



# Grandparents Corner

*April 2015*

## *Encouraging Open and Honest Communication*

Communicating open and honestly with your grandchildren is one of the best things you can do to help them cope. It is especially important to take time to really listen as they need an adult they can go to with their questions, concerns and feelings.

**Plan regular times to sit and talk** - free from games, TV, or other distractions.

**Encourage your grandchildren to talk about their feelings, both good and bad** - try to listen without judging or dismissing their feelings.

**Help your grandchildren learn to identify their feelings** - example: if your grandchild seems upset, you might say, "You look sad, is something bothering you?"

**Young children communicate through play** - young children may not be able to verbalize how they feel, but will express themselves through their play.

**It's OK to say "I don't know"** - you don't have an answer for everything. If you don't know, be honest about it. Don't evade the question or lie.

### **How Much Should You Tell Young Grandchildren?**

**Avoid telling the child too much** - many children are too young to understand the whole story about their situation. If you tell them all the details of the situation, it may do more harm than good. Too much information can be confusing, scary or overwhelming for them.

**Avoid telling the child too little or nothing** - kids are smart and they will pick up tidbits about their situation. If kids learn about their situation from someone else, they could feel hurt, deceived and confused. They may avoid asking you questions or talking to you about other important concerns because they think certain topics are "off limits."

**Never twist the facts or lie to your grandchild** - even young children know the difference between the truth and a lie. They often piece together information, but then are afraid to talk about the truth. Some people may twist the facts in an effort to protect the child.

The best strategy is to be honest at their level of understanding. Your grandchildren will learn the importance of trust and honesty in a relationship.

*Sometimes, communication is made more difficult by the simple fact that the senior is hard of hearing. Make sure your face is in the light so that your lips and facial expressions can be seen. Read the issue and answer True or False to the questions below.*

1. It is possible to understand and share how someone feels without being overwhelmed by them or their concerns.    T    F
2. Sometimes you have to “read between the lines” and look for meaning and emotion behind what is being said when you want to better understand someone.    T    F
3. To be a better caregiver, I need to take care of me, too.    T    F
4. There is no real way to effectively set boundaries when communicating with someone you are caring for.    T    F
5. It is best to wait until the senior is very ill before discussing what choices might be the best for the future.    T    F
6. All family members must express their opinions.    T    F
7. There is no need to involve the older adult in the decision or to respect his or her wishes.    T    F
8. When making an important decision concerning a person with a chronic illness, sometimes extra help is needed such as the expert assistance of a geriatric care manager.    T    F
9. My role as caregiver is to be an advocate for the person in my care and consider his or her best interests.    T    F
10. It is important to take into account important cultural, religious or family values of the person in your care when guiding an important decision concerning their life.  
T    F

**KEY:** 1. T 2. T 3. T 4. F 5. F 6. F 7. F 8. T 9. T 10. T