

12 Tips to Bring the Generations in Your Family Closer

The national Legacy Project is a community service initiative that offers grandparents and parents lots of free information, ideas, activities, and contests to bring the generations in your family closer together. Here are 12 top tips to get you started from Legacy Project Chair Susan V. Bosak. For more great ideas, visit the Legacy Project website at www.legacyproject.org.

① **Start in the Kitchen:** Research shows the kitchen – not the living room or dining room – is the most relaxed place to make cozy memories. We smell, we taste, we talk, we learn things in the kitchen. Something as simple as baking cookies (even if you use a mix!) can create a loving memory.



② **Have Your Own Family Book Club:** Choose a new book every month. If you're a grandparent who lives far away from your grandchildren, mail a book a month – even send along an audiotape of yourself reading the story! This gives you something to share, and to talk about in person or over the phone.

③ **Use the Power of Story:** Read aloud as a family – even with teenagers! It's a cozy activity all ages can enjoy that builds bonds – and can start important conversations. When you finish a story, share the memories or stories from your own life that it evokes. This helps children get to know you and themselves. Bring your stories alive by using old mementoes (your mother's earrings, your grandfather's watch, an old train ticket).

④ **Make It Picture Perfect:** Have a family scrapbook party. Children, parents, and grandparents can choose their favorite photos and you can decorate themed pages. It's a great way to organize those scattered photo packets, recall family memories, and create a treasured keepsake. If you live far apart, photocopy old family photos, write a few lines at the bottom about what's going on, and every once in a while mail a photocopy as a reminder of family history.

⑤ **Involve All Ages in a Collection:** Whether it's rocks, coins, or baseball cards, a shared family interest gives generations something to talk about and enjoy together.

⑥ **Give a Keepsake:** When parents and grandparents give a keepsake, explain or write down the story behind it. Where did it come from? Why is it important?

⑦ **Remember Two Small Words:** Parents should encourage a simple "thank you" note whenever children get a gift from a grandparent. This teaches kids an important social skill, and makes grandparents feel appreciated.

⑧ **Bestow Your Furniture:** Assign a special piece of furniture to each child or grandchild. It's like giving twice – now and in the future – and makes children feel important.

⑨ **Encourage Family Rituals:** The more complicated the world gets, the more simple things matter. From waving good-bye from the same window every morning to going to the local pizza place every Friday night, these are the moments that make memories.

⑩ **Share Your "Best Memory":** Even in a strained relationship, one of the most powerful gifts you can give is a short note describing your best memory of someone. They're often surprised at what it is!

⑪ **Interview an Elder:** When children interview an elder, they learn an important communication skill and come to understand their past. Older people often value the chance to talk about their lives.

⑫ **Hug Someone You Love:** Research shows that the older people get, the fewer hugs we give them. But "big, warm smiles and warm, snuggly hugs" aren't just for kids. We all need them! Remember to give your child or grandchild, and your parent or grandparent, that extra hug.