

Grandparenting For Dummies

By Mariane Holbrook

I just checked Amazon.com and there are 2,017 self-help books for dummies ranging from Sailing for Dummies to Investing in 401Ks for Dummies to Pregnancy for Dummies (Is there really a market for this one; isn't it just a case of connecting the dots?)

But there is no "Grand parenting for Dummies." I submit that there should be.

I love my grandkids like nobody else on earth. I would happily strap myself to a railroad tie for any one of them and cheer as the train came speeding down the tracks to my certain demise.

But there are a few things I wonder about.

How come my 2-year-old grandson can eat two tiny bites of bland oatmeal for breakfast, get suddenly sick and throw up the equivalent of 4 Meatball Hoagies, two 12-inch pepperoni pizzas, an entire German chocolate cake and two liters of coke?

I love new mothers, those innocent, dead-tired beings with sunken, glazed eyes who bravely look at motherhood as the ultimate multi-tasking challenge. Everything their precocious child does is not only phenomenal but worthy of preservation for their very lucky posterity.

When we were kids and spilled something on grandma's carpet, our embarrassed mamas grabbed a bucket and mopped up not only that two-inch spot of chocolate but our moms cleaned grandma's entire carpet, washed the windows and curtains, reupholstered the couch and installed central air conditioning just to make atonement.

Today's mommies gaze wistfully at their toddler's green magic marker stains on grandma's white living room carpet, painstakingly remove an eight-inch square of the stained carpet with a sharp razor blade and clutch it to their breasts with a sigh of wonder and amazement. Then they lovingly have it matted and framed as a Christmas present for guess who? Grandma! (That same darling two-year-old toddler/grandson trotted past me recently, turned around, wiped his runny nose on my skirt and kept going. I admit to being touched.)

When we were kids, we put a baby tooth in a glass of water only to find the tooth replaced with a nickel the next morning. I never figured out why the water was necessary. Did the Tooth Fairy clean it before presenting it to Big Chief Cavity or something? When my granddaughter lost her tooth here during a recent visit, her kind daddy slipped a ten-spot under her pillow. I sat beside her the rest of the night trying to extract every remaining tooth in my head. At ten dollars a pop, I could pay for that carpet.

Preparing meals for grandkids is the ultimate trip, provided you enjoy train wrecks. Three granddaughters require three different kinds of macaroni and cheese. Different foods must NOT touch each other on the plate. The thought of food mixed together in a casserole dish is utterly unthinkable, the operative words being "Eeeew! Gross! What's that??"

Our beautiful, paper-thin, teenage granddaughter, Dena, works as a volunteer on Saturdays at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences as a Junior Curator. Their recent "BugFest" program attracted a couple of thousand visitors.

One of the more popular exhibits was "Café Insectia", where strange critters were cooked up right before your eyes and served to adventurous epicureans: Ant-chiladas, Banana Worm Nut Bread, Superworm Spice Cake or Hushed Grubbies.

Dena brought home a styrofoam cupful of large stir-fried SCORPIONS (I kid you not) which she ceremoniously removed from the cup one at a time, holding it high with two fingers, then dropping it into her open mouth. Dena slowly savored each bite, smiling with satisfactory, culinary delight to the jaw-dropping astonishment and abject horror of her younger siblings.

Not bad for the absolute, ultimate picky eater who shivers and totally shuns foods like eggs, cheese, sandwiches and regular people foods. Gotta love her.

A recent trip with my grandkids to Wings Tourist Trap Beach Store netted only one thing that would last forever; my dislocated hip. After 2 1/2 hours of discussion and bartering with grandma, the girls emerged with an inch long bag of colored stones, 4 small blue seabirds of undetermined species, a bottle of blue water and sand with "Taiwan" stamped on the bottom, and a dried baby alligator jaw. Not bad for forty bucks.

I adore my grandkids. I let them jump on my bed, play in my jewelry box, drip popsicles on my couch and leave the milk on the kitchen counter all night.

Then I send them home to their mom with spaghetti sauce dripping from their hair.

Hey, it's the least I can do.

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