GRANDPARENTS HAVE FEELINGS TOO!

Grandparents often struggle with thoughts, feelings, and worries for their grandchildren who are not taking the typical path to adulthood. They worry how these children will grow up, and they also worry about their own children – the parents of their grandchildren. This is a double whammy for them.

Parents sometimes overlook the process grandparents go through in learning about and accepting a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Parents may wonder: Why don’t grandparents simply accept the diagnosis and help us?!? Or why do they question my ability to do what’s best for my child?

Grandparents may struggle to understand information presented to them about their precious grandchildren. Many times grandparents, in an effort to be positive and lighten the mood, or wish this all away, will make remarks such as: “She doesn’t look autistic,” or “I don’t know what you are talking about – she is just like you were when you were her age.” Remarks of this nature can be very painful to the adult children raising their recently diagnosed child. It makes the parents feel isolated and alone in their journey, without the support of their parents.

At the same time, not too deep in the grandparents’ thoughts is the knowledge that they won’t be around to help support these grandchildren when they grow up. This can be an unbearable source of pain and frustration to them.

One of the greatest things a grandparent can do is ask their child: “What can I do to help?” Offering to make dinner, babysit, or to take or pick up the child from school, can be a huge relief for any parent, and even more so for the parent of a child with special needs.

It’s clear, while grandparents can often not bear the thoughts of having their children or their grandchildren struggle in life, whether it is their children’s struggle raising a child on the autism spectrum, or their grandchild with a developmental
disorder, grandparents can be the best support for families with a child on the autism spectrum at a time when they need it most.

Recommended Link:

- CAR Resource Directory (search for Support Groups)

Additional Resources:

- Autism Speaks® Grandparent’s Guide to Autism
- When You Have a Special Needs Grandchild
- Grandparent Autism Newtork

The Center for Autism Research and The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia do not endorse or recommend any specific person or organization or form of treatment. The information included within the CAR Autism Roadmap & trade; and CAR Resource Directory & trade; should not be considered medical advice and should serve only as a guide to resources publicly and privately available. Choosing a treatment, course of action, and/or a resource is a personal decision, which should take into account each individual's and family's particular circumstances.