

Things Grandparents Know

Baby boomers seem gifted with perpetual youth. But they are also people of passion. From the moment this generation arrived on this earth, they seemed to be bringing a mission and a different vision for society than had existed before. This sense of knowledge and of vision accounts for the incredible drive baby boomers have shown throughout their adult lives which have resulted in changes to society so profound that life in America today only faintly resembles how we lived in the 50s and 60s.

Each era of life has brought its own challenges to baby boomers. As parents, baby boomers were committed to having a different kind of relationship with their children. They are more hands on, participatory and interactive with children in a much greater way than generations before. In a very real way, baby boomers parents sought to be both parent and best friends to their children. The outcome has not always been positive but you do see a sense of family unity and emulation of parents in children of boomers that is even more committed than the family model of the past because baby boomers viewed parenting as a mission and job one of their lives.

As baby boomers move out of the parenting role, at least in terms of having youngsters at home, they now have an opportunity to define in their own terms what it means to be a grandparent. Becoming grandma and grandpa may be a bit difficult for a generation that has always fought the coming of aging and resisted even adulthood much less old age. But if baby boomers embrace the concept of being the kindly and wise old grandparent and filling that role in the lives of their children and grandchildren, they can have an influence on another generation beyond them to pass along their insights and guidance in ways that only grandparents can do.

Children see grandma and grandpa in a different light. Naturally they love them and love the opportunity to visit their grandparents if for no other reason than grandma always has cookies for them. But sitting on granddads knee and hearing his stories or just enjoying his love and teasing is part of growing up that children cherish long into their adult years. And it is a time that even baby boomers can embrace and thoroughly enjoy.

There was a great book out not long ago named "If I knew being a grandparent was this much fun, I would have done it first." This amusing concept reflects that the joy of being grandpa and grandma to your children's children is fulfilling in ways that even surpass the important role baby boomers had as parents. Children listen to their grandparents because they are wise and old and it gives them a sense of security to see that it's possible to go through life

successfully and still be full of life and fun even when old age is upon us. That is why children intuitively know that there are things grandparents know that they want to learn while on granddads lap and they cherish the lessons they are taught from a revered elder.

It's good when baby boomers embrace this new role. Just as when boomers embraced parenthood, they threw themselves into the challenge with a passion that changed the definition of parenting for the better. So too, baby boomers can bring their passion, their sense of deep commitment and their love of family to the role of grandparent and give their grandchildren the gift of a wonderful grandma and grandpa who not only always had love and fun for them but also always seemed to know the right answer.

Look to your time with your grandkids as a time to pass along the wisdom that 50-60 years of life has given you. While children need the guidance and knowledge of their parents, the role of teacher, disciplinarian and rules maker sometimes clouds the parent relationship. That is why grandchildren are open to hearing what grandma or grandpa has to say because the relationship is more clear cut and they see their grandparents as fountains of wisdom always given in love.