough to be pleased with himself but lost enough so he didn't think he was Sylvester Stallone.

Card games are another great example of old-fashioned play. From Go Fish, Old Maid, and UNO to more advanced games like Solitaire, Hearts, and Canasta, there are card games for every age grandchild. A deck of cards is small, portable, inexpensive, and probably somewhere in your house already. And, as we know from past experience, cards make wonderfully flimsy houses that collapse most satisfactorily when the smallest of hands hits them.

Continued...

Active Play Isn't Just for Grandkids

Most children today engage in active play through organized sports and activities. Far fewer play individually, spontaneously, or rule-free. That's where we grandparents come in. We don't have to be football players, or marathon runners, or health club regulars to enjoy physical activities with our grandchildren. Walking is a great physical pleasure we can share with grandchildren. Children today often miss the pleasure of seeing their street, their neighborhood, or their world at eye level. We can walk with our grandchildren and introduce them to neighbors, point out flowers and trees, show them the firehouse, the police station, the bank, the stores. Then when we visit them, we can ask them to take us for walks in their neighborhood and show us the same things. Best of all, walking is a lifelong physical activity. If we make it interesting for our grandchildren early in their lives, they may continue it long into adulthood. Choose physical activities that match your strength and stamina. You don't have to jump rope to play. Merely turning the rope makes you part of the game (and gives you some great cardiovascular exercise). Kite flying, badminton, even hide and seek are good active play possibilities. Anything that involves moving around will benefit you and delight your grandchildren.

Helping Grandchildren Play Alone

We don't have to play with our grandchildren all the time. In fact, maybe it's best if we don't. When we hear the complaint; "There's nothing to do!" or "I'm bored," we shouldn't feel we have to rush in and fill the void. What we can do is help teach our grandchildren how to amuse themselves. Having a supply of arts and crafts materials on hand can solve a lot of problems. Paper, crayons, stickers, glue, sparkles, and construction paper are easy to find and inexpensive to purchase. Don't expect your grandchild to dive into a project without a little help, however. Children are more likely to stay engaged if you give them specific suggestions rather than simply tell them to "make something." Give them some ideas as to what to make and let them choose. Then step back and observe them as they work independently. Remain available to assist or affirm their 'creations.'

Giving children chores to do is another alternative. Remember, what we adults consider work, children often see as play. Helping in the kitchen, weeding the garden, even making a bed can be as much "fun" for a grandchild as any game you play together.

Getting to Know You

"For grandparents and grandchildren, play provides the ideal setting for getting to know one another" ("Intergenerational Play"). Whether we're walking, or playing cards, or making a mess with glue and glitter, we are learning about our grandchildren, and they are learning about us. So go out and play. There's only one rule. Have fun!

Reprinted from www.aarp.org

Do You Want More Ideas and Information?

The GIC Voice is a FREE newsletter for grandparents raising grandchildren that is published by AARP. Each colorful edition is packed full of information and ideas for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.

The winter edition of the GIC voice came out last week and features included: Grief and Loss Marks Lives of Children Raised by Grandparents, What Grandparents Can Do to Help, Obesity is Key Health Issue for Young and Old, New Study Focuses on Needs of Grandchildren in Kinship Care, and Grandparents Can Help Keep Teens Drug Free. Each issue also contains the following topics: Check This Out, AARP in Action, Tips for Grandparents, and Spotlight on the States. This newsletter is a great way for you to learn more about issues facing grandparents across the nation.

You can subscribe online at www.aarp.org/life/grandparents/Articles/a2004-01-20-gicvoice-newsletter.html. If you do not have internet access you can send a letter to :

AARP Grandparent Information Center,
601 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20049.

Support Group Leaders: you can order multiple copies of the GIC VOICE to distribute to your members by sending your information to the above address.



What's New in the Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project?

It is hard to believe that the Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren is almost three years old! We have come a long way in a short time due to the strong commitment on the part of grandparents in Montana and our state partners. Without everyone's hard work and dedication, the project would not be where it is at today. The following is a brief update of what has been accomplished and some future directions.

We currently have 12 active support groups across the state. Over the course of the project we have lost only two groups, so that is an 87% retention rate --- not bad at all! Whether your group has 3 or 20 participants, the support group facilitators are providing a valuable resource to grandparents in your community. We are hoping to start at least three new groups this year. If you receive this newsletter and do not have a support group in your community, but would like to see one started, please give us a call at 994-3395. We will work on trying to get something started in your area. The groups across the state are based on individual needs --- some are held twice a month, others monthly, some provide an educational component, and others are social support and friendship.

Annie Conway, Program Coordinator, for the project continues to publish the bi-monthly newsletter and our distribution list is growing. If you have suggestions for information or would like to highlight something that is happening in your community related to grandparents raising grandchildren, please let Annie know. She can be reached at 994-3395.

Annie has also published our Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren resource guide. We believe that this guide will grow in size in the future as other resources and services are added. Let us know if you have other resources to include. If you would like a copy of the guide, contact Annie.

Our GRG list serve is available if you have information that would be of interest to others related to Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. Feel free to also post questions or helpful hints for others. If you would like to be a part of our listserv, or have your name added to our mailing list, please contact Annie and she can add to either/both lists.

The GRG website is continuing to be developed. If you have access to the internet, visit the website at <http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/grg/index>.

htm . Tracy, our administrative support staff, and Annie continue to work on the site.

We hope to offer more day-long seminars in the coming year in various parts of the state. Currently we are working on seminars to address legal issues and senior benefits check ups with Al Ward at AARP. More information on this will be sent out as it is available. If you have ideas for seminars or other activities you would like the project to consider, let us know. Additionally, if you have any suggestions for the GRG Project in general, call Annie 994-3395 or myself 994-6745.

Finally, I hope all of the grandparents receiving this newsletter realize the importance of the job you are doing and that your grandchildren are getting a second chance because of your dedication and love. Remember to take a moment to take care of yourself so that you can be there for your grandchildren. And thank you for your hard work.

Sandy Bailey, Project Director
MSU Family & Human Development
Specialist

Grandparent Support Groups Across Montana

Billings:

Bernie Mason
P.O. Box 35021
Billings, MT 59107
256-2828

The support group will be meeting the first Monday of the month. There is an educational portion of the meeting and a time to share and discuss special concerns.

Bozeman:

Jeannine Sonnier
Parent Liaison
2435 Annie St.
Bozeman, MT 59718
587-3840

This support group meets once per semester for an hour and a half. Child care is provided.

Judy Morrill

Bozeman Senior Center
807 N. Tracy
Bozeman, MT 59715
586-2421

This group meets once a month at the Bozeman Senior Center for coffee and informal discussions.

Browning:

Connie Bremner
Eagle Shield Center
PO Box 76
Browning, MT 59417

This support group is located on the Blackfeet Reservation. The Native American Elder Family Caregiver Support Program offers Grandparent Raising Grandchildren Support group meetings once a month, usually on Tuesday from 10:00 to 12:00. They also have their meal site located at Eagle Shield Center; therefore after the meeting the grandparents enjoy a free luncheon.

Butte:

Jeff Jensen
Butte 4C's
101 E. Broadway
Butte, MT 59701
723-4019
800-794-4061
www.butte4-cs.org

This support group meets every other Tuesday at 6:00 pm and childcare is provided by Americorps volunteers.

Great Falls:

Geri Laubnetz
Partnership Project
1101 7th Ave So.
Great Falls, MT 59403

The support group meets from 11:30-1 PM one Tuesday per month. Lunch is served, and grandparents share experiences, and have a brief educational, sharing session based on grandparent needs.

Helena:

Jeannette B. Mattfeldt
562 Broadway
Helena, MT 59601

This group meets the 1st & 3rd Thursday of the month at 6:30 in the State AARP office. This group provides educational, social, and informal meetings. They also try to incorporate a speaker once a month. This group is also open to anyone helping raise someone else's children.

Joliet

Merrylee Vukonich
MSU Extension Agent
Carbon County
PO Box 230
Joliet, MT 59041
962-3522

This support group is new and just starting up in Carbon County.

Kalispell:

Melody Domphe
The Nurturing Center, Inc.
146 3rd Ave. W.
Kalispell, MT 59901
756-1414

This group meets once a month, usually on the 3rd Friday and usually evening 7-9 pm. They have had a variety of speakers on Grief & Loss, Legal Issues, and Healthy Discipline.

Missoula:

Kathy Revello, MSU Extension
Missoula County Agent
Amy Westereng
Families First Parenting Program
815 E. Front St. Suite 3
Missoula, MT 59802

This support group meets the second Tuesday of each month, October-June, 6:30 – 8 pm. It is co-sponsored by MSU Extension.

Poplar:

Ardis Oelkers
MSU Extension
Culbertson, MT 59218
787-5312

This support group is just starting up, contact Ardis for more information.

Rocky Boy Reservation:

Evelyn Gopher
Rocky Boy Elementary School
Box Elder, MT
395-4474 ext 229

The support group meets at 4:45 pm 1-2 times per month. In March, Tribal Court will be giving another training session on child custody laws to grandparents in the support group. If you would like more information about the support group or this training session, please contact Evelyn Gopher.



GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN PROJECT

316 Herrick Hall
Bozeman, MT 59715

Phone: (406) 994-3395
Fax: (406) 994-2013
Email: aconway@montana.edu

We're on the Web!

[http://www.montana.edu/
wwwhd/grg/index.htm](http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/grg/index.htm)

Hiking Events for Grandparents and Grandchildren



AARP Montana in conjunction with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks are planning 6 hikes in 2005-6 for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. Although all AARP members can be involved, our focus was to develop something that would be easy enough for grandparents and yet not too easy for grandchildren while giving an educational flavor as well. The six locations will be;

- 2005 Great Falls – Giant Springs State Park
Three Forks – Missouri Headwaters State Park
Lolo Pass – Travelors' Rest State Park

- 2006 Great Falls – Ulm Pishkun Buffalo Jump
Whitehall – Lewis & Clark Caverns
Billings – Chief Plenty Coups State Park

These events will offer guided hikes with a park ranger who is a Lewis & Clark certified historian. In addition, there will be food, information and other giveaways to make for a healthy day of fun, history and exercise. Dates and times have yet to be specified, so stay tuned for more information. For more information contact Al Ward at AARP Montana (406) 457-4703 or award@aarp.org.

