

# The Power of Grandparents



## Grandparents Play an Important Role in Preventing their Grandchildren from Drinking and Using Drugs

Find out how to communicate better with your teenage grandchild; learn about the latest drugs; and discover how you can help keep your grandchild healthy.

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# ➤ 1. The Power of Grandma and Grandpa

**C**hildren have a very special relationship with Grandma and Grandpa. That's why grandparents can be such powerful allies in helping keep a kid off drugs.

Grandparents are cool. Relaxed. They're not on the firing line every day. Some days a kid hates his folks. He never hates his grandparents. Grandparents ask direct, point-blank, embarrassing questions that parents are too nervous to ask:



**"Who's the girl?"**

**"How come you're doing poorly in history?"**

**"Why are your eyes always red?"**

**"Did you go to the doctor? What did he say?"**

The same kid who cons his parents is ashamed to lie to Grandma or Grandpa. Without betraying their trust, a loving, understanding, grandparent can discuss the danger of drugs and alcohol openly with the child he or she adores. And should.

As a grandparent, you hold a special place in the hearts and minds of your grandchildren. Share your knowledge, your love, your faith in them. Use your power as an influencer to steer your grandchildren away from drugs and alcohol.

*[Excerpt from a Print Ad from The Partnership at Drugfree.org ©The Partnership for a Drug-Free America, Inc.]*

## ➤ 2. It's All About the Grandkids

**B**eing a grandparent is central to the lives of most older Americans. According to a 2009 Pew Research Center survey, 80 percent of those ages 65 and older have grandchildren, as do 51 percent of those ages 50-64.

What do grandparents today value most? Spending time with their grandchildren.

And that's a great thing. Grandparents provide stability, security, guidance and support for their families. While parents are generally recognized as the most important and long-lasting influence on children, grandparents have a close and special bond and often serve as an inspiration to their grandkids. This unique relationship between grandparent and grandchild provides an ideal opportunity for sharing, connecting and discussing many important topics — including the dangers of drugs and alcohol.

In this guide you'll find suggestions on how to better communicate with your teenaged grandchild, ways to spend time together and how to use technology to keep in touch.

You'll find information on the latest drugs that teens are using and ways to

keep your grandchild safe. You'll learn factors that can lead a teen to develop a substance abuse problem — and what to do if you think your grandchild is using drugs or drinking. In addition, there's information and resources for grandparents who are raising grandchildren.



You play a very powerful role in the life of your grandchild.

**Read on to learn more.**

## ▶▶ 3. Ten Tips for Communicating With Your Grandchild

**D**id you know that by strengthening lines of communication and letting your grandchild know you care, you're building protective factors — which helps you play an important role in deterring him or her from trying drugs and alcohol? Here are 10 ways to have healthy, productive conversations with your grandchild:

- 1.** It's important to talk with your grandchild. A lot. Take a walk or go for a drive with her. When there's not much eye contact, she won't feel like she's under a microscope.
- 2.** Listen to your grandchild respectfully and without judgment. If you're less critical, he will feel he can trust you more.
- 3.** Have conversations with your grandchild on a variety of topics — activities, friends, school, job, hobbies, current events, etc.
- 4.** Strive for honest and direct communication.
- 5.** Listen to your grandchild's cares and concerns. She will then feel more comfortable to open up to you when she needs your advice.
- 6.** Take an active interest in the details of your grandchild's life.
- 7.** Take time to learn about your grandchild's hobbies — and share your skills as well.
- 8.** Give praise and positive feedback.
- 9.** Offer encouragement for achievements — both large and small — and be sure to attend at least some of your grandchild's activities so he knows what he's doing is important to you.
- 10.** Let your grandchild know that you are always there for him or her — no matter what happens. Make sure that he or she knows to come to you for help or information.

*"I think it's a really essential part of children's upbringing to have other significant adults — such as grandparents — that they know they can be open and be themselves with. It gives them room to be real, to have the space to really express themselves, and to develop free from any judgment or fear of punishment."*

**— Dr. Jane Greer,  
Marriage and Family Therapist**

## ➤ 4. Spending Time Together

**T**he more involved you are with your grandchild and the more time you spend with him or her, the closer you'll be.

So, take a walk, play a board game, shop, go to a concert, watch a baseball game or sightsee together. Use opportunities like family gatherings or inviting your grandchildren to stay over to show that fun doesn't require drugs or alcohol.

*"Doing an activity with your grandchild — just the two of you — can be really special and help him or her to develop a sense of self-worth."*

— Jay E. Berkelhamer, MD,  
FAAP, grandfather, pediatrician and past president of the American Academy of Pediatrics (2006-2007)

"Try doing what your grandchildren likes doing," suggests Dr. Bartell, psychologist, speaker and author on several parenting books. "Go to the movies, the mall, go shopping for clothes or take them to a show or a museum. Watch TV or do some cooking together — maybe it's the things that their parents don't have time to do with them."

And then you can move on to sharing things that *you* like doing. Activities that teens today don't often get to do such as gardening, jigsaw puzzles, building a model



or baking a pie. Teach them to sew, fish or do a craft project — things you are good at. These are activities they may not do with their group of friends or their parent — but that they'll probably really enjoy.

Focus on the positive. Tell her how proud you are of her and talk about her life and her goals. "Showing interest in school work and offering positive feedback will boost her ego and she will want to spend more time with you," adds Dr. Bartell.

"Kids who have a complicated relationship with their parents will often enjoy spending time with their grandparents — it makes them feel good," explains Dr. Bartell.

Teenagers enjoy trying new things and it's a great way to bond — they're very receptive. And they often open up and talk during these activities — and that's how you'll find out what's going on with them. "I know a 14-year-old who loves to go to her grandparents' house to work in the garden, play cards and watch old movies together," says Bartell. "She loves it — it's a relaxing escape from her hectic life."

## ➤ 5. Grandparents Getting “Tech-y”

**G**randparents are using technology more and more to keep up and connect with their grandkids. Whether they live across the country or across the street, grandparents are texting, emailing, video-conferencing and using social media like Facebook and Twitter with their grandchildren.

Although kids are busy with their friends, homework and afterschool activities, they always appreciate getting a text or an email. Let them know you’re thinking about them on a regular basis by sending a short note their way that says, “Have a happy week,” “I’m proud of you!” or “I’m thinking about you.” A simple “How was school today?” or “I love when you tell me stories about things you do with your friends” shows your grandchild that you want to know what’s going on in his or her life.

Try emailing or texting your grandchild pictures or videos of something you both like or a project that you’re working on — or something that made you laugh or reminded you of her or him.

### **ON LONG DISTANCE GRANDPARENTING:**

*“My grandkids live in Chicago and we’re in Atlanta so we Skype. We also email with our 10-year-old granddaughter. But the telephone is our primary connection. We also take frequent trips to visit them. And last summer, our granddaughter came to visit us for a week.*

— Jay E. Berkelhamer, MD



## ➤ 6. Learning about Drugs and Alcohol - and Talking About Them with Your Grandkids

In order to educate your grandchild about the dangers of drugs and alcohol, you need to educate yourself first.

Talk with others in your community and learn about the messages that kids are bombarded with everyday through peers, school and the media. It is up to adult family members, like grandparents, to help teens sift through those messages and decipher right from wrong. Grandparents should be aware of all the risks drugs and alcohol pose.



Research shows that brain development continues throughout the teenage years into the early '20s, and that drug experimentation during this time is more risky to the [still-developing brain](#) than previously believed. As a key influencer, you can help your grandchild avoid the dangers of drugs and alcohol and reinforce the benefits of healthy, drug-free living.

1. View our [Drug Guide for Parents \(pdf\)](#) to learn about the latest drugs.
2. Keep up-to-date on the latest research and drug trends — including the increased misuse and abuse of prescription drugs among teens. (See pages 8-9)

3. Talk regularly with your grandchild about the risks of drug and alcohol use — especially in opportunistic situations. You can use references in the news, movies, TV shows, etc. to spark up a conversation about substance abuse.

4. Try using “active listening” to get past the emotions and on to what’s really bugging her. It works like this: You listen without interrupting (no matter what), then sum up what you heard, describing the emotions for her to confirm. (Example: “It sounds to me like you’re feeling hurt and angry. Is that true? “) In the end, you get clear on her problem and she feels understood.

5. State your disapproval of underage drinking and drug use. And state your position clearly and often. One of the major reasons teens decide not to use drugs is the fear that their parents or other family members will lose respect for them. Teenagers do not want to let down their families.

6. Instead of a boring lecture, let your grandchild know about the health and safety risks of teen drug and alcohol use. One way is to use “teachable moments” — using real events or storylines from pop culture to illustrate these risks. Teens who perceive alcohol and drugs as harmful are less likely to engage in underage drinking.

7. One way to begin is to ask your grandchild, “Have you ever been offered drugs or alcohol?” or “Do you know anyone who drinks or uses drugs?” In this way, your grandchild might be more likely to open up than if asked about his or her own personal use.

## ➤ 7. Understanding Teen Abuse of Prescription Drugs

**E**very day, 2,500 teenagers use a prescription drug to get high for the first time.

They're accessing these drugs in the comfort of home; it can be as easy as opening a cupboard, drawer or a grandparent's medicine cabinet. The good news – there are steps you can take to help protect your grandkids from prescription drug abuse: monitor, secure and dispose. But first, let's learn more about teen prescription drug abuse.

### 1 What is Prescription Drug Abuse?

Prescription drug abuse is the use of prescription medication to create an altered state, to get high, or for reasons — or by people — other than those intended by the prescribing doctor.

### 2 How Many Teens Are Doing This?

According to research conducted by The Partnership at Drugfree.org (as well as other reputable national studies) as many as one in five teens say they have taken a prescription drug without having a prescription for it themselves. This behavior cuts across geographic, racial, ethnic and socioeconomic boundaries.

### 3 Why Are Some Teenagers Doing This?

Teens abuse prescription drugs for a variety of reasons. To party and get high, in some cases, but also to manage or regulate their lives:

- They're abusing some stimulants such as Ritalin and Adderall to give them additional energy and ability to focus when they're studying or taking tests.
- They're abusing pain relievers like OxyContin and tranquilizers such as Xanax to cope with academic, social or emotional stress.
- They're abusing prescription amphetamines to lose weight, or prescription steroids to bulk up.

### 4 What Are The Risks?

There are both immediate and longer term risks. In the short term, overdosing (especially on prescription pain relievers) can be fatal, as can mixing prescription drugs with over-the-counter medication and/or alcohol. In the longer term, prescription opioids (pain relievers) and other prescription medicines are potentially addictive. Coming to rely at a young age on prescription medicine (or any drug) to manage your life can lead to a learned, lifelong pattern of dependency and can prevent the learning of necessary coping skills.

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## ➤ 7. Understanding Teen Abuse of Prescription Drugs (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8)

### 5 Where Are Teens Getting

**Prescription Drugs?** The vast majority of teens abusing prescription drugs are getting them from the medicine cabinets of friends, family and acquaintances. Some teens traffic among themselves – handing out or selling extra pills of their own, or pills they’ve acquired or stolen from classmates. A very small minority of teens say they get their prescription drugs illicitly from doctors, pharmacists or over the internet.

### 6 What Should I Do With My

**Medicine?** Here are three tips to help safeguard your pills and safely dispose of expired or unused medicines

- **MONITOR:** Start by taking note of how many pills are in each of your prescription bottles or pill packets. Keep track of your refills. This goes for your own medication, as well as for your other members of the household. If you find you need to refill your medication more often than expected, that could indicate a problem. Encourage other family members to regularly monitor their own medicine cabinets.
- **SAFEGUARD:** Keep prescription medicine in a secure place. Teens abuse prescription drugs because they are easily accessible, and either free or inexpensive. In fact, 64 percent of kids ages 12 to 17 who have abused pain relievers say they got them from their friends or relatives, typically without their knowledge. Approach securing



your prescriptions the same way you would other valuables in your home, like jewelry or cash. There’s no shame in helping protect those items. The same holds true for your medications.

- **DISPOSE:** Discard expired or unused prescription drugs when your grandkids are not around.

Unbelievable though it may seem, some teenagers will retrieve discarded prescription drugs from the trash. To help prevent this from happening, mix the medication with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter. Put the mixture into an empty can or bag and discard. Unless the directions on the packaging say otherwise, do not flush medication down the drain or toilet.

To help prevent unauthorized refills and protect you and your family’s privacy, remove any personal, identifiable information from prescription bottles or pill packages before you throw them away.

## ➤ 8. Knowing Your Grandchild's Risk Level

**S**everal decades of research shows that some teens are more at risk for developing a substance abuse problem than other teens.

The more risk factors a teen has, the more likely he or she will abuse drugs or alcohol. However, it is important to keep in mind that risk factors do not determine a child's destiny. Instead, they provide a general gauge as to the likelihood of drug or alcohol abuse.



Addressing risk factors early and paying careful attention to children at higher risk can reduce that child's likelihood of a future problem with drugs or alcohol. Understanding risk factors is also very important when a child with more risk has already experimented with substances or has a problem. In that case, you will have a clearer picture of why things might have happened and know how to get the right kind of treatment.

### ➤ 4 Common Risk Factors Associated with Teen Drug and Alcohol Abuse

**1. FAMILY HISTORY:** Family history of drug or alcohol problems, especially when it is the parent's history, can place a child at increased risk for developing a problem. Children can inherit genes that increase their risk of alcoholism, so having a parent or grandparent with alcohol problems may indicate increased risk for the child. Inheriting the gene does not mean the child will automatically become dependent on alcohol.

If there is a history of a dependence or addiction in your family, you should let your child know since he or she is at a higher risk for developing a drug or alcohol problem. These conversations should take place when you feel your child is able to understand the information.

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## ▶ 8. Knowing Your Grandchild's Risk Level (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10)

### 4 Common Risk Factors Associated with Teen Drug and Alcohol Abuse (CONTINUED)

**2. MENTAL OR BEHAVIORAL DISORDER:** If your child has a psychiatric condition like depression, anxiety or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), he or she is more at risk for developing a drug or alcohol problem. Although not all teenagers with these disorders will develop a substance abuse problem, the chances are higher when they have difficulty regulating their thoughts and emotions.

Therefore, children with psychiatric conditions should be carefully monitored for the possibility of drug or alcohol use. It is also a good idea to talk with your health care providers about the connection between psychiatric conditions and substance use. Managing and treating underlying psychiatric conditions, or understanding how emotional and behavioral problems can trigger or escalate a substance abuse, is important for preventing or reducing risk.

**3. TRAUMA:** Children who have a history of traumatic events (such as witnessing or experiencing a car accident or natural disaster; being a victim of physical or sexual abuse) have been shown to be more at risk for substance abuse later in life. Therefore, it is important for parents to recognize and address the possible impact of trauma and get help for their child.

**4. IMPULSE CONTROL PROBLEMS:** Children who frequently take risks or have difficulty controlling impulses are more at risk for substance abuse. While most teens understand the dangers of taking risks, some have particular difficulty resisting impulses to engage in risky behavior.



## ➤ 9. How to Help If You Think Your Grandchild is Using Drugs or Drinking

**A**re you worried about the grandchild in your life? Then it's important that you talk to him or her. "If you are concerned that there is something going on, be very genuine and very open," suggests Dr. Jane Greer, Marriage and Family Therapist.

*Dr. Greer suggests saying:*

- Hey, how are you doing? Is everything okay?"
- "You seem a little not yourself. You seem a little low energy."
- "Anything we can talk about?"
- "How are things going with your friends?" or "How are things going on the dating scene?"

**"If the child is not ready to talk," says Greer, "continue by saying, 'Okay, I'm just going to check in and, of course, you know I'm here.'"** And then take the responsibility to make the phone calls, to send the emails and texts, to stop by for the visits so that she not only hears that you're there for her but really feels that you're there for her and sees it."

What should you do if your grandchild confesses to you that he or she drank or smoked? "The first thing is to ask your grandchild a lot of questions to collect

information," says Dr. Bartell. "How much did you drink?' and 'Was this your first time?'" You'll need to tell the child's parent — and be sure to explain to your grandchild that you need to do this.

"Offer to talk to his parents with him or her — and role play how you'll tell them," says Dr. Bartell. "Explain to your grandchild, 'I love you and I want you to be safe and that's most important. If I don't tell your mom or dad there's a chance you could get in trouble or get hurt or die and I'd be responsible for that.' Your grandchild is telling you about his or her substance abuse for a reason — and you need to take it seriously."

If you're truly worried and feel there's a real problem, like drug use or depression, and your grandchild hasn't confessed anything to you — it's better to be safe than sorry. "While you want to maintain the trust you've developed with your grandchild," says Dr. Bartell, "his or her safety must come first. Contact his or her parent to share your concerns and see if there's any way you can help."

"When you do alert his or her parents, try to have specific examples," suggests Dr. Bartell. "For example, you could say 'I'm just wondering, but I noticed Johnny's grades have gone down, his friends are smoking, he's acting more disrespectful. And it's making me worried.'"

## ➤ 10. Grandparents Who Are Raising Grandchildren (As the Primary Caregiver)

**O**ne in 10 children in the U.S. lives with a grandparent, according to the Pew Research Center.

The number has continually risen over the last 10 years with the largest jump from 2007 to 2008, the first year of the recession. 2.9 million grandparents are legal guardians of grandchildren. Often they assume this responsibility with neither of the children's parents present in the home.

Dr. Kornhaber, psychiatrist, researcher and founder and president of the Foundation for Grandparents, reminds grandparents that despite various circumstances, raising a grandchild is complicated. "You will have to know about emotional, legal, financial, health and educational matters," he explains.

### Emotional Considerations

"It can take a lot of emotional strength to raise kids," says Dr. Bartell. "So, grandparents in this situation should try to get help from others. You may need to assign an aunt or uncle or other family member who can be involved and who can be another set of eyes watching over and bonding with the child. When you're a grandparent raising a grandchild you need a big support system and there is no shame in asking for it."

### Legal Considerations

"The legal status of children raised by grandparents can be tenuous," writes Dr. Kornhaber. "For example, many children who live with their grandparents because of intermittent parental substance abuse problems are often fearful because their parents still have legal custody.

"Bouncing back and forth between grandma's house and a frequently relapsing parent can be very disruptive to children," he explains. "Grandparents raising grandchildren should obtain some kind of legal custody for their grandchildren until they are assured the parent is able to be responsible."



For information and help when raising grandchildren (including financial, health and educational), please see the resources listed on page 14.

## ➤ 11. Snapshot: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

**F**or the most part, grandparent caregivers have very limited financial resources. Nearly one in-in-five (18%) are living below the poverty line while 47% have household incomes that fall between one- and three-times the poverty line.

- Overall grandparent primary caregivers are relatively young — more than two-thirds (67%) are younger than age 60, with 13% younger than age 45. This likely reflects the fact that younger grandparents are still physically able to take on the needs of grandchildren.  
Some 62% of grandparent caregivers are women, and 38% are men. Two-thirds of grandparent caregivers are married, while 34% are not.
- The majority of grandparents who care for their grandchildren have been doing so for quite a long time. More than half (54%) report that they have been the primary caregiver to at least one grandchild for three years or more, and 23% have been the primary caregiver to a grandchild for between one and two years.

### ➤ Resources for Grandparents Who Are Raising Grandchildren:

- [AARP Foundation GrandCare Support Locator](http://giclocalsupport.org/pages/gic_db_home.cfm)  
([giclocalsupport.org/pages/gic\\_db\\_home.cfm](http://giclocalsupport.org/pages/gic_db_home.cfm))
- [GrandFacts: State Fact Sheets for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children](http://aarp.org/relationships/friends-family/grandfacts-sheets)  
([aarp.org/relationships/friends-family/grandfacts-sheets](http://aarp.org/relationships/friends-family/grandfacts-sheets))
- [Grandparents Raising Grandchildren](http://usa.gov/Topics/Grandparents.shtml)  
([usa.gov/Topics/Grandparents.shtml](http://usa.gov/Topics/Grandparents.shtml))
- [Generations United](http://gu.org) ([gu.org](http://gu.org))
- [GAP \(Grandparents as Parents\)](http://grandparentsasparents.org)  
([grandparentsasparents.org](http://grandparentsasparents.org))
- [Grandsplace](http://grandsplace.org/gp1) ([grandsplace.org/gp1](http://grandsplace.org/gp1))



## ➤ 12. Grandparents Play Many Roles

**T**he more involved you are with your grandchild and the more time you spend with him or her, the closer you'll be.

In his book *The Grandparent Guide: The Definitive Guide to Coping with the Challenges of Modern Grandparenting*, Dr. Kornhaber, MD has identified the following grandparental roles:

- **ANCESTOR** - "You function as an ambassador to the past, a powerful figure in the present, and a role model for the future."
- **BUDDY** - "You're a pal, secret confidante, and at times, even a light-hearted conspirator."
- **HERO** - "The fact that you have lived in times and places so far removed from your grandchild's everyday experiences imbues you with heroic qualities."
- **HISTORIAN** - "Sharing your own life experiences as well as those of your ancestors will give your grandchild a sense of continuity and belonging."
- **MENTOR** - "You are a cheerleader firing her imagination, inspiring her dreams, nurturing her spirit, and encouraging her intellectual growth while giving her a sense of self-worth."
- **ROLE MODEL** - "Your actions show your children and grandchildren how they should behave as grandparents of the future."
- **SPIRITUAL GUIDE** - "Acting as a spiritual guide involves teaching your grandchild to harvest such fruits of the spirit as love,



tolerance, compassion, reverence, joy, peace, gentleness, faith, and kindness."

- **TEACHER** - "As a grandparent, you have the right and the responsibility to run your own classroom about life, to develop your own curriculum, and to pass on your wisdom, knowledge, and life experience."
- **STUDENT** - "Just as you teach and inspire your grandchild with your knowledge, she can teach and inspire you with her knowledge of contemporary times across generations and motivate you to jumpstart your capacity to grow and change."
- **WIZARD** - "Activate your own wizardry and be your grandchild's companion in the preternatural world of make-believe and illusion, of dreams and surprises. Fly together on the wings of fancy and enjoy the flight!"

## ➤ 13. Experts Weigh In

### ARE TEENS DIFFERENT TODAY? TWO EXPERTS WEIGH IN

*"In general, it's important to know kids and teens today live in a highly-pressured world with academics, peer pressure and technology. The way kids are raised has dramatically changed. Their life experiences and the pressures they face are different. How do these pressures manifest themselves? In alcohol and drug use, anxiety, depression and self-abusive behaviors, which can be confusing for grandparents."*

— Dr. Susan Bartell



*"In my mind, teens today are not that different from the way teens have always been. Teens experience rapid periods of development; unpredictable behavior; interest in the approval of peers; a desire to achieve more independence; yet they often want to go back to kinder, simpler time when they were younger; they can be impulsive and irrational at times. But the majority of the time they work through it and come out of teen years as well-adjusted young adults that can make important contributions to society. But there is a period of three or four years where you wonder if they've left the human race. Just the same as in the past. There can be complications with substance abuse which is not new but there are different substances to abuse today (such as prescription drugs abuse) — and all the new technology at their fingertips."*

— Jay E. Berkelhamer, MD



**OFFER RESPITE** *"Ask the parents how you can help them raise their teenager. Be available to your family during crises. Be objective; do not take sides. Monitor how the parents and teenager are getting along. If appropriate, get involved in a helpful, loving, and compassionate way. Offer respite to all."*

— Arthur Kornhaber, MD  
*The Grandparent Guide*



## ➤ 14. Snapshot: Grandparents Today

### Let's take a look at grandparents living in the U.S. today:

- The numbers of grandparents are at record highs and still growing at more than twice the overall population growth rate. There were an estimated 65 million grandmothers and grandfathers in 2010. By 2020, they are projected to reach 80 million, at which time they will be nearly one-in-three adults.

*[Source: U.S. Census Bureau's nationwide Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 2001 and 2004.]*

- A majority of grandparents today are Baby Boomers ages 45 to 64 years old. As a result, today's grandparents are more likely to be college graduates and fully employed than at any time in the past.
- About one in five grandparents are African-American, Hispanic or Asian compared to two in five young adults, indicating that grandparents will become more diverse in the future.
- Among those ages 65 and older who have grandchildren, 39% say they have helped their adult children with childcare in the past 12 months. These grandparents are more likely to have given their adult children money over the past year (50%), and somewhat less likely to have helped their kids out with errands, housework or home repairs (31%). *[Source: 2009 Pew Research survey]*

*On Being a Modern Grandparent*  
*"The greatest challenge grandparents face is the need to keep up with the changes that are occurring in the world. They must adapt to changes and cope with them. It means having a positive, flexible, energetic attitude toward understanding, learning, and personal change."*

— Arthur Kornhaber, MD  
*The Grandparent Guide*



## ➤ 15. Snapshot: Teens Today

### What's it like being a teenager today?

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, that there are about 42.2 million pre-teens and teens (aged 10- 19) in the U.S. That's approximately 14% of total population.

Remember how moody you were as a teen? And how frustrating it was at times trying to express yourself? Your teenage grandchild is in that boat now. So when he has an outburst, cut him some slack. It's normal.

### Teenagers Are Busy

- 64% of teens (13-19) participate in a sport
- 61% of teens are involved in non-athletic extracurricular activities
- 21% of students spend more than 10 hours per week on homework
- 79% of students feel pressured to get good grades [Source: Horatio Alger Association, *The State of Our Nation's Youth*, 2009]

### They Spend A Lot of Time Online

- 95% of children 12-17 are internet users and 70% of these users go online daily
- 76% of online teens use social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace or Twitter (93% of these social media users have a Facebook account) [Source: Pew Research, 2011]

### Teens are Giving Back and Enjoying Family Time

- 52% of teens do volunteer work (girls are more likely than boys - 57% v. 48%)
- 94% of teens spend free time after school with a parent
- 68% of teens agree that "I really like to do things with my family"
- 62% of teens agree that "Helping make the world a better place and doing things for others is very important to me"

### What Do Teen Think About Drugs and Alcohol?

- 32% of teens are concerned about drinking and driving (up from last year)
- 92% believe that drugs are an issue that exist in society
- 82% of teens feel they can talk to at least one parent openly, honestly and with detail about serious issues like drugs, sex and drinking [Source: TRU]

### Happy Grandparent's Day!

National Grandparent's Day was established in 1978 and is celebrated every September on the Sunday after Labor Day.

## ➤ 16. Resources for Parents and Grandparents

HERE ARE HELPFUL RESOURCES FROM [The Partnership at Drugfree.org](http://ThePartnershipatDrugfree.org):

- **The Parent Toolkit** ([theparenttoolkit.org](http://theparenttoolkit.org)): A drug and alcohol prevention resource for parents and grandparents (in English and Spanish).
- **Rx Fact Sheet**: A guide to the legal drugs kids are using and abusing.
- **Drugfree.org/prevent**: Learn how to prevent your child or grandchild from getting involved with drugs and alcohol.
- **Not In My House** ([notinmyhouse.drugfree.org](http://notinmyhouse.drugfree.org)): Learn more about the steps you can take to help protect your grandkids from prescription drug abuse.
- **Warning Signs** ([timetoact.drugfree.org/think-look-for-signs.html](http://timetoact.drugfree.org/think-look-for-signs.html)): Find out the signs and symptoms of teen drug and alcohol abuse.
- **Interventions e-book** ([drugfree.org/timetogethelp/learn/e-books](http://drugfree.org/timetogethelp/learn/e-books)): What to do if your child is drinking or using drugs.
- **Time To Act** ([drugfree.org/timetoact](http://drugfree.org/timetoact)): How to tell if your teen is using — and how to take action to intervene.
- **Treatment e-book** ([drugfree.org/timetogethelp/learn/e-books](http://drugfree.org/timetogethelp/learn/e-books)): How to find the right help for your child with an alcohol or drug problem.
- **Time To Get Help** ([drugfree.org/timetogethelp](http://drugfree.org/timetogethelp)): Support for parents and caregivers of a child struggling with alcohol or drugs.
- **Toll-Free Helpline** ([timetogethelp.drugfree.org/learn/helpline](http://timetogethelp.drugfree.org/learn/helpline)): Speak to a Specialist about your teen's substance abuse problem. We're here to help you: 1-855-DRUGFREE (1-855-378-4373)

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **AARP** ([aarp.org](http://aarp.org))
- **The Grandparent Guide: The Definitive Guide to Coping with the Challenges of Modern Grandparenting** by Arthur Kornhaber, M.D. (Contemporary Books, 2002)
- **Grandmotherhen.com**
- **The Modern Grandparent's Handbook: The Ultimate Guide to the New Rules of Grandparenting** by Dr. Georgia Witkin, (New American Library, 2012)

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