



# 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."