



Grandparent Letters

Letter 1 Affection and friendship

GOALS

This letter will help you and your grandchild get to know each other better. By showing interest in the child and revealing some interesting things about yourself, you can begin to build a rewarding relationship. Children are interested in you. They would like to learn about your past and your current interests and activities. They also want you to know about the big events in their lives.

These children want to reach out to others but need patient, *accepting* adults who can support their efforts to do so. Also, keep in mind that no matter how well you know someone, there is always something interesting you can discover in him or her.

ACTIVITIES

1. Write your *Special Letter*:

- ☐ Talk about things you like and dislike.
- ☐ Describe your life as a child. What did you enjoy doing then? What were your friends like?
- ☐ Describe your current friends. What qualities do you look for in a friend?
- ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. For your grandchild's scrapbook:

On a piece of typing paper draw a picture of you and your grandchild doing something fun together. On the back or the bottom of this picture describe what you are doing together. Why is it fun? Maybe you could also mention some other things you would like to do with your grandchild.

3. In your journal (After completing letter 1):

Keep in mind that the journal provides you with an opportunity to speak to your grandchild as an adult. For what reasons did you decide to try this

correspondence program? Describe your reactions to the activities you did. What kind of feelings did you experience? What thoughts went through your mind?

(After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): How did your grandchild respond to your *special letter*?

4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any additional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 1 on his or her instruction sheet.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

• "Me" Mobile

Construct a mobile of symbols of special things—things you treasure (family, friends, foods, special treasures, favorites, etc.). To make a simple mobile, take a coat hanger and tie your objects to it with string or yarn. Use small objects, drawings, pictures, etc. for your symbols. Attach these objects with glue or tape to cardboard or heavy paper cut into different shapes. Punch a hole in the top of each symbol and attach a piece of yarn or string to it. On the back of each symbol, write a brief description describing why it is special. Attach a note telling the child how to make the symbols into a mobile.

• Home Tour

Draw or attach one or more pictures of your home on a sheet of paper. Take your grandchild on an imaginary tour by describing your home in detail. Do you live in an old house? Does it have an attic? Is it small or large? Talk about and describe other places you have lived.



Letter 2 Family and Heritage

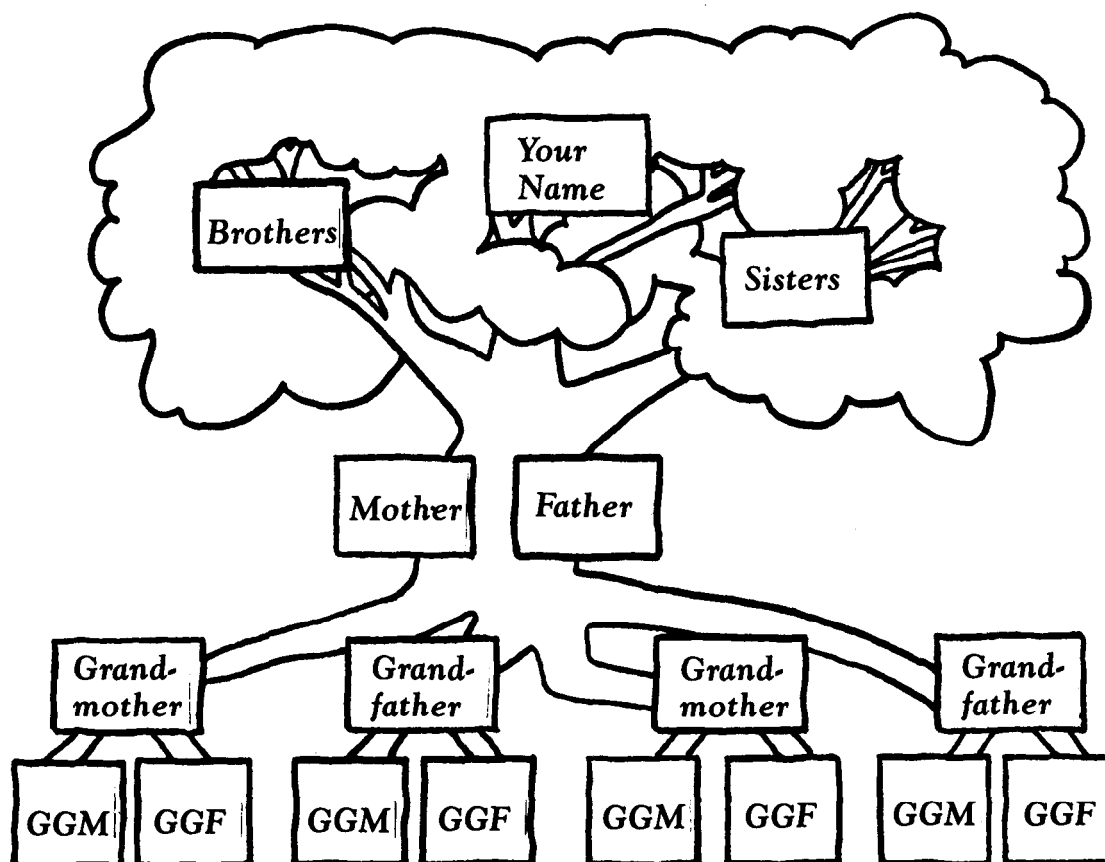
GOALS

Children's attitudes toward the life cycle can be profoundly affected by their contact with elders. Their feelings about their own future will be influenced by the way their grandparents approach life. But children also want to establish some sense of connection with the past. What was it like before they were born? What did their parents and grandparents do when they were young? In a child's eyes, grandparents are living repositories of change and history. They have seen so many things and experienced so much of what life has to offer. Only the older generation can provide children with a glimpse of living history as seen by someone who was really there.

ACTIVITIES

1. Write your *Special Letter*:

- ☐ Where and when were you born? Where did you grow up? How many brothers and sisters did you have? What did your parents do for a living?
- ☐ Discuss your growing up—games played, sports, school days, work experiences and exciting events witnessed.
- ☐ Talk about some of the dramatic changes—television, jet planes, computers, etc.—that have taken place since you were a child.
- ☐ Anything you think is important!



2. For your grandchild's scrapbook:

Construct your family tree. Sketch a tree on a piece of paper. Label the branches and roots on your family tree. Write your complete name and the names of your mother and father on the tree trunk. Trace your roots on your mother's and father's sides of the family. Try to include the birth names of all female ancestors.

3. In your journal (After completing letter 2):

Describe some of the events of your past that you think your grandchild would like to know about. Mention any stories your parents or other relatives may have told you. Talk about what life was like when you grew up.

(After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): Identify some of the things your grandchild likes to do and contrast them with what children his or her age did when you were young.

4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any additional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 2 on their instruction sheet.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

- *Decorate Your Scrapbook*

If you completed the "Me" Mobile in Letter #1, use the symbols to decorate the cover of your scrapbook.

- *Family Picture*

Find an old picture of yourself or your parents that you would be willing to part with or have another photo made from your copy. Place this picture on a sheet of typing paper and write a brief explanation of the picture.

- *Life Line*

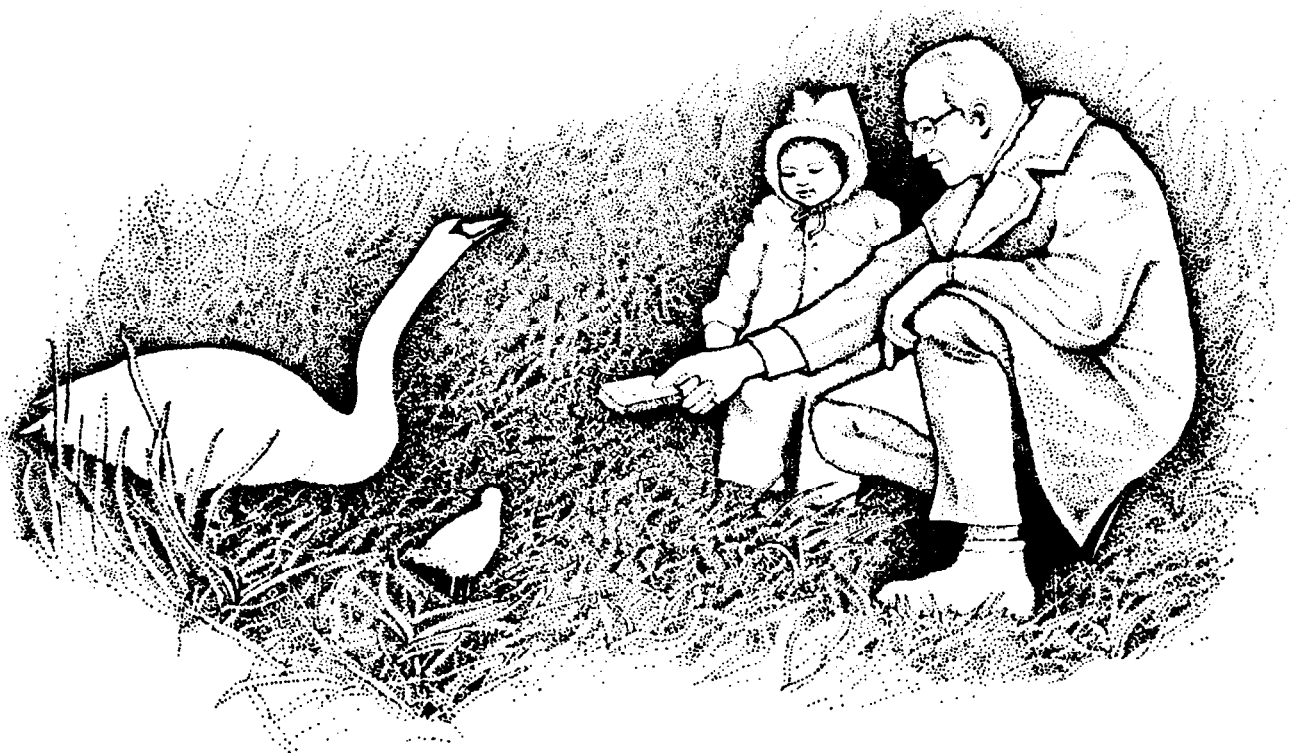
On a long strip of paper, draw a heavy horizontal line representing "Life." Mark "Birth" and the date at the left end. Mark significant pictures, momentos or brief descriptions to signify these points.

- *Something from the Past*

Send a picture or description of something owned or made by an ancestor. Include a description of how the object was made or used.

- *Family Food*

If you have a traditional food or dish that your mother or grandmother prepared, send the recipe to your grandchild. Explain how it became a tradition in your family.





Letter 3

Generosity and Love

GOALS

Grandparents can help grandchildren learn that the bonds of affection and friendship can be strengthened by sharing and sacrifice. In the materialistic world of today, we need to find ways to nurture generosity in children. From being in contact with you children can discover that "a little bit of fragrance clings to the hands of one who gives another roses."

ACTIVITIES

1. Write your *Special Letter*:

- ☐ Talk about people in your life who made a difference because of their caring and generosity.
- ☐ Discuss generosity. You might tell about times you gave to others and your feelings about giving.
- ☐ What are some qualities you see in people you love? Why are these qualities important?
- ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. For your grandchild's scrapbook:

Cut a circle out of construction paper and write your grandchild's name in the middle. Add petals, leaves and a stem. On each of the leaves and petals write something you like or appreciate about your grandchild. Glue this "Love Flower" to a piece of paper. Briefly explain your flower on the back.

3. In your journal (After completing letter 3):

Describe your ideas and feelings about generosity and friendship. What kinds of experiences did you have as a child that influenced your attitudes towards giving?

(After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*):
How did your grandchild feel about love and generosity?

- ##### 4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any additional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 3 on his or her instruction sheet.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

- *Exchange of Gifts*

Make a jigsaw puzzle of a picture of yourself, your house or something else you value. Paste the picture on heavy paper or lightweight cardboard. Cut it into a variety of shapes.

or

Make a bookmark from felt, pasting on the child's initials or make a bookmark mouse. Cut an oval of felt, add felt eyes and ears. Glue on a strand of yarn for a tail.

Paint a picture on a scrap of wood.

- *Poem or Story*

Create a poem or write a short story describing an experience you had with giving. You could illustrate it with your own drawings or with pictures cut from magazines.

- *One-A-Day Love Packages*

Send four or five small packages or envelopes for the child to open on certain days. You might include treats, stickers, notes, small trinkets or I.O.U.'s for future activities. On each package specify when they are to be opened and include an explanatory note.





Letter 4

Responsibility and Courage

GOALS

Overcoming fear and accepting responsibility are two of life's constant struggles. Every step of development requires us to cope with new challenges and uncertainties. Elders are in a unique position to nurture a perseverance and strength of will that will enable children to face many of life's difficulties.

ACTIVITIES

1. Write your *Special Letter*:

- ☐ Discuss courage and the times when you acted courageously, especially when you were younger. These acts of bravery need not be dramatic. Sometimes the most difficult acts are quiet and unrecognized, like refusing to ridicule someone when everyone else does so.
- ☐ Discuss responsibility and courage in professions such as policemen, firemen, doctors and nurses.
- ☐ Talk about responsibility and chores. (Things like washing the dishes, taking out the trash or babysitting.) Emphasize that you have done these things because they are responsibilities and these tasks are necessary even though they may not be very enjoyable.
- ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. For your grandchild's scrapbook:

On a sheet of paper, complete a sentence like, "It takes a lot of courage to . . ." or "Responsibilities are important because . . ." Illustrate your statements with drawings or pictures from magazines.

or

Write a poem or short story about courage.

3. In your journal (After completing letter 4):

Describe some courageous moments you had as you were growing up. Be as specific as possible. Describe some of the responsibilities you faced as you became older.

(After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): Do you believe courage and responsibility are important? If so, why? How did your grandchild respond to the issue?

4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any additional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 4 on his or her instruction sheet.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

• *Treasure Box*

Decorate a small box as a container for a special treasure. Leave the decision of what to put inside the box up to your grandchild. Enclose a note with a brief explanation of the box and its purpose.

• *Future Fantasy*

Draw a picture or write a story about something you would like to do in the future or when you "grow-up." Write a brief explanation of how courage or responsibility may play an important part in this dream.





Letter 5

Respect for Elders

GOALS

Research shows that children generally have a very dim view of aging. Although they have a great deal of esteem for elders, children are afraid of growing older themselves. The stereotype of infirmity and passivity during later years is common among children, but those who have contact with elders are less likely to have a negative stereotype of aging. Being close to a grandparent, for example, might provide personal experience with someone who is aging gracefully and with dignity. When children view elder friends as persons, the negative stereotype diminishes. By becoming involved in their lives you can help children realize that aging is no tragedy, that they can look forward with hope and confidence to their own future.

ACTIVITIES

1. Write your *Special Letter*:

- ☐ Emphasis the idea that people can continue learning and enjoying life throughout their later years. Each stage of life signals a change—new opportunities emerge as previous activities become less important. People can be creative and childlike at any age.
- ☐ Tell about some of the fun activities that you and your friends take part in.
- ☐ Mention some of the major changes you experienced as you grew up.
- ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. For your grandchild's scrapbook:

Look through several magazines to find pictures of elders involved in various kinds of activities. Cut them out and paste the pictures on paper. If you cannot find any pictures, draw a picture of an activity you enjoy. Write brief explanations of these activities.

3. In your journal (After completing letter 5):

Describe what growing older has meant to you. What are some of the major changes you experienced as you grew up? How have you responded to these changes?

(After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): Are there any important ideas about aging you would like to mention to your grandchild? How did your grandchild respond to this issue?

4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any additional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 5 on his or her instruction sheet.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

• *Making a Mosaic*

Save eggshells; wash and dry. Dip the shells in food coloring, using several colors. After spreading them out to dry, crush the eggshells into small pieces. Draw a design on a sheet of paper and glue the colored shells into a mosaic. Write a brief explanation of mosaics and how they have lasted for a long time as decorations on buildings.

• *Elders Can*

Show your grandchild pictures of several objects made by elders in your community or by yourself. Attach these pictures to paper and include brief descriptions on them. Emphasize to the child that these things are possible because of the years of experience an older person can apply to the work.

• *Grandpicture*

Draw a portrait of your grandchild. Write a brief description of what you like about him or her.



Letter 6

Honesty and Commitment

GOALS

The fabric of our society is held together by the trust we have in each other. Each of us moves through the day expressing confidence in others and demonstrating our own trustworthiness. For example, when we drive a car, eat at a restaurant, and leave our children with a babysitter, we place trust in others. Our childrearing typically places a great deal of emphasis on this dependability.

We want our children to recognize the importance of giving their word to others. In their relationships with children, elders can nurture this sense of responsibility.

(After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*):
What kinds of principles do you hope your grandchild will acquire regarding these issues as he or she grows older?

4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any additional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 6 on his or her instruction sheet.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

ACTIVITIES

1. Write your *Special Letter*:

- ☐ Describe what a *lie* and *dishonesty* mean.
- ☐ Describe a time in your childhood when you lied. How did you feel about lying? Did you get caught?
- ☐ Describe a situation when someone lied to you. How did this make you feel? Do you trust that person today?
- ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. For your grandchild's scrapbook:

Draw the outline of several balloons on a piece of paper. Inside each balloon write a truthful statement, such as, "I really like you." or "I am your Grandma." In a brief explanation, stress that telling a lie to someone is like popping a balloon—one moment we think we have something, but the next moment it is no longer there.

3. In your journal (After completing letter 6):

Describe some of your strong beliefs about honesty and commitment. Do we always have to be completely honest? Can honesty ever be cruel?

• Balloon Person

Write your grandchild's name on a balloon with a felt tipped marker and draw his or her picture on it. Attach the balloon to a piece of paper with tape. Write a short note asking your grandchild to watch the picture change as the balloon is blown up. Also make a list of ways you keep the special commitments you have to your friends.

• Tall Tales

This activity may work better if an audio-cassette recorder is used. Playing this game is a humorous way to encourage your grandchild to reflect on the truthfulness of what he or she says. Emphasize that although *tall tales* can be fun to make up, they can hurt if the stories mislead others. Tell your grandchild that you are going to say something that is true or false and he or she will have to guess which it is. Be outrageous in your descriptions, making up an elaborate story. Ask your grandchild to guess which stories are true and false and then reveal the correct answers at the end.



Letter 7

Helpfulness

GOALS

To teach children to be helpful, we have to do at least two things. First, we have to help them learn the skills involved in helping others with various tasks; second, we have to give them opportunities to practice being helpful even when their efforts may not contribute to completing the task.

For example, to learn how to clean up after dinner, children have to know how to clear the table, wipe it clean and wash and dry the dishes. Someone has to show or tell them how to do these things. Also, someone has to encourage them to help with mealtime cleanup even though their “help” may cause more work at first. Because elders may have more time and patience than many parents, they can be especially effective in nurturing a sense of helpfulness in children.

ACTIVITIES

1. Write your *Special Letter*:

- ☐ Discuss things that people do for you that you feel are helpful. Talk about acceptable ways to go about helping someone else.
- ☐ Give suggestions of things your grandchild can do for his or her parents, neighbors, teachers, etc. to help out.
- ☐ Tell how you feel when you do something to help someone else out.
- ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. For your grandchild's scrapbook:

Draw a picture of you helping your grandchild with a task. At the bottom of the page identify what is happening in the picture.

3. In your journal (After completing letter 7):

Talk about some of the people who helped you while you were growing up. What did they do? What effect did they have on you? Talk about the importance of helping. Why should a person learn to help others?

(After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*):
How have your grandchild's letters helped you?
How have yours helped him or her?

4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any additional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 7 on his or her instruction sheet.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

- *Nature Walk*

Go out for a walk. Look for interesting twigs, rocks, leaves, etc. Arrange the rocks and other things to make “helpful people” or objects. Add decorative touches with paint to indicate eyes, nose, hair and other body features.

- *Helpful Hands*

Paint the palms of your hands and fingers. Make a print. Explain at the bottom of the page the many ways your hands can be helpful.





Letter 8

Competition and Justice

GOALS

All too often in our society, children identify with personal success. The performance of another person becomes more important than their own improvement. Research shows that grade school children can become so preoccupied with winning that they are willing to sacrifice their own personal gain to ensure failure by others. We can help children realize that learning and personal growth should never be sacrificed for winning and that competition can be used as a challenge to improve rather than as a opportunity to defeat someone else.

ACTIVITIES

1. Write your *Special Letter*:

- ☐ Talk about competition, possibly as it relates to sports or exhibiting at fairs. Tell how you felt competing.
- ☐ Talk about good and bad competition and good and bad winners and losers.
- ☐ Talk about competition and how it can be used as a challenge to improve.
- ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. For your grandchild's scrapbook:

Enlarge the illustration of the first place ribbon on a piece of construction paper. Cut it out, making a number 1 or 1st Place in the center.

or

Gather a length of ribbon and cover a button with ribbon, making a number 1 in the center. Attach the gathered ribbon to the button to make a rosette. Attach streamers at the bottom with glue.

Attach the ribbon to a piece of paper for the scrapbook. On this paper write the reasons why you think your grandchild is number 1 for you.



3. In your journal (After completing letter 8):

How do you feel about competition? What was your experience with competition and cooperation as a child? Can you remember and describe any childhood incidents that made an impression on you?

(After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): Are there any ideas about winning and losing you would like to convey? How did your grandchild respond to this issue?

- ##### 4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any optional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 8 on his or her instruction sheet.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

• Compare Collages

Cut small angular pieces from assorted colors of tissue paper. Glue an overlapping collage design on paper or cardboard. Frame it. On the back of the picture offer suggestions to your grandchild to improve and create his or her own collage to send to you. Explain how the collages can be different, emphasizing that each will be special in its own way. Also, each will show the abilities and interests of the person who made it.

• Competition Improvement

Make a list of activities that you compete in. After each item write a brief explanation of ways you can improve in this activity.



Letter 9 Conflict and Violence

GOALS

Power is both fascinating and frightening to children. In the world of adults, children may resent their own position of weakness and vulnerability. In their relationships with their friends, children seek to establish a position of influence and strength typically overlooked or belittled by adults. We can help children learn that they really do have something to offer others and that their emerging sense of power can be harnessed to serve positive ends. Elders are in a good position to nurture this outlook in children.

ACTIVITIES

1. Write your *Special Letter*:

- ☐ Discuss ways to solve conflicts. What are some good and bad ways to solve conflicts? How do you solve your conflicts or problems?
- ☐ Talk about peace and your wartime memories.
- ☐ Tell about a time when you were involved in a fight or some other conflict when you were young. What happened? How did you solve the conflict?
- ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. For your grandchild's scrapbook:

Draw a picture of a time when you were in a fight and hurt by someone during your childhood. At the bottom of your picture describe what happened to you and how you solved the conflict (if at all).

3. In your journal (After completing letter 9):

Talk about your ideas and feelings regarding conflict, peace and cooperation. What experiences did you have in growing up that influenced your opinions on these issues?

(After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*):
How did your grandchild react to this topic?

- #### 4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any optional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 9 on his/her instruction sheet.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

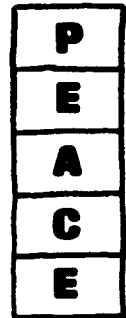
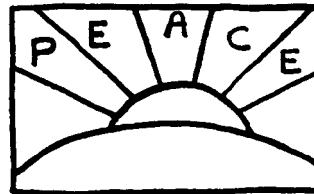
(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

• *Special Code*

Make up your own secret code. You, the grandparent will make up simple symbols for the first thirteen letters of the alphabet. Keep a copy of the code for yourself and send a copy to your grandchild. Ask him or her to make up the remaining thirteen letters and send you a copy of them. Now you can send "secret" messages.

• *Peace Banner*

You will need fabric or felt, colored paper or plain paper and crayons or watercolors. Decide on a peace design, such as those illustrated. Create a peace banner.





Letter 10

Sadness and Grief

GOALS

Loss is never easy to accept, at any age. Children may have a particularly difficult time dealing with loss because they do not understand the long-range implications of what has happened. But elders have experienced more of life and can share their experiences with young people. Also, from their position of authority, elders can encourage children to express honest grief and respond with care to the suffering of others. Elders can help children understand that expressing sadness is one way to heal a hurt.

ACTIVITIES

1. Write your Special Letter:

- ☐ Describe some of the things a person might do to express sadness, such as crying, going for a quiet walk, talking to someone, or praying.
- ☐ Talk about some of the times you were sad and what you did to deal with your feelings.
- ☐ Talk about things that make you happy.
- ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. For your grandchild's scrapbook:

Draw a diagonal line from corner to corner across a sheet of paper. Paste a yellow construction paper sun in the upper half and a blue construction paper cloud on the lower half. Cut out pictures from magazines that portray something that brightens or saddens you. Paste these pictures on the pages depending on the feeling you assign them. On the back of the page explain why these things brighten or sadden you.

3. In your journal (After completing letter 10):

Describe some of your ideas about sadness. How have you coped with losses in your life? How did your parents react to loss?

(After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): How did your grandchild react to this topic? When you complete your journal send it to your grandchild's parents for safekeeping.

4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any optional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 10 on his or her instruction sheet.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

- *"Feeling" Badges*

Design badges of various sizes and shapes. Attach labels of feelings like sad, excited or happy to them. Find a picture in magazines to match these feelings.

- *Tree of Life*

Draw the trunk and branches of a tree on a large sheet of paper. Make some leaves of construction paper. Label some of the leaves with names of living things. Attach these to the branches. Label the other leaves with names of things that have died and place them on the ground under the tree.

- *Writing How You Feel*

Make decorated note paper from folded sheets of paper. (Collect tiny flowers ahead of time and press them.) Glue these on the stationery or using crayons or markers, draw flowers on the stationery.



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