Grandparents Top Tips for a child with Aspergers Syndrome

by

Dave Angel
Having a grandchild is such an exciting time.

However having a grandchild diagnosed with a disability that we know nothing about can be especially frightening.

Being a grandparent means that we know longer have ultimate control over the life of the new child in our family.

Rather than being in a position where we can make decisions for our grandchild, we learn to play a supportive role.

However being supportive can be especially challenging when we don’t understand the disability.

Having a child with a new diagnosis of Aspergers Syndrome can be very overwhelming.

Following a diagnosis, it is common to find yourself angry, disappointed, scared, and sad.

Diagnosis is important however, as the earlier it is diagnosed, the earlier intervention can begin, and progress can be made.

Aspergers syndrome, while a life long condition, does not mean that your grandchild cannot be happy, productive, and successful.

But it does mean that your grandchild and their family may need additional support.

Providing support to this child and their family may not take the traditional form that we all expect to offer.

It may require some additional learning, some additional patience, and some additional time.

However, working with the right frame of mind, this support can help the child with ASD be more successful and help the family function more smoothly.

**Understanding Aspergers Syndrome**

Aspergers Syndrome is a type of autism, a neurological disorder that affects the way a person interacts with others and his or her world. Its cause is unknown.

Statistically, there is reason to believe that there is some genetic component, but the jury is still out.

The affect ASD can have on a child’s life can vary greatly.
If mildly affected, it can impact the relationships that an individual will have, and the ability to focus on specific tasks.

If severely affected, a child may lack the ability to communicate in a typical way, may display inappropriate behaviors, and impact their ability to participate in typical school activities.

Take some time to learn about ASD. Your grandchild and his or her parents need you to understand as much about this syndrome as you can.

Being the grandparent, you have the opportunity to make a difference in this child’s life, a difference that can only be understood by those who live with ASD.

Prepare yourself to provide support that is non-judgmental. Learn to accept this child for who he or she is, without criticism.

Parents may be overwhelmed by problems they are having with their child.

Typical reports from parents include obsessive behavior, irrational outbursts, wild fears, and irritability over the smallest issues.

It is important to understand that these behaviors are not a choice of the child, but rather a response to an environment that they cannot control, and an internal monitoring system that does not function very well.

ASD also brings some capabilities that can be of significant benefit to a child.

They are reportedly highly creative.

They experience things more intensely and have the ability to focus intensely on subjects that they are preoccupied with.

**Supporting your Grandchild with Aspergers**

With support, your grandchild will be able be successful, and the impact that ASD has on their life can be minimized.

To the untrained eye your grandchild often appears to be ‘normal’.

However there are some difficulties with social interaction, play and repetitive interests and obsessions.

You need to be aware of these and accept they are part of the condition.

For free articles about Aspergers go to [www.parentingaspergersbookstore.com](http://www.parentingaspergersbookstore.com)
If there is a specific support plan in place, to deal with inappropriate behaviors, etc, follow that plan to the extent that you are able.

His or her parents have most likely worked with professionals to develop a plan that is effective and has the ability to reduce inappropriate behavior and enable the child to fit in with their peers.

This may not include the typical disciplinary measures that you are accustomed to, but it is critical to the success of the child to follow that plan.

It is easy for grandparents to feel that they are well versed in the areas of child rearing; however, this child has some exceptions that you have most likely not experienced.

It will be important for you to listen to those closest to the child and follow their direction.

On the positive side most children with ASD have average intelligence or higher.

So in many respects you should treat your grandchild with ASD as you would any of your grandchildren.

Provide this child with the same “typical” activities that you would any other child.

Even though they may not display the same interest, it is important for them to experience the same types of play as other children.

Provide your grandchild with a safe, positive environment, without criticism.

Follow the parents’ advice on how to provide rules and expectations that are realistic.

Remember that if he or she displays inappropriate behavior, it is not out of choice, but a part of the disability.

They really would like nothing more than to behave in the way that you and others want them too.

When you are spending time with the child, plan to participate in activities that are going to be successful for the child and avoid situations that are going to create inappropriate behavior.

A child with ASD needs consistency in their daily routine, therefore following the direction or requests of the parents will be very important.

Their directions or requests are not simply a means to control, but something that they recognize as critical to the success of their child.

For free articles about Aspergers go to www.parentingaspergersbookstore.com
If you have questions about why they make certain requests – ASK.

It is unlikely that they will make irrational demands of you or the child, and there is typically a good reason for their direction.

They know their child, and they know what will create trouble situations for them.

Listening to their concerns may provide the opportunity for you to become more involved in the success of your grandchild.

Children with ASD can become easily overwhelmed with what appear to be daily activities to the rest of us.

Get to know your grandchild as much as you can, and again, if there are things you don’t know – ask the parents.

Knowing what things can create a positive situation and avoiding those that can cause a meltdown will increase the positive nature of your relationship with your grandchild.

Children with ASD are often described as being “wired” differently.

Because of this the typical parenting techniques may not work with the child with ASD.

As you learn more about ASD and you listen to the parents, you will become more comfortable with your grandchild.

It is likely that this child will not learn skills at the same rate that other children do, therefore it will become important to prioritize what to focus on.

It will also become increasingly important to choose your battles carefully.

Communication and social skills typically do not develop in usual ways and can be very frustrating experiences for children with ASD.

In learning the process to work with your grandchild, you can provide techniques similar to what the parents are doing at home.

If they are using visual cues to help the child complete their daily routine, then do the same while they are at your house.

Again – consistency will increase both your comfort level and the child’s.

Don’t focus on trying to work on too many things at one time.

This is sure to be unsuccessful for the child with ASD.

For free articles about Aspergers go to www.parentingaspergersbookstore.com
Children with ASD have strengths as well as needs.

Do what you can do to focus on those strengths, provide support when needed and your grandchild will learn to complete tasks independently.

Support for the Siblings

Being the sibling of a child with a disability is not easy.

The siblings of a child with ASD may experience embarrassment because of their behavior, frustration and anger because they must sacrifice their time with the parents.

If you have the time and opportunity, spend some additional quality time with siblings. They need some special time too.

They may share strong opinions of their sibling with ASD, and even anger.

Allow them the opportunity to voice their concerns, even if you don’t agree with them.

After all, they are the ones who have to live with it.

Offer to spend time with the ASD child, so that siblings can have some one-on-one time with their parents.

Recognize how this affects their childhood.

It is likely that their needs are often put on the back burner just because of the amount of resources required by the child with ASD.

This is not because the parents or anyone else is at fault. It is just the way it is!

Support for the Parents

Raising any child is hard work, but raising a child with ASD comes with demands that go beyond what is typically expected or even reasonable.

Be prepared to support the parents emotionally, and with the gift of time.

As grandparents, it can be easy to think that we know best.

Do not judge the parents. Provide support for them in whatever areas they may need.

They may need someone to assist with medical appointments, or someone to care for siblings while they attend appointments.

For free articles about Aspergers go to www.parentingaspergersbookstore.com
They may need someone to provide a helping hand at home, as their days can be exhausting, leaving no time for those typical daily tasks.

Listen to what the parents say they need.

Listen to their concerns and empathize with their concerns.

Learn what you can about ASD, and support the direction that they are going in.

Some days, they may simply need someone to listen to their frustrations.

By listening, you may be able to help the parents put things in perspective.

If you have advice, recognize that they have already heard plenty of advice.

It may be better to wait until they ask for your opinion.

If possible, provide child care so that the parents can have an evening out.

Their relationship will need some extra effort to maintain some normality, as their child will tend to take all of their time and energy.

This family will endure more stress than the typical family.

With your support, they will be able to strengthen their own relationship.

Understand that ASD is not the fault of one parent or the other. It is not the result of bad parenting!

Don’t rush to judgment in any situation, as you may not understand the whole picture.

Keep the lines of communication open with the parents.

Find out what their priorities are with their child, and ask what you can do to help.

Be prepared to implement whatever requests they have, particularly those that are related to the behavior of the child.

It is not unusual for parents or even grandparents to be in denial.

It will not benefit the child to go without support services, so although diagnosis seems tragic, it will provide the path for support services to begin, and the earlier intervention is provided, the more likely success will be gained.

**Where to Go From Here!**

For free articles about Aspergers go to [www.parentingaspergersbookstore.com](http://www.parentingaspergersbookstore.com)
Read, and then read some more! The best way you can support the child, their siblings, and the parents is to understand what ASD is.

Consider visiting the following websites for additional information on ASD.

These sites will explain further what ASD is, what types of support are appropriate, and where there are additional resources.

It will be difficult for you to support the family, if you have little understanding of ASD, therefore this learning process will be important for you and them.

It may also help to alleviate some of your fears or concerns for the child, and give you some direction on how to work with them.

http://www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/

http://www.aspergers.com/


http://www.med.yale.edu/chldstdy/autism/aspergers.html

http://www.maapservices.org/

If you are not internet savvy, there are some wonderful books on the subject of ASD.

The Complete Guide to Aspergers Syndrome by Tony Atwood

All Cats Have Aspergers Syndrome by Kathy Hoopman

Can I tell you about Aspergers Syndrome: a Guide for Friends and Family by Jude Welton

As you learn about Aspergers Syndrome, be willing to share information with the family that you have learned, but try to be sensitive to the fact that they have most likely already done their research.

So, share with the extent that they seem interested in additional information.

If you find an interesting article, make a copy for them.

For free articles about Aspergers go to www.parentingaspergersbookstore.com
Don’t be offended if they don’t immediately jump on the information that they have learned.

They will use what seems best for them and the child in their situation. Not every idea will work with every child.

Consider joining a support group for families of ASD.

This will provide the opportunity to learn from others who have already gone through what you are experiencing.

Support groups can provide emotional support as well as a wealth of ideas.

http://aspergerhelp.net/

http://www.orgsites.com/pa/aspergeradvocates/

You may also ask the parents if there are support groups locally and offer to accompany them or at least baby-sit so they can attend together.

Being a Grandparent is a wonderful and rewarding opportunity, your experience, wisdom and love can provide tremendous support to the family and you have a unique contribution to make.

Work together with all of the members of the group in the ways we have suggested and both you and they will reap the benefits and be able to face the challenges that having a child with Aspergers in the family can bring.

Good Luck

Dave Angel

Please feel free to forward this report on to anyone who you feel may benefit from it.

For free articles about Aspergers go to www.parentingaspergersbookstore.com
Resources

We have several website resources about Autism/Aspergers that we hope would be of benefit to you:

www.ParentingAutismChild.com – Sign up for a free Mini-Course on Autism

www.ParentingAspergers.com – Sign up for a free Mini-Course on Aspergers

www.ParentingAspergersBookstore.com – Collection of free articles, free newsletter and various books and CDs.