



### A Guide for Grandma & Grandpa

We hope you have some short and/or extended visits with your grandchildren this summer. Here is a sample guide to share with their parents (your children) to complete, so all of you can have peace of mind that you are prepared for everything the grandchildren visit/stay brings.

**(Parents, Complete Before a Stay with Grandparents:)**

#### Sample Introduction:

Parents, begin your note with a simple, "Thank you!" for a terrific opening. I also leave information about what food/meals are available in the house, and the nearest super-market. Optional: inform them you've left a gift card to the market to show your appreciation. If you are traveling, a small souvenir is also a great thank-you when you return.

#### Sample Contact Information:

Parents, I recommend listing information in two ways: first, list all of the most important information including your direct contact information, the name and phone number of the place where you are staying, and the children's physician and pertinent medical information (allergies, medications, current and chronic medical issues).

Sample: "Our cell phone numbers are x and x. We are staying at hotel x, number is x. Doctor x at x; allergies x; medications x; other medical information to know x."

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Parents, next list information according to your children's daily schedules. Example: they may use the bathroom when they first rise in the morning, then dress, eat, go to pre-school and/or school, and so on. Follow that order:

Sample: "**Bathroom:** Child #2 is toilet-training so please remind her to use the bathroom according to the schedule I've attached. When in doubt, cue her in the morning/at bed-time, at meal-times and before you go somewhere. Wear pull-ups at night. Child #1 is independent in the bathroom."

Sample: "**Dressing:** they can choose their clothes but may need guidance to be weather-appropriate. Child #1 wears a uniform to school; uniforms are stored in her closet. Everything you need is in their rooms or in the foyer closet."

Sample: "**Meals:** They prefer water over anything else to drink (child #1 may prefer organic milk). They like x. Child #2 will eat/try everything; child #1 is still pickier, but will eat most/enough of her vegetables and fruits. No or little junk food or snacks, try fruit or a veggie first."

Sample: "**School:** (list the wake time, how long it takes for them to get ready and helpful hints such as where to find basic things like hairbrushes, extra socks, etc.) Leave for school by x o'clock, child #1 must be in the door by x o'clock. Pick-up is at x o'clock."

Sample: "**Nap:** (include start time, duration and key routine items)."

Sample: "**Weeknight and weekend night routine:** (include a summary and helpful hints)."

Sample: "**Activities schedule:** (include church, sports, lessons, events, etc.)."

Finally, save the document, to update for future trips. Tuck a copy in their baby books to enjoy later. It is very likely you, as their grandparents, will be more than prepared and will not need all of this guidance. I think it's more important for the parents, to feel like they have prepared you for anything, so they can enjoy the time away. Good luck!

#### Elephant Optical Illusion Answer and Explanation:

How many legs does the elephant have? Tricky, isn't it?! This picture is an "impossible" picture that contains some subjective contours. A subjective or illusory contour means the contour of the image is created by the shapes around it.

(Thank you, [SharpBrains.com](http://SharpBrains.com)!)

### Why, Exactly, is Chronic Stress So Harmful?

You probably know that chronic stress can affect your health. It can lead to depression, and even to a higher risk of cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease symptoms. *Why?*

Under stress, the brain's limbic system — responsible for emotions, memory and learning — triggers an alarm that activates the fight-or-flight response, increasing the production of adrenaline (epinephrine) and cortisol, which work together to speed heart rate, increase metabolism and blood pressure, enhance attention, the immune system and anti-inflammatory response, and lower pain sensitivity — all good things when your very survival is on the line. When the stressful situation is over, the body resets back to normal.

However, under constant stress, the body is unable to reset. High adrenaline and cortisol levels persist, potentially causing blood sugar imbalances and blood pressure problems, and whittling away at muscle tissue, bone density, immunity and inflammatory responses. These events block the formation of new neural connections in the hippocampus, the part of the brain responsible for encoding new memories. When these new connections are blocked, the hippocampus can actually shrink in size, hindering memory. *So, what can you do to counter-act stress and maintain brain and body health?* Read on!

### **May Birthdays**

Princess Charlotte, May 2nd, 2015

Audrey Hepburn, May 4th (1929-1993)

John F. Kennedy, May 29th (1917-1963)

### **What's in Season?**

*In May, Try Asparagus, Honeydew and other Melons, and Corn*

### Six Tips to Lower Stress and Build Resilience

**Get some exercise:** Studies show that aerobic exercise helps build new neurons and connections in the brain to counteract the effects of stress. Regular exercise also promotes good sleep, reduces depression and boosts self-confidence through the production of endorphins, the "feel-good" hormones.

**Relax:** Easier than it sounds, right? But relaxation — through meditation, tai chi, yoga, a walk on the beach, or whatever helps to quiet your mind and make you feel more at ease — can decrease blood pressure, respiration rate, metabolism and muscle tension. Getting out into nature can also have a positive, restorative effect on reducing stress and improving cognitive function.

**Socialize:** Maintaining stimulating social relationships is critical for both mental and physical health. Create a healthy environment, inviting friends, family and even pets to combat stress and exercise all your brains.

**Take control:** Empowering yourself with a feeling of control over your own situation can help reduce chronic stress and give you the confidence to take control over your brain health. Some videogames and apps based on heart rate variability can be a great way to be proactive and take control of our stress levels.

**Have a laugh:** We all know from personal experience that a good laugh can make us feel better. Even just thinking about something funny can have a positive effect on reducing stress and the damage it causes to your brain.

**Think positive:** How you think about what stresses you can actually make a difference. Simply changing the way you look at certain situations, taking stock of the positive things in your life and learning to live with gratitude can improve your ability to manage stress and build brain resilience. (Thank you, [SharpBrains.com!](http://SharpBrains.com))

### **What's different this month? And, why?**

**Surprise! Simple changes in our newsletter format are examples of small but effective ways to boost your brain-power by changing your usual routine.**