

family matters 

"What's wrong with Grandpa?"

How to Talk to Your Kids

The Tug of Love

The bond between grandparents and grandchildren is a precious one. Anyone who has known a grandparent's love or the joy of grandchildren knows this is true. But as the older generation ages, youngsters can witness disturbing changes in their grandparents' physical and cognitive abilities, and confusion, fear and distaste for what they're seeing can cause them to pull away. And parents, caught in the middle, can end up feeling torn.

How can parents nurture closeness between the older and younger generations when the double challenges of growing up and aging threaten to pull them apart? One of the best ways to increase the chances that generations will stay close through life, say many experts, is simply by making sure they spend time together beginning when children

Debbie Mandel, 54, a stress-management consultant who lives in Lawrence, New York, worked hard to foster this bond between her parents and three children. When her sons and daughter were little, she took them to her parents' house for traditional Jewish Friday-night *shabbat* dinners. After her dad died, her mom became her guest. Her daughter, Amanda, now 15, especially enjoyed these visits. When Debbie finally had to put her mom in a nursing home due to advanced Alzheimer's, Debbie kept visiting on Fridays but didn't ask her kids to come. Her sons chose

THE
early
show

For more information, tune in to "In the Family Circle" on CBS TV's *The Early Show* the week of January 31.

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cember 2003 at age 88, Amanda went with Debbie to visit Grandma in the nursing home. They brought ice cream and stuffed animals and told stories and jokes that made Grandma laugh. Watching the two of them together, says Debbie, she often marveled aloud, "Look how much love there is."

Note, however, that Debbie's sons, who had also spent a lot of time with Grandma, did not visit her. "They were kind of phobic about it," says Amanda. No matter how hard parents try to keep generations close, in other words, there's no guarantee they'll succeed. People and relationships change over time, often in ways we can't predict or control.

A woman we'll call Joanna

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not to visit. But Amanda, then eight, insisted on going. "She was very attached," says Debbie, "and she wasn't about to relinquish the relationship just because Grandma had moved."

Almost every Friday for the next seven years, until Debbie's mom died in De-