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## Grandparenting

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One solution to the alienation that can lead to young children using guns is generational interaction. The patience and moderation grandparents often express are so needed in young lives. By encouraging and promoting this family relationship, society can bring a gentler influence to children.

Of course, the benefits flow the other way, too. Age is no barrier to worth. Children express spontaneity, joy, innocence, affection. These qualities are an expression of their inherent spiritual nature. And they are qualities to be enjoyed, as well as cherished and protected. Instead of focusing only on what children need to learn, we can also appreciate the qualities they naturally radiate.

Grandparents have more than age and experience. They often express great patience, unselfishness, and generosity. They are sometimes able to devote exclusive attention to children while parents are busy working and juggling schedules. The qualities expressed by children and grandparents are so complementary, like jelly and peanut butter. It's possible to keep them separate, but they're so much better together!

When I was growing up, my parents lived hundreds of miles from my grandparents. Visits were special occasions. At my grandmother's house, we woke up each morning to the gentle cooing of doves. To this day, when I hear a dove I think of peaceful, unhurried mornings. Once I approached a total stranger to tell him that he smelled just like my grandfather - it was an especially clean smell that I hadn't experienced in years. We talked, and he seemed to enjoy the encounter as much as I did.

Since my grandparents were significantly older, an aunt and uncle took on the grandparent role for me when we moved back where the rest of the family lived. My aunt gave us entire weekends of her time. We would play games, go to the park, swim, eat fun food. My uncle had dinner parties and

regaled us with stories of faraway places, history, theater. He took us to museums and plays. What a blessing it was to have such variety!

Another way of saying it is that love can be expressed in so many ways.

Yet the most important common denominator of all these "grand people" was each individual's love of God. Each of them read the Bible and strove to practice its teachings in daily life. Their efforts to understand God and express His/Her qualities shone through their activities. More in what they did than in what they said, more in deeds than in words, they set silent examples that inspired us to learn more of God ourselves and see the unlimited possibilities of divine goodness.

One of the classic "grandparenting" stories involves Moses and the children of Israel. When Moses led his people out of Egypt, it took almost three years for them to reach the Promised Land. But then the adults were unwilling to enter for fear of the peoples who lived there. So Moses led them for 40 years in the wilderness until the children among them grew to adulthood. It was this generation that entered the Promised Land. You could say that Moses acted as a grandparent to a generation of grandchildren, teaching them God's law and the necessity of obedience to divine authority. The grandchildren learned their lessons well. One of their first encounters after entering the new land involved taking Jericho solely through obedience to God, without shooting an arrow (see Josh., chap. 6).

In this age when a six-year-old uses a gun, perhaps it's time for grandparents to give the best gift there is: a love of God, a daily example of studying the Word of God, and a sharing of the practical blessings of obedience to God. As it says in Psalms, "For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (100:5).

I make strong demands on  
love, call for active witnesses  
to prove it, and noble sacrifices  
and grand achievements as  
its results.... Love cannot be a  
mere abstraction, or goodness

without activity and power.

Mary Baker Eddy