

20 Secrets No One Tells You About Becoming a Grandparent

BEING A GRANDPARENT ISN'T ALWAYS A WALK IN THE PARK—BUT IT'S WORTH IT.

When you think of being a grandparent, you probably imagine hugs, cuddles, and kisses 24/7. And while all of these things are certainly part of what it's like when your children have children, it's not all fun and games. The restraint you have to exhibit and the reflection you end up doing on your own parenting—well, that's harder to brace yourself for when becoming a grandparent.

I myself have experienced myriad emotions since finding out my son Adam and my daughter-in-law Lauren will be welcoming a baby boy—a mixture of delight and excitement combined with incredulity. My tow-headed cutie pie is now a 32-year-old man about to take on the role of parent to my first grandchild! In preparation for my grandson's arrival, I talked to friends who are grandparents and did some soul-searching and research of my own to come up with some grandparenting secrets nobody tells you (though they absolutely should).

1. You will need to stay in shape to keep up with those bundles of energy.

Before you become a first-time grandparent, create a workout routine that involves running, stretching, and lifting since these are activities that you will be doing when spending time with your grandkids. Increase your stamina and take naps as needed. (It's OK if you enjoy them more than the kids do.)

2. You will feel a new sense of pride for your own children.

When you first witness your child holding, feeding, changing, talking to, and playing with their child, you'll feel an overwhelming amount of joy that this big person who was once a tiny human in your care is now raising the next generation.

3. It'll make you think about how you raised your children.

As a grandparent, you will do a lot of reflecting on your own parenting. And be warned: Though you'll be grateful you did certain things, there will be other things you wish you had done

differently. Just remember that everything you did helped your child become the loving parent they are now.

4. Your children will have a newfound appreciation for you as a parent.

Having kids gives your own children a new perspective on what they were like as kids and what you were like as a parent. Sure, that can have its downsides, but it can also make you and your offspring closer than ever. Recently, my son gave me a card that said, "Santa asked if I wanted a million dollars or the greatest mom in the world. I said I would take the million dollars since I already have the greatest mom in the world." Of course, I cried and keep the card on my kitchen counter as a reminder of how blessed I am.

5. You will have to follow your own kids' rules.

As challenging as it might be sometimes, you have to remember that now your child is the parent. You can have a vote, but your child and child-in-law have veto power. You can make a suggestion, but they have the final say. And your opinion may not always be wanted, so know when you're overstepping those boundaries.

6. You'll need to adapt to the changing times.

What was conventional wisdom when you were first parenting may no longer be applicable today. It's important to trust your children and to do your own research to be sure you're current with today's best practices, like that babies should sleep on their backs on a firm mattress without bumper pads rather than in a cushioned crib on their stomachs.

7. You won't be able to walk into a store without being tempted to pick something up for your grandchild.

As soon as I heard I was becoming a grandparent, I started looking for cute outfits for my grandson. I found him a onesie that reads "the snuggle is real," and another that says "smart and handsome like my dad." Oh, and books that I plan to read to him always find their way into my shopping cart!

8. You will probably be more patient and flexible with your grandchildren than you were with your kids.

With age comes wisdom and patience. So the things that your children might have done to push your buttons probably won't annoy you when it's your grandkids who are doing them. At this point in life, you've learned to take time to breathe and ask yourself if what is happening is worth reacting to. Besides, you can—and should—leave the hard stuff up to their parents.

9. You will learn what matters most.

The things you might worry about on a daily basis will seem inconsequential when you spend time with your grandchildren. Little things like cleaning up around the house hardly matter when you're in the company of your pride and joy.

10. You don't have to say yes to everything, nor do you have to be included in everything.

If your children ask you for assistance with transportation and childcare, say yes when you can and are willing to and no if you are not able. And don't compare yourself with the other set of grandparents. It's healthy to set boundaries for a balanced parent-child-grandchild triad.