

ARE YOU A GUILTY GRANNY?

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Have you felt like a 'guilty granny' (or Gramps)? I have heard three 'guilty Granny' scenarios in the last few days and thought I would share them, along with our response. People who use their parents to mind their children might like to read this article, too.

1. "I have always tried to be available for my daughter's kids, but I am now beginning to feel guilty for wanting to have a life! Am I being selfish for starting to feel like I am being taken for granted?"

Suggested response:

You can explain to your son or daughter that you love your grandchildren and that you enjoy your freedom as well. Tell them that you will not always be free because of other commitments. Let them know they are free to ask, but that you will not always be free to help. Add that they should organize back-up baby sitters so they won't be disappointed. Ask them to give you at least a week's notice of their plans, unless it is an emergency.

2. A grandparent saw her son and four-year-old granddaughter in the street. Here is how the conversation went. "Hey, Sammi, how would you like to stay with Granny tomorrow? (Big nod and grin from granddaughter). What about it Gran? We will drop Sammi off at 8 a.m. for the day. Thanks a lot!" Granny was put on the spot in front of a child. She hardly had time to think, let alone reflect on what she had planned for that day.

Suggested response:

Tell your son or daughter that it is completely unfair to get a grandchild's hope up about coming to stay with Granny for the day before checking it is OK with you. It puts you in the position of being the 'bad guy' if you refuse. You can even tell them if they do it again, you will refuse on principle.

3. A young couple wanted to take a week off to go somewhere with friends. They ask their seventy-year-old parents if they would look after the three and six-year-old grandkids for the week.

Suggested response:

This could well be an unrealistic request. It may be that you feel unable to physically manage young children with lifting and carrying them, or getting their baby gear in and out of the car. It may be that you have other things planned for that week and cannot manage both. It may be that you feel the responsibility is too great or that, because of medication you are afraid you won't wake for them in the night. You may not be able to manage the early mornings of getting them to preschool or school on time.

You may suggest the offer of help, but not take the children for the entire time. The important thing is to know your limitations and have a back-up plan if you don't think you can manage.

DO NOT FEEL GUILTY

- a) If you don't feel up to looking after little ones.
- b) If you have other things planned and it is not convenient.
- c) If you just don't feel like it, especially if you look after them quite often.
- d) About being honest with your kids about your ability and availability.

You want grand parenting to be a great experience for them and for you. Guilt or frustration is not going to create the best basis for a long, memorable and happy union between family members.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org, or check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blogsite at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com