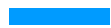


One Senior Place: Connecting with grandkids is hard, but there are ways to get their attention



Brenda Lyle | Special to FLORIDA TODAY

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Q: My memory is failing — how can I connect with my grandkids?

A: The gap between the generations has always existed.

Now, kids spend hours in front of a variety of electronic screens.

During a recent visit with my 11-year-old granddaughter, she declared it “gross” that I only used one thumb for texting!

Despite the prevalence of gadgets, there are meaningful ways to connect with your grandchildren — even in the shadow of memory loss.

Previous three One Senior Place columns:

- **It's OK to rest:** Being a caregiver to elderly parent is taxing; take care of yourself, too
- **Bah humbug:** I don't feel very grateful this holiday season. What can I do?
- **Preserve their knowledge:** It's important for kids to learn about grandparents while they still have them

Those darn gadgets

Have your grands teach you some of the games they play.

Many game "apps" engage your memory and your creativity.

There are fun ways to take (and do silly things with) pictures, which can then be stored and shared with you.

Ask them to show you the pictures on their phones or iPad. This is a great way to get to know their activities and friends.

Have your grands tell Siri to play some music from iTunes.

You can take turns sharing meaningful songs. Music memory lasts the longest in the brain and can even stand up to Alzheimer's.

The old-fashioned way

Look through old photo albums with your grandkids.

Chances are, they have never seen a book with printed photos before.

Hand write a letter to your grandchild, but not in cursive, since many schools no longer teach cursive writing.

Write about the things you remember. Older kids and teenagers find these fascinating, especially references to things they have never seen before, like record players or typewriters.

Get touchy-feely

Kids still play with Playdough and sometimes grandma knows how to make it from scratch!

This is a great way to connect through the senses.

You can talk about colors as you build clever characters like pink snowmen.

Today's youngsters also play with magnetic sand. Imagine building a tabletop sandcastle!

Have them show you a modern toy catalog. To help jog your memory, cut out their Christmas requests and glue them on paper to take along to the store.

Teach your grandchild how to cook one of your favorite holiday recipes. Not only will the memory of the interaction linger, but the child will have a cherished recipe to share when they become an adult.

You can set the tone and the pace of holiday gatherings to reduce your stress.

It's about quality, not quantity.

No matter the stage of memory loss, remember there are still ways that your

family can bond together.

Connecting with your grandkids is easy as long as you are willing to step into their world for a minute or two.

One Senior Place is a marketplace for resources and provider of information, advice, care and on-site services for seniors and their families. Questions for this column are answered by professionals in nursing, social work, care management and in-home care. Send questions to AskOSP@OneSeniorPlace.com, call 321-751-6771 or visit One Senior Place, The Experts in Aging.

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