

# Annoying Habits of Grandparents

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One of the greatest joys of being a parent is watching my children interact with my own parents. My kids, ages 1 and 4, are head-over-heels for them, and the feeling is mutual. I love seeing the happiness they bring one another. I especially love it when my parents take my children off my hands for a few hours, allowing my husband and me to go out to dinner, grab some extra sleep, or just enjoy a much-needed break.

I am grateful for all of these things. That is not to say that my parents don't occasionally drive me crazy. Indeed, all of this grandparental wonderfulness comes with some annoying side effects. Like when they...

1. **Give the grandchild way too much sugar, and are shocked when the kid goes on a sugar-fueled rampage.** My husband and I try to live by the rule that grandma and grandpa can do whatever they want when they are in charge, but why do they never learn from this?
2. **Forget that you exist.** It's all about the grandchildren now. You could be coughing up a

lung or bleeding from your eyeballs, but the first question out of your mother's mouth still will be: "How are the kids?"

3. **Call to make sure you're dressing your child appropriately for the weather.** I guess this one shouldn't surprise me, because my mother used to call to remind *me* to wear a hat – but, well, see #2.
4. **Constantly tell you that whatever you're doing is "not the way we did it when you were little."** Put babies to sleep on their backs? Strap kids into car seats until they're 8? Ha! Not in the good old days, when liquor was a valid sleep aid for infants and kids free-ranged it in the back of the family station wagon.
5. **Buy your kids way too much stuff.** "Yes, I get the thing about wanting to spoil the grandchildren, but please don't go overboard for Christmas and birthdays," you tell them gently. "The kids don't have the attention span to open more than two or three presents, not to mention the fact that my house is already overflowing with their stuff." Nice try, Scrooge. Not only will this tactic fail, but you will be accused of depriving your children of happiness.
6. **Offer your children bribes that come back to haunt you.** For instance, my 4-year-old now expects to get Pez every time he poops on the potty. And the other day he said to me, "Be sure to tell Nana that I shared with my brother; then she'll take me to the toy store." So my kid has learned that basic acts like using the toilet and sharing can be used to extort adults for toys and candy. Thanks a lot, Mom.
7. **Take credit for everything.** "Oh, I taught him that," is a frequent refrain. It might be true – but, given #6, I have to question their methods.
8. **Have a revisionist view of what they were like as parents.** "What do you mean? We weren't *that* strict."
9. **Have somehow earned medical degrees since becoming grandparents.** "It sounds like an ear infection! He needs antibiotics!!"
10. **Passive-aggressively judge your parenting choices.** "You're leaving them and going away for three days? Wow, that's brave. I never did that when you were little."
11. **Throw you under the bus.** Heaven forbid you step in and say no to the sugar, they will not hesitate to make you the bad guy: "Well *I'd* love to give you a cupcake, sweetie, but your mommy said no."



## Michelle Vames

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