Grandparent Raising Grandchildren

Statistics – 2006
US - 6.3% of children under the age of 18 are being raised by grandparent head of household
FL – 7% and Lee County – 7%
Majority of households are headed by two grandparents and then grandmothers.

Main reason for raising grandchildren is to keep the children with family and out of foster care.
Situations – death, substance abuse, mental illness, jail, economic hardships, divorce, domestic violence, etc.

Important to provide the child with stability, trust, routine and safety. Listen to and reassure child. They may fear the grandparent will leave also.
Be honest about the event; listen when child is ready to talk. They can have conflicting emotions – shame/anger, loyalty/love, hurt/guilt, and grief for the loss.

Can have physical aches and pains, headaches, stomachaches, etc.
If possible help child stay in touch with the absent parent(s). Don’t force the child to visit or connect.

Developmental stages –
The grandparents are not expecting to raise more children at this time in their life. Majority are under the age of 65 so they are still working. Problems with money, child care, medical care, and respite care. There can be trouble with children who have not yet left home having to share with their nieces and nephews.

Older adults are looking back at what they have accomplished in their life, pride in their children. It is a huge adjustment to bring a child of any age into the family system that had been just the two grandparents. Successful aging = avoiding disease and disability, exercise – mental and physical and being engaged in life.

Young children – learning trust, control of environment
School age children – learning to do things on their own competently, knowledge, and developing friendships
Adolescents – Independence, self control, relationships/friends

Types of custody
Informal physical custody most common,
Temporary – legal but short term
Guardianship – legal usually until 18
Adoption – legal, parental rights severed, usually courts involved.

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AARP - http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/raising_grandchild/
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