



## Grandmother

-an Indian word synonymous with respect and honor

Grandmother Turtle, Grandmother Spider, or just Grandma. She brought the people to earth and gave them the rules and knowledge they needed to live. Indian people have many grandmothers, real and mythic. Some are biological relatives, some adopted ones. Grandmothers raise children; they tell stories in the winter and teach children the skills they need for survival. Grandmothers are the central characters in the daily lives of Native women- indeed, of Native people (Green 1984:310).

Does this definition of grandmothers hold true in today's society? Do contemporary grandmothers interpret their roles the same as their grandmothers did in the past? It is impossible to generalize about all Native Americans, but it has been my observation with Plains tribes in Montana that there are pan-Indian expectations when it comes to the roles of grandmothers in Indian culture that have endured to the present.

In some Indian communities "Grandmother" is used to address any older woman and is used as a sign of respect and honor. Women look forward to the time when they reach this phase of life. These are the relations that hold a key to the past. They act as the transmitters of cultural identity which helps to perpetuate Indian communities.

Nowadays grandmothers' roles may be even broader than in the past. It is not unusual to find grandmothers serving on Tribal councils and working for Tribal government who are also raising biological or adopted grandchildren. Grandmothers may also fill the role of financially assisting her offspring as well as sharing child care responsibilities of grandchildren.

Some of the reasons for caring for grandchildren have certainly changed in contemporary society given the social ills affecting all cultures, but the prevailing attitude that grandmothers play a very important role in the lives of grandchildren has been established throughout Native oral histories. A grandmother raising grandchildren is not the anomaly it is in non-Native cultures. There doesn't appear to be any outward stigma or resentment attached to taking in and caring for children. Instead, it is looked upon as an expected obligation of entering this stage of life.

This is just one perspective on what the title of grandmother means. What does "grandmother" or "grandfather" mean in your tribe or culture? What are the traditional responsibilities of grandparents in your culture? Responses received at the address on the back of this newsletter will be posted in the next GRG newsletter with your permission.

Article submitted by Renee Harris, FSNE Coordinator, Montana State University. Opening quote: Green, Rayna, ed. *That's What She Said*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

### December Motivation

"Look at a day when you are supremely satisfied at the end. It's not a day when you lounge around doing nothing, it's when you've had everything to do and you've done it!" --Margaret Thatcher

# Dealing with Your Grandchild's Difficult Behaviors

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What do grandparents miss most after grandchildren come to live with them? The answer is always the same. They miss being a grandparent.

Before the move, grandparents were free to spoil their grandchildren. Now, they are the ones who have to keep those children in line. That's not nearly as much fun. It's also hard work. For one thing, parenting styles have changed a lot since grandparents raised their own children. "Time outs" are in. Spanking is out. Switching gears takes a lot of energy and patience. So does keeping tabs on curious little ones who find trouble at every turn. Grandparents aren't as young as they used to be. That becomes painfully obvious when they try to chase after a toddler or keep a teenager in check.

Guiding youngsters through life can also be emotionally draining. Grandparents may be at a loss when it comes to dealing with the mental health issues that trouble their grandchildren. These children are so young. Yet many of them have already lived through more trauma than some adults face in a lifetime. They feel alone and unloved. And they have needs that other kids don't share. This kind of trauma can change children. They may act differently than they used to. They may be angry or anxious. They could be aggressive or withdrawn. At the same time, they may need more comfort and understanding from the adults in their lives.

Grandparent caregivers must be strong enough to set firm limits for these children. They also need to be tender enough to offer plenty of praise and encouragement. It's a delicate balance. Getting it right would be hard for even the best parent.

## Parenting Troubled Kids

What do grandchildren need from the grandparents who are raising them?

- Grandchildren need positive reinforcement. Patting children on the back when they do something good can inspire them to do more good things. It can also help them feel good about themselves.
- Grandchildren need consistency. It's best to set ground rules that are clear. That way there are no questions about what is right and what is wrong. Do your best to enforce those rules in the same way every day.
- Grandchildren need to feel safe. If you have to punish them, do it calmly. Do not use physical or emotional violence.
- Grandchildren need to know you care. Make sure they know that their bad behaviors will never make you stop loving them.

## Behaviors You Can't Control

Are you having trouble getting through to a grandchild? Do your efforts at discipline fail time after time? Your grandchild could have a condition that you can't control. He or she may need help from others. Some medical disorders can cause a child's behavior to change. If you think this is happening to your grandchild, talk to your health care providers. They can screen your grandchild. The child may have a behavior disorder, a mood disorder or an anxiety disorder. If so, medication and therapy may work. See the child's doctor or mental health provider. Don't wait to get help. Most disorders are easier to treat when you catch them early.

# Continued...

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## Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Behavior disorders are common in children who are being raised by grandparents. One of the most common is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Children with ADHD can't control the way they act. They can't sit still. They have trouble focusing and completing tasks. They forget things. They interrupt others. They speak or act without thinking. These children are usually very bright. But they have a hard time doing well in school. They also have a hard time making friends. ADHD seems to run in families. Some experts think that people with ADHD may not have the right amount of some chemicals in their brains. These chemicals help people pay attention. Others believe that children can get ADHD if their mothers drink alcohol or use drugs when they are pregnant.

## Bipolar Disorder

Is your grandchild wildly happy or angry, and then very depressed? Perhaps it's bipolar disorder. People with this disorder have extreme mood swings. Sometimes, they may have lots of energy and talk a mile a minute. They might not be able to sleep. They may do things that are very risky. They may get angry and violent. These are called "manic" symptoms. At other times, the same people will be very quiet, sad and hopeless. They may have very low energy. They may cry a lot and feel like they want to die. These are called "depressive" symptoms. Anyone can develop bipolar disorder. It often runs in families. It can also appear in families that have a history of drug or alcohol abuse.

## Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

It's normal for children to feel afraid when they have to do new things or meet new people. But these fears usually go away after a while. Does your grandchild have fears that don't go away? Then he or she may have an anxiety disorder.

There are many anxiety disorders. One is called Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, or OCD. Children with OCD tend to get stuck on a particular fear or worry. They just can't let go of it. They feel that they have to do something over and over in order to make their fear go away. One example, a child with OCD may be obsessed with germs. To deal with that obsession, the child may wash his or her hands over and over until the skin becomes raw.

OCD may run in families. New events like starting school can bring it on. So can major losses, like moving, losing a loved one, or a change in the family.

## **Helping a Child Improve**

Serious behavior problems aren't a child's fault. And they aren't your fault either. But both you and your grandchild must work together so the child will improve. Get the help you need. Take part in the child's therapy. Give the child your support. And, together, both you and your grandchild can look forward to better days ahead.

*Reprinted from [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)*

# Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Still Needed

MSU Extension Family and Human Development is currently seeking grandparents who are raising grandchildren (GRG) in Montana to be a part of a study to examine how parenting a second time around affects grandparents and how to best provide support.

To participate, you will be asked to fill out two surveys about your experiences as a grandpar-

ent. After four months you will be asked to participate in an interview which will cover some additional questions about your grand-parenting experience.

MSU is seeking any grandparent who helps raise a grandchild across the state of Montana. We need to have grandparents who are attending support groups as well as those who are not in a support group.

Grandparents will receive a \$20 stipend as a thank you for your time and participation in this study.

If you would like to be a part of the GRG study, or if you have questions, please contact Annie Conway at (406) 994-3395, via e-mail at: [aconway@montana.edu](mailto:aconway@montana.edu), or send a letter to the address on the back of this newsletter.

## Discipline: A Four Part Series

Sandra J. Bailey, Family Human Development Specialist for MSU Extension, is preparing four Montguides that address the topic of discipline at the infant/toddler, pre-school, school-age, and adolescent age.

Discipline is a hot topic among parents, schools, and community agencies that support families. While there are many different

approaches to discipline in general, there are also different expectations for discipline as children grow and develop.

If you are interested in different approaches to discipline and different techniques for children as they grow, please visit

*"Discipline is a hot topic among parents, schools and community agencies that support families."*

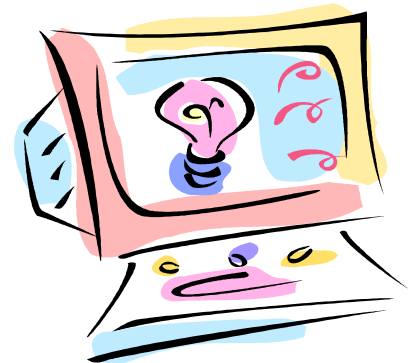
[www.montana.edu/publications](http://www.montana.edu/publications). There you will find the first two Montguides in the series on discipline as well as many other publications that may be of use to

you. You can also visit your county extension agent for copies of these Montguides.

## What Do YOU Want to Read About???

As a grandparent raising a grandchild, what are you interested in? What would you like to learn or read about in this newsletter? What information would you like to see presented in your local community? What challenges are you facing with your grandchild? What challenges or issues are you dealing with on a personal or professional level?

If you have any ideas for future newsletters or training sessions, please e-mail [aconway@montana.edu](mailto:aconway@montana.edu), or write Annie and send it to the address on the back of this newsletter, or call and leave a message at (406) 994-3395.



# The Fairness Trap

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“Trying to always be fair or give equally is an easy trap to fall into. Many parents do this when purchasing items, serving food, or giving time. Being fair or equal develops a score-keeping attitude.

Children measure their worth by comparing their treatment to that of others. Children really appreciate our recognizing and meeting their special needs, even if we occasionally treat them unequally.

Don't worry about spending the same exact amount of money on gifts or adding junk to one child's loot just to even the score. Base gifts on the child's individual needs or interests and stay within a general budget. Instead of measuring amounts of food, let children serve themselves, understanding that they must eat what they take. Instead of interrupting time with one child just because we haven't spent an equal amount of time with other children, remind them that we will spend time

with them, too. Base the amount of time on individual needs that might be quite different, but equally important.

It can be difficult, for both parents and children, to change beliefs about fairness and equality, but when children feel special and important they realize “equal” is often less.”

*Excerpt from The Parent's Toolshop: The Universal Blueprint for Building a Healthy Family (©2000), by Jody Johnston Pawel, LSW, CFLE. [www.parentstoolshop.com](http://www.parentstoolshop.com). Reprinted with permission from [www.NCFR.org](http://www.NCFR.org).*

# Delaying and Dawdling

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“Sometimes children seem to take forever walking, coming when called, or doing tasks we want done quickly. Gut reactions offer quick fixes that cause long-term problems.

If we carry children everywhere, they don't practice walking for themselves and become clingy.

If we drag them or swoop them up roughly, they are frightened and cry or resist.

If we threaten to leave them when they don't follow us, they feel insecure and unloved, believing we would actually abandon them.

If we do tasks for our young children, they don't get experience doing for themselves and are dependent longer.

Plan ahead, leaving time for children to do some tasks on their own.

Make deals like “You can put your coat on if you let me zip it up.” Offer choices to walk or carry them.

If they continue to dawdle, we can then pick them up, saying, “I can see you've decided to be carried this time. Next time, you'll have a chance to walk.”

This teaches them that being carried is a choice they have, not a punishment we impose. Consistent follow-through fosters internal motivation and teaches children the skills they need to comply.”

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

## Famous Broccoli Casserole

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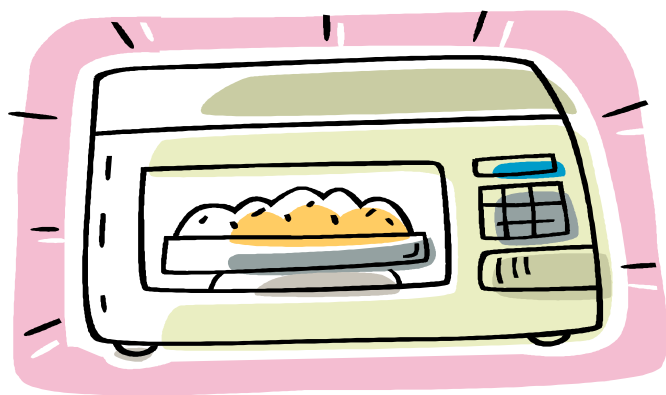
### What You Need

- 2 packages of frozen, chopped broccoli
- 2 Tbsp. melted butter
- 1/2 lb of processed American cheese
- 1 stick butter (melted)
- Saltine crackers

### What to Do

Pre-heat oven to 350.

Cook broccoli until it is almost done, and drain well. Return to pan. Add cheese and 2 tbsp. melted butter. Stir until cheese is almost melted and blended with the broccoli. Pour into a greased casserole dish. Cover with cracker crumbs, and drizzle melted butter over crumbs. Bake at for 25-30 minutes. Serves 8.



Submitted by Karen Adams of Reno, NV.