

Life has a lot of changes. As we become older, we take up new roles and have new duties, in particular for our own kids. Few transitions look as dramatic as the transformation of a mother into a grandmother. That can be difficult. Nevertheless, moms are decision-makers, while grandmas are secondary characters.

That isn't a downgrading. Ask Anna Quindlen. Understanding how to be a grandmother to Arthur, who is her eldest son's first child, has been a lesson and an extremely rewarding experience. However, it isn't the same thing as being a mother.

Giving support without falling into old "Mom knows best" routines is a balancing deed. Errors are unavoidable, as Anna can tell from her own experience.

Where she formerly led, she follows now. That's only an aspect of living in "Nanaville" – a place to visit and learn in instead of the place where grandchildren call home.

Chapter 1 - Grandparents are supportive people in the lives of their grandchildren.

It started with a text message.

Anna was in her dining room when the message came in. The message came from her oldest son; Quin, and he had glad news. Lynn, his wife had made it through an emergency C-section. Therefore, they gave birth to Arthur, the child where everyone had been eagerly waiting for.

Daily, approximately 360,000 children are born. And daily, if they're fortunate enough to see the event, twice as many women turn to grandmothers just like Anna. That's the big picture. Zoom in, however, and those types of figures seem very meaningless. What is actually different is how those women's duties change as they navigate the change from being a mother to a grandmother.

Therefore, what's the difference?

The majority of the kids are brought up by their parents. When they get to adolescence and recollect their influential early years, their moms and dads unavoidably appear largest. But, Grandparents are different. Their names show later in the recognitions, together with the remaining of the supporting cast.

However, just as anyone who has ever had a grandparent will say, that doesn't entail they're not vital. Secondary? Definite. Meaningless? Not true.

Just consider the important duty done by allegedly "peripheral" figures in literature.

Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet only wouldn't function without the character of the nurse, who secretly conveys messages between the star-crossed lovers. There's also Mrs. Hudson, the practical housekeeper who keeps the place Arthur Conan Doyle's notably austere detective, Sherlock Holmes lives.

Supporting casts "flesh out" the plot. Just like a movie featuring just a little cast of stars, life in the absence of colorful background characters would be poorer. Our grandparents provide a sense of connection with our histories, assisting us to know who we are and what we can turn to.

The first step on the path to transforming to a grandmother is embracing that you'll never play a similar role in the lives of your grandchildren just like you did in the lives of your children. The things grandmothers can offer their grandsons and granddaughters are color, texture, history, mythology.

Chapter 2 - By telling your children how to be a parent over their children, you risk pushing them away.

Feeding, diapering, reading, singing, lifting, cuddling, loving, and occasionally chastising –a lot of motherhood is in the active present tense. Being a mom entails doing. It is no surprise that it's really hard to relax when your kids get older and begin making their own route through life!

Things get harder when you become a grandmother. Now, you're a grey veteran. You've everything. You know what's what, and it is obvious in the manner you reason and talk. "That baby is hungry." "That baby wants Motrin." "That baby needs to sleep more."

It might be second nature; however, be cautioned: being nosy is not a great thing.

Learn from Anna. She got to know the hard way. When Arthur was just three, his parents had agreed that he was ready to start preschool. Anna disagreed with that. At that point, it was her first mistake: she went ahead and share that "understanding."

Her relationship with Quin had been very harmonious all the time; therefore, the following thing that occurred took her by surprise. He pushed back – really hard. He told her in no unclear words, was a red line. Nana has to back off and allow him and Lynn to raise their own child.

You can name it the first commandment of Nanaville: if you desire to see your grandkids more than twice in a year, keep your unwanted ideas to yourself. It seems very harsh, right? Definitely; however, it's not just a self-serving method to keep grumpy parents onside. Also, there is a concrete cause for holding your tongue: you might be incorrect.

Consider how much the advice provided to new parents varies over time. For instance, when Anna first gave birth, doctors said to her that Quin should never be let to sleep on his back since it would increase his risk of choking. Nowadays, the majority of the pediatricians tell parents the opposite of that: back sleeping is the safest method and can reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome.

Therefore, know that: probabilities are, you haven't spoken to an expert in the field recently. While your children, absolutely have. Now's the time to agree that they might have a better understanding!

Chapter 3 - Nanaville isn't essentially about what you need to do; it's essentially about what you want to do.

Wo ai ni, sunzi. That's Mandarin for "I love you, Grandson," and those are the first words Anna learned in that language. However, before we talk about that, let's go back to before Anna became a grandmother.

The story of Arthur, Anna's grandson, starts in Beijing, China. During one evening, an American ex-pat that was there to work and also to learn Chinese started speaking with a local called Lynn. By now, you know what happened in the remaining of the story. They fell in love. They got married. They settled down in America and gave birth to their first child.

Both of his parents were fluent in English and Mandarin. Staying in the United States, it was obvious that Arthur would learn English. However, they also desired to transfer his birthright: access to his mother's native language and the culture of the land that it is spoken. Therefore, what was the reason why Anna, a self-declared monoglot who detested language classes in school, choose to take Mandarin lessons instead of just speaking to her grandson in English.?

Anna had chosen that she wished to be part of Arthur's life. When he gets older, she wishes to ask him how he is doing with his studies, to cook a pot roast for his college friends, and make eggs, Benedict, for his significant other. At the moment, although, that entails going down on the floor and playing with him on his level. And when he points at the family labrador and mentions hei gougou instead of "black dog," she wishes to understand him.

Mothers don't have the chance to make the difference between want and must. If you're working with even a smallest of care, you don't sit down on the couch with a cup of coffee and say, "I don't want to give that baby food at the moment." Motherhood is governed by the law of Thou Shalt. If your child is bright red and grabbing his ear in pain, you're driving to the hospital – no doubts, no buts.

Also, Nanas does the exact things; however, there's a difference. Except she has become a stand-in mom for some cause, a grandmother changed diapers, crawls about on entire fours, and, certainly, learns Mandarin since she has decided to do that.

Chapter 4 - You learn about who your children are when they give birth to their own kids.

Quin is the type of guy who understands things. Moby Dick, famous music, Chinese history –anything, he has the answers. He’s analytical, meticulous, and reasonable. There’s a cause he puts on a T-shirt that has the slogan “Grammar police: to correct and serve.”

These are great abilities; however, Anna pondered how compatible they were with the confusion of bringing up a child. Quin pondered on that, as well. For a very long time, he was against the notion – kids, he mentioned, just weren’t his bag. His mother had thought for a long time in the same way. When she was in her twenties, she read a book known as *The Baby Trap*, a 1970s manifesto for the “childfree movement.” For a very long time, she loved the freedom of not having a child and detested the notion of having her wings clipped.

However, then, she gave birth to Quin, Chris, and Maria. The world slanted on its axis, and her opinions changed. The same thing occurred to Quin after the birth of Arthur.

Fatherhood didn’t ruin Quin’s intellectual interest; it only changed his concentration. Instead of a Joseph Conrad novel or the cultural politics of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Quin now desired to know... his son.

That went together with something like an emotional melting process. Arthur was changing him into a softy. When he and Lynn understood that Arthur’s inability to sleep was making him unhappy, they chose to sleep train him. In practice, that entailed putting him in a different room and allowing him to “cry it out.” That wasn’t effective. Within ten minutes, Quin began crying – he couldn’t continue with it!

That’s love. Anna once questioned her son on what he had discovered really surprising about fatherhood. He said that had never thought it was imaginable to love someone as deeply as he loved Arthur.

Nothing makes her more proud of her son’s commitment to his child. Some peoples determine their success as parents with their children’s degrees, occupations, houses, and pay. Nothing is

wrong with that – those things are essential. However, the question that is actually important is simpler: have you raised good people?

Having observed Quin change into a loving father, Anna tells that she has succeeded in doing that.

Chapter 5 - The present baby boomers are a different type of grandparents.

It's not only the instruction doctors give pregnant women that's transformed over the decades – parenting, generally, is a different ballgame.

Consider Anna's parents. During their time, things were not complicated. You give birth and got on with it. Entertainment entailed sending your children out to go and play, and the closest you had to an educational toy was your younger brother or sister. Shoes and school clothes were passed down, and the teacher was right all the time, particularly if she were to be a cane-wielding nun.

Seventy years ago, families were really bigger than they currently are now. Anna's mom had five children; her paternal grandparents had 32 grandchildren. None of those numbers was rare. Even though you weren't poor, family life was shaped by scarcity: time and focus were constantly in short supply. Tasks were assigned to a mass of aunts, uncles, neighbors, and grandparents. Love was anything except unconditional – what was important was how you acted and what you accomplished.

Grandparents had a certain place in this order: they were the old people. Though they weren't that older than their baby boomer counterparts, they had a different point of view. That was partly due to the average life expectancy.

If you weren't predicted to live above 70, 50 seemed old. And that's how they acted. Concetta, Anna's grandmother wore shapeless clothes and didn't put any makeup; Caesar, her husband wore sharkskin jeans and used his afternoons attending to his tomato plants. It would never have happened with them to go down on the floor and play with a toddler.

That's transformed. Grandmothers such as Anna are very active. They're likely to go skiing with their grandkids or ask them about their result as they are to distribute plates of steaming stew.

Meanwhile, medical developments have redefined biological potentials. In a New York market, while Anna was ordering fish with Arthur strapped to her chest, the woman beside her stated that she looked great "for how young he is." It took her a while to understand what was happening.

Definitely— women in Anna's age can give birth now! Her grandmothers were 47 when she was given birth to. Presently, that could be the age of an older mother or a youngish grandmother. That's an extreme transformation.

Chapter 6 - Children such as Arthur denote the future of the United States.

When Arthur was given birth to, his doctor tossed him onto his stomach and revealed his parents their baby's bottom. A patch around the size of an adult hand and the color of a stormy sky was across his bottom. The pediatrician told them that this was called a Mongolian blue spot — a birthmark that is popular among Asian babies.

It wasn't only to assure Arthur's mom and dad that everything was okay. Blue spots are regularly mistaken for an indication of abuse in societies that are not accustomed to Asian babies; therefore, it was essential that Quin and Lynn could clarify what it was.

However, those types of misunderstandings will turn out to be increasingly rare in the future. Why is that so? It is because the United States is in the middle of a massive demographic change.

The key point here is that: Children such as Arthur denote the future of the United States.

This is exactly what America appears like presently. Children are very likely than before to have, let's say, a white mother and a black father or to be half-Latino and half-Swedish. Pinballing

between languages is a normal thing now. The year that Quin was given birth to, only one in seven children was multiracial or multiethnic. During the time of his son's birth, that figure had tripled.

That's light-years taken away from the world in which Anna was raised. While she was growing up, the word "mixed marriage" signified a Catholic had married a Lutheran who had changed to Catholicism. On the other hand, children such as Arthur, represent the relationship of very diverse nations and cultures.

Let's look at Arthur's maternal grandparents, who were brought up in Maoist China, where they learned in Beijing before being taken to the countryside to be "reeducated." Afterward, they relocated to the United States and brought up their daughter in a university town.

On the other part of the world, Arthur's paternal grandparents were coming up in a Catholic society where priests asked to go on missionaries to save "Red China." They got to know how to use chopsticks at restaurants serving food Americans assume as Chinese and Chinese people hardly identify. After their eldest son graduated, he relocated to Beijing.

The arc of progress, meaning, bends toward grandchildren who are both like and different from us. They have those two histories; however, they can't be reduced to any of them. Occasionally, people mention how closely Arthur looks like his father or mother. There's no disagreeing with that – sometimes he actually does. However, then he'll turn his face, smile, or snifle and become both or none.

He is his own person and will write his own past.

Nanaville: Adventures in Grandparenting by Anna Quindlen

Book Review

Transforming to a grandmother entails embracing a new role and leaving the deep-rooted customs. Different from mothers, nanas play a secondary role in their family's life: they're part of the supporting character instead of one of the leads. However, that doesn't entail that they're

not significant – as a matter of fact, grandparents offer a deep sense of connection to the past and form grandchildren's sense of their own identity.

The crucial thing is to make the relationship with your children and their significant other work. That's essentially about taking a back seat and assisting them to train their kids instead of saying to them what's what. Get that aspect of the equation correct, and you'll have one of the most pleasing experiences of your life.

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