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Five Tips To Bridge Generations

Posted on November 25, 2015 by Christine Crosby in GRAND Voices



By Deanna Bufo Novak

Here are some grand tips on bridging the generations.

1. Use the time to show your enthusiasm for your heritage

Nothing you write to children or grandchildren in an email will convey the same feeling of joy and pride as you in-person sharing your family stories one-on-one where your children can see you smile, laugh and where they feel the wonder. You are the child's first teacher and they are full of questions and thirsty for knowledge, especially when it comes to their own families. Engage them, listen to their

questions and answer the best you can. "I am of Italian descent and have always been proud of it," Bufo Novak says. "As a child, I would ask my great-grandfather about life in Italy, what it was like coming to America, and why we ate macaroni every Sunday and I loved his broken English answers!"

<http://www.grandmagazine.com/news/2015/11/five-tips-bridge-generations/>

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every Sunday and I adored his broken-English answers!"

2. Select recipes or crafts related to your heritage and do them together

For generations, immigrants flocked to America, bringing their own traditions. It has made this a great nation. "Passing down traditions with cooking, sewing and crafting or even looking at old photos helps tremendously and it gives our children a strong foundation from which to grow," Bufo Novak explains. "Attending a wide variety of cultural festivals is another wonderful experience for the whole family to get immersed in a culture, without stepping foot on an airplane."

3. Mealtime matters

Eating together provides opportunities for the family to communicate in a quality way. By sharing stories, ideas, thoughts and feelings, strong and meaningful relationships are formed. Eating together as a family has several critical benefits for a child's development including with their physical, social, emotional and academic growth. "We should provide our children with the speaking and thinking skills they need to participate and excel in our global community." If you go out for a meal, restaurants are also an incredible source of cultural information and sensory experiences. Eat the traditional food of a country, listen to its music, point-out its traditional décor and colors that are used.

4. Gather after the meal in one special room of the home

The size of homes has grown by 50 percent, meaning family members can retreat to their own corners of the house. There were benefits to bonding when homes were quaint and there were "parlours" that families gathered in on Sundays and the home included multiple generations. Ease of travel also plays a role in spreading us away from the core family dwelling. "Families, like my own, relocate often to different parts of the country and even the world," Bufo Novak says. "While modern technology helps us stay close to loved ones, e-mails and digital photos will never compare to the experience I had growing up constantly surrounded by family, including my great-grandfather, grandparents, parents, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins."



5. Avoid technology as a babysitter

Over the past two decades, children who watch television, have received messages from popular culture telling them that parents are selfish, immature, incompetent, and generally clueless. Those themes are inserted by writers for laughs or to make a point in a storyline, but it can also make an impression that is not true of your family.

Think outside-the-box to offer a child who needs to have some quiet time. Give them supplies to write a thankfulness journal or let them help you cook something for a person less fortunate, or find them books so they can learn about and explore other countries. "Many libraries have entire sections devoted to the world's countries and cultures and in your child's eyes, a visit to the library can mean an exciting trip around the world," Bufo Novak says. "Children find it fascinating when we, as parents, learn something with them, so encourage further interaction and be sure to point it out to them when you are learning something new." Simple phrases such as "I didn't know that! That's so cool!" will likely get them excited to learn even more.

Encouraging children to understand and be proud of their own heritage helps them form strong roots, thereby increasing their own self-confidence. Confident children will be much more likely to accept those around them. So, climb that



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Deanna Bufo Novak is the mother of two young Italian-Polish- American children. She is an attorney and the creator and author of personalized one-of-a-kind children's books called My Heritage Book, ABCs Around the World, and My Sleigh Ride Around the World, and founder of their publisher kidsHeritage, Inc.

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