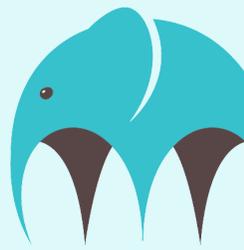


# Grandparent Caregivers: Navigating the Journey



This information sheet offers answers to some frequently asked questions from grandparent caregivers who are raising their grandchildren as a result of their own child's mental health challenges and/or are concerned about mental health challenges in their grandchild.

## PCMH Peer Support Group

Our Grandparent Caregiver Peer Support Group is held virtually on the **second Thursday of each month from 7:00 to 8:30 pm ET.**



[Register here to join our virtual group](#)

Group participants can stay connected by joining our [Facebook group](#).

## Are there any in-person support groups for grandparents?

- While we don't currently offer in-person groups we can support you in starting one in your community! Email us at [support@pcmh.ca](mailto:support@pcmh.ca) if you are interested.
- If you email us with your location, we can try to connect you to other available resources in your area.

## How can I support my grandchild with their mental health challenges?

- **Seek out child and youth mental health services** available in your area. Use our [Find Help](#) tool to find local service providers that can support your family at no cost.
  - Accessing services may require your grandchild's permission if they are 12 or older. You may not always receive full information, depending on your grandchild's consent and circumstances.

## Tips for Wellness Planning

- **Don't forget about your own needs.** You juggle so much for everyone else—remember to take time for yourself. Find a new hobby, take daily mindful moments, and check in with how you are feeling.
  - Check out our webinar: [Caregivers Have Feelings Too: A Guide to Self-Care](#).
- **Be kind to yourself** and practice self-compassion.
- **Acknowledge your feelings.** If guilt arises, catch yourself and reframe.
- **Focus on the present** and set aside your future worries. Try not to get lost in the past as a parent or the future for your grandchild.
- **Trust yourself** and do what feels right for you—don't compare yourself to others. This is your journey, and your story is still being written.
- **Forgive yourself** if you make mistakes.
- **Take time for your relationship.** Plan a date night or spend time away as a couple.
- **Seek counselling** for yourself or as a couple.
- **Grieve your role.** It's okay to grieve not being “just the fun grandparent.” Plan a special “Grandparent Day” for fun and building connections.

## Tips for Navigating the Journey

- **Find a lawyer and make arrangements official**, if possible. This is especially important if the Children's Aid Society (CAS) becomes involved or if the parent is unstable and might leave with the child.
- **Build a network** and surround yourself with supportive people (e.g., family, childcare, school, faith community).
- **Connect with other grandparents.** Peer support makes a world of difference!
- **Keep detailed records.** Documentation may be required in court, and it generally helps you stay organized as a caregiver and for other professionals involved.
- **Understand parental struggles.** If you suspect drug or alcohol issues, educate yourself to better support both the parent and your grandchild.
- **Prioritize your grandchild.** Early on, prioritize their safety over the needs of parents or extended family. As they grow older, include them in conversations about family dynamics.

## How can I be both a parent and grandparent and still do what's best for our relationship?

- **Set boundaries.** Maintain a good understanding of the boundaries you want to set and stick to them. Remember what is in your control and what isn't.
- **Practice being comfortable with being uncomfortable.** Managing multiple relationships can be challenging. While you are focused on ensuring the safety and well-being of your grandchild, remember that your own safety and comfort are equally important. This may require establishing firm boundaries and being okay with saying no when necessary.
- **Your feelings about situations and the people involved are valid.** Peer support can be incredibly helpful for processing these emotions and receiving encouragement. To connect with a Grandparent Peer Supporter, email [grandparents@pcmh.ca](mailto:grandparents@pcmh.ca).

## How can I manage my relationships with other grandchildren who do not live with us?

- You might have a lot of feelings about this, and your feelings can impact how you manage the situation. It's important to **get support for yourself** so you can focus on the needs of all your grandchildren.
- **Spend time with each grandchild or sibling group individually** to create special moments and memories with them as well.
- **Build connections among your grandchildren** by bringing them together. It can be a chance to nurture their relationships and show them that they are all valued.
- **Have age-appropriate, honest conversations** with your grandchild about why some grandchildren live with you and others don't. These discussions can help children understand their family dynamics and accept the situation.
- Remind yourself that there are many family dynamics at play. If needed, **seek professional counselling** to support you in managing these challenges.

## Can you provide some more information on attachment issues?

- Attachment is an important but complex topic. There is a lot of great information available online and through community programs for you to learn more.
- **The Circle of Security program** is typically offered through local community child and youth service providers at no cost. Use our [Find Help](#) tool to locate your local centre, and see if it is available in your community.
- **Consider seeking counselling** or other professional support to help you and your grandchild navigate attachment issues and strengthen your bond over time.

## What supports are families in my situation lacking?

- **Accessible counselling services:** Many relationships are affected by these circumstances, and affordable counselling to support the whole family may not be available.
- **Compassionate service providers:** Families benefit from feeling less stigma and judgment as well as greater empathy from service workers.
- **Peer connections:** Opportunities to connect with other grandparents in similar roles who 'get it' are invaluable but limited.
- **Financial support:** Many grandparents don't qualify for funding, and there can be complications with the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CTB).

## Watch the Webinar

### [Grandparent Caregivers: A Fireside Chat](#)



Tell us what you think! Please take a moment to complete our [Webinar Feedback Survey](#).