

Grandparenting Styles

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

The segmentation analysis in the National Study of Jewish grandparents with its five groups accurately reflects today's Jewish grandparents' distinct experiences and relationships with one grandchild, randomly selected by the survey program. As such, it is highly useful to Jewish organizations and communal professionals as they seek to understand the reality of Jewish grandparenting today.

However, this analysis alone does not paint a complete picture of Jewish grandparenting today. As the study shows, and as we know from existing literature, focus groups, interviews, and responses from preliminary study presentations, grandparenting, attitudes and practices are seldom static or fixed. Most grandparents report that they have different relationships with different grandchildren. Additionally, an individual's grandparenting attitudes and Jewish practices and aspirations may shift over time. Existing research speaks of different stages of grandparenting.

With the help of Marshall Duke, a member of the Jewish Grandparents Network National Advisory Committee and Charles Howard Candler Professor of Psychology at Emory University we created an additional theoretical framework based on our research as well as existing research and literature on grandparenting styles.

Engaged Grandparenting Style

The Engaged Grandparenting Style represents those who are, in different ways, actively involved in the lives of their grandchildren and in transmitting Jewish values, customs and traditions. Variations within this style represent a grandparent's choice to either balance between the following four parameters or emphasize one of them:

- Prioritize relationships with children and grandchildren
- Prioritize secular/cultural values
- Prioritize faith and Jewish traditions
- Respond to exigency

Constrained Grandparenting Style

The Constrained Grandparenting Style is seen in grandparents who desire to be more involved than they are but cannot be due to factors such as:

- Distance
- Relationship/family conflict
- Illness or disability
- Assimilation
- Limited financial resources



Remote Grandparenting Style

The Remote Grandparenting Style is seen in grandparents who, for a variety of reasons, choose to maintain a distant relationship with grandchildren, interacting with them primarily on special occasions or holidays.

Applying Grandparenting Styles

Based on the three grandparenting styles identified above, we locate the five grandparent groups presented within the National Study of Jewish Grandparents as follows:

- Engaged Grandparenting Style
 - Joyful Grandparent
 - Faithful Grandparent
 - Secular Grandparent
- Constrained Grandparenting Style
 - Wistful Grandparent
 - Detached Grandparent
- Remote Grandparenting Style
 - Detached Grandparent

While the five study groups identified in the National Study fit comfortably within the three grandparenting styles, this framework acknowledges that grandparents function within dynamic family systems and grow and change themselves. For example, while a grandparent may identify with a particular group e.g. Secular or Faithful Grandparent, his or her style may change. Alternatively, a grandparent may choose to adopt or assume a style and, in time, come to identify more closely with a different group.