

Carolyn Hax: A grandmother sought advice. Now she wants another opinion.

By **Carolyn Hax**

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Adapted from an online discussion.

Dear Carolyn: *I wrote in for advice on how to disengage gently from our granddaughter whose activity level overwhelms us. My husband and I have mulled over your and others' suggestions. Water parks and the like have too many people, too much noise, too much motion.*

We are academics and introverts. Crowd and noise drain all the energy out of us. At a Smithsonian years back, the crowds, colors, random motion and the noise made me shut down. First dizziness, then nausea, then I fainted. Airports and subway systems are also a problem. This started when I was about 12, so it's lifelong.

We think we did a good job raising our child, gave him an excellent education, etc. But must we turn ourselves inside out, trying to deal with a grandchild whom we find exhausting? Can't we be happy and content with the occasional photos?

— Can't Stand Our Grandchild (Part 2)

Can't Stand Our Grandchild (Part 2): I struggle to think of anyone who has worked so hard to get the answer they want.

You don't want to spend time with this grandchild. Period. So own it: Tell your son you realize her high energy is not the child's fault or his, but you're just not physically up to it. Take your lumps.

Or, again, get creative. Train your big academic brains on this puzzle. Figure out quiet places that give this child room to run, tire herself out, then settle down.

You can even bring your son into the conversation: "Hey, we're overwhelmed by this, *which is obviously not the kid's fault.*" (Do not stint on this part.) "Can you think of quiet places to park ourselves while she runs around?"

Anyone writing in can accept my answers, or reject them as bad or unworkable. That's fine. But every answer comes with consequences. If you want nothing of your annoying grandchild except photos, then don't expect ever to be close to that grandchild, and possibly not your child anymore, either, depending on your grace, humility and flexibility in addressing this.

Readers' thoughts:

- Sounds like Grandma has a sensory processing disorder or anxiety disorder, not introversion. Children's play areas [and museums] have sensory days with muted lights and sounds. Large open public parks might work, too.
- You looked at those *particular* suggestions for possible ways to manage the differences between you, and found problems with them. Valid. Not valid is not reaching out to her parents, asking them to work with you to make a relationship possible.

The fact that you're not jumping all over possible solutions means you don't want a solution, you want what you want — and yes. You can have it. But no, you're not going to get it without paying hard for it.

- As the mother of two ADHD kids and the aunt of three more, I can name about a thousand ways Grandma could show love. My 89-year-old mother has kept great relationships with all her grands and great-grands by exchanging letters and small packages with them. Now my 18-year-old daughter runs all her errands and worships the ground she walks on.

Go ahead and beg off, Grandma, but just know you're among the first in a long line of people who may avoid or dislike your granddaughter for something that is not her fault.

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