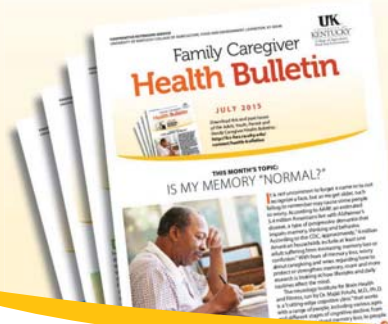


# Family Caregiver Health Bulletin



**SEPTEMBER 2015**

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## THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

# GRANDCHILDREN AS CAREGIVERS

**W**hile middle aged adults make up the majority of caregivers for older and chronically ill family members, grandchildren are playing an increasing role in the care of grandparents. Their challenges and experiences are just as important to consider as families turn to the next generation. **Some of the family obligations experienced by caregivers are due to:**

- Demographics (families live further apart; spouses or adult children may not be able/available)
- Physical and emotional needs of care recipient

Continued on the back →



# Grandchildren are playing an increasing role in the care of grandparents.

## Continued from page 1

Grandchildren caregivers are unique because they are facing the age-related problems of both their grandparents and parents. They are also at a developmental point in their lives that leaves them balancing the stress and challenges of caregiving with the demands of education, work, social and romantic engagements, and even raising young children.

Grandchildren also worry about the long-term commitment of caregiving. They become conflicted between what they want to do, what they think they should do and what they feel their role as a grandchild will allow.

### Common grandchildren caregiver challenges include:

- Time constraints
- Financial sacrifice
- Stress-related worry and anxiety

Some grandchildren will incorporate poor coping strategies. For example, they may become increasingly agitated or shut down. **It is therefore important to embrace effective coping mechanisms such as to:**

- Take time for yourself
- Find balance between caregiving and other aspects of life
- Be flexible
- Be creative and invite friends to your grandparents house
- Attend caregiver trainings
- Learn about end of life care and other legal issues such as advanced directives and powers of attorney

*Grandchildren caregivers are unique because they are facing the age-related problems of both their grandparents and parents.*

- Understand chronic illness and diseases affecting your grandparent
- Utilize local resources
- Stay connected to friends and family
- Ask for help

While caregiving can be challenging at any age, there are also many positive aspects. **Some positive aspects for grandchildren caregivers will include learning:**

- A lot about oneself and one's family through caregiving
- To enjoy the joy that comes with providing care
- To enjoy time spent with older adults
- Life values and lessons from grandparents
- About the aging process and ways to accept one's own aging
- To assign meaning to their role as a caregiver
- That grandparents are a priority
- That a grandchild can make a difference in their grandparents' lives
- That as a grandchild caregiver you have different responsibilities than other grandchildren
- To evolve into a better caregiver and better understand caregiver responsibilities to apply in other aspects in life
- To have an interest in the study and/or field of aging
- How good/satisfactory it feels to be a caregiver

### SOURCES:

- AARP. (2011). The surprising caregiver: Your grandchild. Retrieved July 13, 2015 from <http://www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving/info-08-2011/grandchild-as-caregiver.2.html>
- Fruhauf, C. A., Jarrott, S. E., & Allen, K. R. (2006). Grandchildren's perceptions of caring for grandparents. *Journal of Family Issues* July 2006 vol. 27(7), 887-911.
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Family Caregiver  
**Health Bulletin**

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