

**Little Trees Creations
PO Box 178 Carlsborg, WA 98324
360 683 0992 Itcreate@olypen.com**

**Linda Silvas
Author of “Mama Bear Baby Bear” Indian Lore.
How substance abuse can fragment the family circle.**

**What Are the Emotional Effects Grandparents Go Through
Because They Are Raising Their Grandchildren?**

When any grandparent, not just Native American, decides that they are going to raise their grandchildren, the emotional rollercoaster that comes along with the decision is not the easiest, or the most fun to ride. Native American grandparents quite often have many more difficulties adapting to the choice, but if they can find it, they have a larger, more structurally sound support system to utilize.

In Native American society, it is tradition that all members of a tribe assist in the raising of all the children. Or at least that was the way it was. When one parent is having difficulty with a child, another parent may step in to help. There is, however, a great deal of pride amongst Native Americans, and this can be somewhat detrimental to the Native American grandparent that is trying to raise their grandchild.

If the reason behind the child being reared by the grandparent is not a socially acceptable reason such as substance abuse, incarceration, sometimes disgrace becomes associated with the child. This can be very difficult for both the child and the grandparent to overcome.

Sometimes legalities come into play that makes it more stressful for the grandparent to raise the grandchild. Due to the laws surrounding the protection of Native American children and that they need to be raised by other Native American peoples, it can greatly limit the options for the child. This often means that the only option is the grandparent, whether they want or feel they are able to care for a young child again.

Grandparents have great emotional bonds with their grandchildren. It is different than what they had with their own child because as we grow older our belief systems change. We are more tolerant in many ways.

Depression is found to be high among some grandparents that have taken on the task of raising their grandchildren. Often this is due to a generational gap but more to finances.

Grandparents are afraid they are not going to be able to continue to care for the child as they age, or that their pensions are not going to be enough to provide adequately.

Often a grandchild may be experiencing behavioral or emotional problems due to the home environment the child just came from. The grandparent may not understand all the stressors the children are under and fear they may not notice when the child needs help in time to get help.

Depression makes for a tense home for the child and can actually cause more problems. Depression assists in the creation of higher levels of stress, and stress can produce extremely negative impacts upon the physical health of the grandparent.

Often the grandparents get a feeling of failure when they have to bring in and raise their grandchildren. They feel that they themselves have failed as parents because they did not teach their

own children how to be good parents. They worry that they will again fail to teach their grandchildren the same skills. Because of these beliefs and feeling, often grandparents will not seek out assistance and support groups to help them raise this new generation. This results in a feeling of alienation.

Being a grandparent raising a grandchild is nothing like when they raised their own children. They are missing legal rights to care for the children they are trying to raise. It is more difficult to obtain specific services such as Federal Aid programs without permanently adopting the child. It is much harder to do simple things like merely enrolling the child in school or getting health care taken care of in a timely fashion.

If more grandparents could find help, they would find they are happier and can do a better job raising their beautiful grandchildren to be positive members of society and they will realize the blame does not rest on their shoulders.

Now lets talk about abuse. Many grandparents are already in a very emotional state of mind. Having another child to raise was not exactly in the plan. Retirement, travel, do what ever I want attitude is a good feeling. This is something we all prepare for and look forward to... Time to relax, enjoy life, and take a trip.

How things can change.

Now as parent you have to deal with your own child's attitude, and believe me, that adult child will have one, especially if their minds are altered by substance.

There will be situations when the adult child accuses the grandparent of not raising their child the right way, feeling are hurt and most of the time anger is already set in.

Here is one of the most common abuse and I will play it out in the third party.. “Mom/dad, I have a chance to get very good paying job and get my life straightened out, only one thing.. I need my driver’s license. If I could get it then things would be fine but I need some money to pay my tickets or I can’t get my drivers license back” ...

Well now, mom is thinking “Hmm, if he could only get his license back and get this great paying job then he can make a good home for him and his child and my life will go back to normal. “Okay son, do it, go get your license.” Son says “Yeah, well mom, I need \$3000 to pay my tickets off, can you help me get on my feet mom? Please, It’s probably the only time he say’s “Please”.

You know your money is tight. Your on a fixed income, you now have your grandchild/children to raise and feed. How can you spare the \$3000? But some how you do and you do it because your adult child is trying to straighten out his life and you so desperately want them to.

Well 9 out of 10 times the plot only thickens. Because after paying the tickets, now he needs to fix his car so it will be safe and reliable to get to his new job. Now he needs insurance, new/clean cloths, gas money, lunch money and the list goes on and on and on. Nine times out of ten, they aren’t even grateful, in fact, sometimes they cops a major attitude if you can’t give more money and it turns into a terrible scene. You are emotionally and financially spent/exhausted.

Your adult child doesn’t realize he is abusing you, you do not realize your being abused.

Attitude plays a huge part.

Asking for money.

Not showing up to visit their child.

These are a few of the things a parent must look for. You must be educated in this new world and receiving abuse from your adult child is a very common event.

Learning to say “no” in a gentle but firm way is going to save you a lot of grief.