

# The Emotional Aspects of Being Long-Distance Grandparents

Link: <https://www.liveabout.com/the-long-distance-grandparent-blues-1696075>

Thanks to new technology, dedicated grandparents can find ways to connect with their grandchildren, even when they live thousands of miles away. The emotional aspects of separation are not, however, so easily remedied. Long-distance grandparents may feel sadness, bereavement, pain, resentment, jealousy, frustration and anxiety. These suggestions may help grandparents who are struggling with these emotions.



## Initial Separation

Your joy at learning that you are going to be a grandparent may be tempered with sadness if the expectant parents live far away. You may blame or resent the family member whom you feel is to blame for the geographical distance, even though it may not be anyone's fault.

In a slightly different situation, if your grandchild lives near you and then the family decides to move far away, what you feel may be very close to bereavement. In some ways, it is harder if you were geographically close to grandchildren and then have to adapt to distance.

### What to Do

- Give yourself permission to feel sad.
- Don't allow yourself to place blame.
- Acknowledge that your children have the right to choose where they want to live.
- Pursue your own interests or develop new ones if you have the time.
- Devote some (but not all) of your energy to keeping in touch with your grandchildren.
- Don't forget to use similar strategies to stay close to adult children.

## The Stress of Visiting Them

Your expectations for visiting your grandchildren will be high. It is unlikely that everything about the visit will go smoothly, although it will help if you make decisions about the visit before you go. Once you arrive, it may take time for your grandchildren to feel comfortable with you. Don't be hurt if a younger grandchild doesn't seem to like you. A little time and effort will break down your grandchild's resistance.

When it is time for you to leave, you may feel sadness for two reasons: first, that the trip was not as perfect as you had imagined, and second, that the trip is over.

#### What to Do

- Remind yourself before the trip not to have unreal expectations.
- Don't push yourself on your grandchildren. Let them make the overtures.
- Don't overstay your welcome, and your visit will end on a better note.
- Before you leave, make tentative plans for your next trip. That way, you have something to look forward to.

### **The Stress of Entertaining Them**

You may be ecstatic at the prospect of your family coming for a visit. If, however, they are coming back to their hometown, they are probably planning to visit friends and perhaps the other grandparents as well. You may end up feeling jealous or slighted. If the kids and grandkids are staying with you, you may even feel as if you have been used as a cut-rate hotel. And those grandchildren that seem so perfect don't always behave perfectly when they are staying with Grandma and Grandpa.

#### What to Do

- Remind yourself not to have unreal expectations about the visit.
- Don't be a slave to their every need. Allow them to help with meals and chores.
- Consider entertaining their friends or in-laws in your home.
- Don't be afraid to set standards for the grandkids' behavior, although you won't want to make those rules too tough.
- Before they leave, make tentative plans for their next visit.

### **Reunion Anxiety**

For many, it will never happen, but a blessed few will learn that their family is moving back to the area. The grandparents should feel unmixed pleasure, right?

Actually, any change in family dynamics can be stressful. Often, the family in transition will plan to move in with the grandparents, creating a multigenerational household. Sometimes they will rely on the grandparents for babysitting or even regular child care. A long-distance relationship can end up looking like a fairly good thing.

#### What to Do

- Understand that change, even positive change, is usually stressful.
- Set boundaries in regard to child care and other accommodations.
- Be prepared to have somewhat mixed emotions at times.
- Relax and look for the positive.