



UNSOLICITED ADVICE? HERE'S HOW TO RESPOND

1 Be confident in your parenting

Short: *"Mom/Dad, I value that you're concerned for our kids and want the best for them, but I'm committed to growing wisdom by staying connected."*

Longer: *"I am really trying to focus on building wisdom in our kids and that's a slower, messier process. I ask more questions. I try to help them realize when they have done something hurtful and guide them to sincerely make it right. Above all, I work to stay connected."*

2 Empathize and Affirm

Empathize: *"I understand your normally peaceful house can get pretty chaotic at the holidays. It's got to be tough when one of my kids is struggling."*

Affirm intentions: *"Mom/Dad, I know you are concerned for our kids and want the best for them. I'm so glad that you care enough to express that."*

Affirm actions: *"I love how you... (have so much fun baking together, tell the best stories at bedtime, were really patient when...)"*

3 Offer a few practical tools

You might tell your parents,

"You don't have to ignore kids' misbehavior. But especially since we don't see you everyday, I want my kids to really enjoy their time with you."

Give relatives these phrases to say to your kids when they're struggling or misbehaving:

- *"It seems like you're having a hard time. Do you need a hug, or do you need some help from your mom or dad?"*
- *"Looks like there are some big emotions here. Why don't you take a break and think how you might solve this in a way you'd feel really proud about?"*

4 Strengthen your kids

Focus on the opportunity

Viewing this challenge as a learning opportunity to respond to different kinds of people, your kids will be more confident and less likely to view themselves (or their grandparents) as a problem to be fixed. Your positive perspective can make a big impact!

Talk about potential holiday tension

"We sure love Grandma and Grandpa, and it can be a lot of fun to see them! But sometimes it gets a little stressful at their house, doesn't it? What's good about being there? What's hard about being there?" Validate any difficult feelings without blaming anyone.

Help kids stand in the truth

Remind your kids, "Not everyone agrees with the way we want to parent you. So remember, even if someone talks to you in a harsh or critical way, you are still a valuable person. Those people love you but sometimes people forget that when they are upset. Let me know if I can help you if this happens."