

Senior Advice: Make your grandson's visit memorable

by *Doug_Mayberry*

Q: Our 17-year-old grandson is coming to visit for a few days. We don't get to see him often. In our retirement community there isn't much action for him, and we do not know anyone his age nearby. Do you have any ideas for making his visit enjoyable?

A: Being able to communicate one-on-one with a grandson is a wonderful opportunity to bond. He will enjoy receiving your full attention, regardless of what activities you plan.

For example, teaching him about finances could be a winner. Does he have a checking account and know how to write checks? If you can afford it, consider opening a small account for him. If you own common stocks, explain the market to him and show him how to read the financial pages.

When I was young, my mother taught me how to cook. I learned how to scramble eggs, fry hamburgers and cook hot dogs, make Jell-O salads, write a grocery shopping list and go to the market alone, wash dishes, run the washing machine and vacuum. Ask your grandson to pitch in helping you. He may find it is fun and rewarding.

If your grandson has never gardened, you could teach him pot gardening. Growing his own vegetables is its own reward, and he could take the pot home with him when he goes. Help him learn the basics of taking care of himself and sharing responsibilities that will help build his self-esteem.

You could also offer him a short course in basic manners for today's gentleman. Does he stand up when a woman enters the room, think about giving up his train or bus seat to a person with a baby, open doors for other people, write thank-you notes for gifts and favors, and other actions that signify his maturity and help open doors for him?

And learning from each other can go both ways. When my granddaughter visited recently, she taught me a lot about using my computer and how to record and save television programs. No doubt your grandson will bring his electronic toys. Ask him how they work. You may end up wanting an iPod.

The key for a successful visit is to have an options plan to keep him learning and busy. Take lots of photos of everything you do to keep the memories alive in the future. The most important thing is to relax and enjoy each other's company.

Q: Many of our close friends are moving to retirement homes, want to be closer to their children or face major health issues, all of which cause our social circle to dwindle. It's not easy for us to make new friendships.

My husband and I both believe we are slipping into spending more time watching television, napping or playing computer card games and other forms of escapism. I miss not being with other people and am getting bored. What options can you share to encourage us to move forward?

A: You have already made the most important step by realizing that you are getting out of the loop. Changing your habits is your best move. Active retirement living requires a forward-looking positive attitude.

Consider the benefits of continuing to learn - a foreign language, a musical instrument or a subject area you've never had time to pursue. Plan your financial needs or take dancing lessons.

Expand your lives by becoming more people-involved. Volunteer at a library, homeless shelter or charitable event. In doing so you will automatically be looking forward. Making a difference in other people's life brings tremendous rewards.

As partners, encourage each other to be upbeat. Exercise regularly, eat properly, take vacations, don't become frustrated by setting your expectations too high and be thankful for each day. By being supportive of others, you will be rewarded by their responses in kind. Every day can be a wonderful one if you choose to make it so.

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