

Grandparents and Grandchildren: the special relationship!
Can we make it live forever?

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Much as already been written about the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. It's always a special one because often as they say, you can have fun with your grandchildren and then hand them back to their parents. But there is a lot more to it than that.

The love between a grandparent and grandchild is ever so special because mainly, and almost always, these relationships are non-transactional. In today's world, as we get older, we see and realise that most relationships are usually transactional and take place for a definite reason. But in the case of grandparents and grandchildren, there is nothing except love, affection, care, caring, and often adoration on both sides.

I appreciate that not everybody wishes to have children, and therefore will not have grandchildren. There are also many with children who are unable to have grandchildren because some of today's relationships do not reach the point where bearing children is something that is considered. Today's younger generation are often extremely careful in thinking about having children. They feel that they do not have enough resources in life themselves to be able to offer something meaningful to the children that they might bring into the world, or they feel that today's world is unsafe and unstable, and therefore do not wish to expose their progeny to these unstable times. A few are purely more individualistic in their thinking, even to the point of "selfishness" about living life for themselves and their own pleasures. I hasten to say that I do not mean to be judgemental.

But still for those who have them, grandchildren must offer a sense of joy when they see them. Those of us who have worked hard during our younger days, (like my 100 hours per week average in the late 80s) have not had time to play and enjoy moments to see our children growing. For those such as us, “baby boomers” as we are often called, grandchildren offer us a second chance to experience what we missed out on, and what our children perhaps missed out with us. Today’s generation are much more aware of this issue.

There are some grandparents who are unable to have access to their grandchildren. There are many reasons for this, faults on both sides, sometimes just misunderstandings, or sometimes just physical distance due to work related lives and simple geography. But it does happen that sometimes, grandparents and grandchildren do not have access to each other. That can be quite heart rending and heart breaking, especially for the grandparents because they know what they are missing out on. I’ve heard of grandparents who pine for the presence of their grandchildren.

Grandchildren are perhaps thought to be too little to realise what they’re missing out on, but I suspect that when they grow up and realise what they have missed out on, they are likely to have some regret at that stage, and find someone to point a finger at, holding those responsible for keeping that distance. I read an article in the “Telegraph” recently where that is exactly the situation. Hopefully, this happens only occasionally, but who knows. All I can say is that grandparents and grandchildren must be allowed access to each other for the unfettered and unselfish love and joy that that relationship brings to both parties.

There can also be occasions of unspoken emotion, transmitted between grandparent and grandchild, and sometimes words do not need to be said between them to understand each other. It can be the child making a plea to

the grandparent in what they might see as troubled or troubling times, but all that the grandparent can do is to look on, almost impotently to try and rescue the situation, as they are not the child's official ward. Very rarely, hopefully extremely rarely, this can be in extremely tragic circumstances. The same unspoken emotion can also be an expression of affection between the two. The love and understanding between the two can be understood and felt not just right from the beginning, but there are often times when the child's actual feelings are often felt by the grandparents, especially when the child is in emotional pain, and grandparents, especially the grandmother, can be a source of refuge.

I have yet to read completely Richard Dawkins "The selfish gene", first published in 1976, but I can sense the other reason why grandparents wish to do as much as they can for the grandchildren. It is to keep their own genetic line running on in the human race, and is one explanation for "altruism" which leads to actually enhance the survival of closely related individuals.

All in all, it's the summer of 2026, and there are families all over the northern hemisphere spending their summer holidays together. I would love to think that all grandparents and grandchildren get time together to continue to establish and develop that special bond, a bond like no other, but one that is not often given enough thought to. This too, is one of the "Loves", that makes the world go round.

So what if we take this further? My brush with the world of AI and with my imagination running wildly as usual, I wonder if we could create holographic videos of our loved ones, for us to see when they are no longer with us. I would take this further, and use scientific advances to make these interactive, perhaps initially in the most basic interactions. But that could

happen! Of course, the detractors would say that this could create unhealthy bonds, but then who are we to decide for everyone what is healthy or not in today's world, where even Bran flakes' healthiness is questionable. Come on, O UK inventors, and all, the world over! Please give this a think. It may help us retain the most non-transactional relationship on this world, and make it "live" forever.