



A Mutually Beneficial Relationship

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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I once read an article that asked, "Why do grandparents and their grandchildren get along so well?" The answer was "Common Enemy".

I'm sure that the intent of this story was to illicit a chuckle from the reader but often, in my private practice, I see an unhealthy alliance between these two separate generations against the parents of the children.

Being a grandparent has a number of advantages. Often retirement allows time and finances that were not present for individuals when they raised their own children. Grandparents have "experience" and "wisdom" that they may have lacked in previous years and frequently enjoy being with young people who they can send home after a holiday. The shared experiences can last a lifetime for all concerned.

When I grew up, we had grandparents who lived very close to our town. I remember how I loved to take the train to Wolseley in order to spend the day shelling peas, visiting neighbours or shopping with my dad's parents. They would do things that I thought were unique. They made their own soap, canned fruit and make interesting furniture out of tin cans and wooden spools. I loved it when grandpa would sing a ditty to us or grandma would take us swimming in the dugout.

When I went to Regina to see my maternal grandmother, we would sit in the park, visit the Exhibition, or be introduced to all the staff members in the Co-op cafeteria where she had lunched every day. She taught me how to begin the "Lord's Prayer" in Norwegian and shared stories of our ancestors.

When grandparents use their time with their grandchildren to teach skills, recall memories or instill values, everyone wins. On the other hand, however, if they form alliances that degrade parents or diminish respect, everyone loses.

I have six grandchildren and, of course, they are each amazing! When they visit with me, I try to focus on how I can provide them with unique experiences, information that will increase their sense of "family" and living examples of my values.

I am very cautious about supporting the parents in their roles and openly supporting their decisions to and in front of the children in order to not diminish their positions.

Each of us has the power to create and promote healthier relationships. How have you done this within your family? Remember, your actions become the memories of the generations who follow.