

Common Emotions and Strategies

Grief & Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbally acknowledge child's losses. Discuss changes in child's life and what they've had to "leave behind." Take photos of child in his/her new environment (custodial grandchildren may have little documentation of their early years). Display on a bulletin board or collage. Read the story <i>Boomer's Big Day</i> by Constance McGeorge. Cut out a paper suitcase. Assist grandchild in locating pictures in magazines or newspapers of items they would choose to take with them if moving. "Fill" the suitcase by pasting magazine pictures inside.
Guilt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide many opportunities each day to enhance child's self-esteem. Allow them to "help" as frequently as possible and reinforce their efforts. Read the story <i>Jamaica's Find</i> by Juanita Havill. Allow grandchildren to dictate their own story if desired. Praise child consistently for even small, positive gains. Keep feedback genuine but look for opportunities to "catch" child in desired behaviors. Discuss the concept that everyone makes mistakes. Brainstorm ways to apologize/make things right again when mistakes occur.
Fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide consistency in both caregivers and environment. Establish routines for separation. Read Audrey Penn's <i>The Kissing Hand</i>. Reinforce "brave behaviors." Start a sticker chart and provide stickers for each brave behavior displayed. Remember, for a fearful child, a "brave" behavior may be something as simple as smiling at a friend or not crying when separating from grandma. Many children are frightened of being alone in the dark. Purchase a small flashlight and allow grandchild to decorate it. Keep the flashlight next to (or in!) his/her bed each night.
Embarrassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist the grandchild in developing answers to questions that other children or adults may ask about their home life. Be alert to ways that you can assist your grandchild in "fitting in." Search out what afterschool options (i.e., sport teams, scouts, musical groups, etc.) are available and popular with other children. Talk to other caregivers about clothing and activities. Read <i>The Ugly Duckling</i> by Hans Christian Anderson or <i>Elmer the Elephant</i> by David McKee. Discuss how animals and people can be "different" and "special." Assist grandchild in making list or collage that depicts their own uniqueness. Share a humorous and embarrassing moment or two from your own life. Focus on how you were able to laugh about this situation at a later time. Discuss what you learned about yourself.
Anger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for opportunities to model appropriate expressions of anger. Identify the feeling and show how it can be managed correctly. For example, "I'm really angry that I broke this bowl. I'm going to go away by myself for a few minutes until I calm down. Then I'll come back and pick up the broken pieces." Provide a variety of outlets for expressing anger. Options include pounding clay or pillows, finger painting to wild music, running in place, taking ten deep breaths or listening to quiet music. Read <i>Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day</i> by Judith Viorst. Laugh about Alexander's many troubles and discuss how the next day will be different for him. Prevent angry feelings from building up by insuring that grandchildren get some exercise (preferably outdoors) each and every day. Go for a walk, visit a playground, dance to wild music, or kick a soccer ball. Fifteen minutes of exercise each day will go a long way toward preventing angry outbursts in many young children.