



JERRY CAMMARATA FATHERS DIARY

Kids need grandparents, too

And I quote, "every time a child is born, a grandparent is born too." Isn't that the truth. The unsung heroes and heroines of our society continue to be the elders who, when you need a pinch of salt or information about life processes, can be supportive.

After all, the grandparents know it all—they have been there. Take our new son, Gerald Vincent as an example of grandparent power. Like other new-borns, he has been uncomfortable in the evenings. He takes his bottle and doesn't seem to burp up all the consumed gas. Going to sleep has not been an easy task either. We called our physician, Dr. Wu, to reorder a prescription of Donatal that our two previous children took when they experienced the same condition. The doctor's response to us was that the best way to deal with this problem these days is to give the child tender loving care. My wife and I thought we were giving our child tender loving care. What to do!

Well, leave it to my mother-in-law, Ida. To the rescue with a simple home spun remedy that got my wife through the same problem when she was first learning how to pick up her head and roll over.

Try it

Now we give Gerald Vincent two baths. The first is given mid-morning to prepare him for a refreshing day. The second bath is the relaxer. After his bottle in the early evening and a loving attempt at burping, he is placed in his tub of lukewarm water and given a soothing massage and conversation. To our surprise, he has not had as much trouble with gas and

has been able to fall asleep much easier and longer through the night. Dr. Wu was right. Extra tender loving care like giving little Gerald Vincent a bath a night helps a great deal. It took Grandma Ida to show us the way.

And what thanks does grandma get for her efforts? Quite a lot. For one thing, my wife and I do consider and discuss ideas of parenting with our parents and implement many. Secondly, the baby appears to be content, offers a smile and really is saying to all of us, Thank You.

A real generation gap

Recently after reading, "Grandparents, Grandchildren—The Vital Connection," by Arthur Kornhaber, M.D. and Kenneth L. Woodward (Anchor Press, 1981), I developed a greater appreciation for the special bond that all grandparents should have with grandchildren. It was Kornhaber and Woodward that gave us the opening quote. Further they indicate, "Society records the child's birth and its parents but not its grandparents.... One reason this is so is that... people do not have to do anything in order to become grandparents." It seems to me they paid their dues and then some and should get a piece of the applause when the new miss or mister enters this life.

If you want to see what kind of appreciation your child has for their grandparents, ask him or her to draw a picture of them. According to the authors' work in this area, pictures drawn by children of their grandparents can be divided into three groups. Each group depicts how much interac-

tion the child has with his or her grandparents. For example, in group one, close grandparents are drawn large, in full figure and detailed as well as doing some activity. Group two illustrates children with little contact. Their pictures emphasize leave-taking expressions such as grandma waving goodbye. Group three provides drawings of distortions and bizarre activities of grandparents. Grandparents are imaginary people and recorded as such.

Truly, kids don't hide how they feel when they draw. That has been demonstrated over and over. The authors have been able to assist us in recognizing a deficiency our children may have in interacting with their grandparents. Of course, we are not psychologists or social workers, but I bet your child can produce a picture of his or her grandparents that will be pretty much on the mark of reality.

Planned grandparenthood

If you want life to be more meaningful to your children, get the grandparents as involved as possible. Give them a sense of purpose. Let them be responsible for certain kinds of care of your children. Take them on trips with you. Oh, yes, they can be your babysitter. That's terrific. A night or two with the kids is right up their alley; be sure, however, to give them a night or two to go out on their own.

Remember, the way you act as an organizer of the generations in your family will have a direct impact on the way your children will perceive you and your spouse when you grow old and they have children.

There is too much to know and do to selfishly attempt parenting alone. Certainly even consider adopting an elder down the street. Come on! Let's preserve that vital connection between grandparents and grandchildren.

If you still need more information, dip into the book by Kornhaber and Woodward before you get any older.



Grandparents have an enormous amount to give to their grandchildren.