



Grandparenting at a Distance: Facilitating Attachment and Intimacy

As the grandparent of a delightful 3-year-old (affectionately known as Ipsy), who lives a distance away, I miss not visiting with him for a few hours a day, or taking him to the park, or having him over for Sunday afternoons, the experiences I enjoyed with my grandparents, who lived 7-8 blocks away. We regularly walked to their house or my grandfather's art supply store, passing Dave's appetizing store, Elsie's trimming store, and the steamy bagel factory underground. At my grandfather's store, I occupied a welcoming transitional space of novelty and comfort, sitting at the roll top desk, hidden behind the long counter. Looking inside I was mesmerized by the meticulous, orderly way my grandfather and uncle framed pictures and often chatted with customers. Looking outside through the big picture window, I leisurely watched life stroll by.

Not being in proximity, nor a daily part of Ipsy's life, how do I encourage our attachment and integration of our relationship in his life? Cyberspace has become the new transitional space for grandparents at a distance to feel closer. Between visits, I appreciatively rely on iCloud sharing of photos and videos, and FaceTime chats, that facilitate greater intimacy between us, as evolving inner mental representations and brief narratives play in Ipsy's mind. Technology has created the means for chronicling in real time the incremental progress of Ipsy's growth, the colorful documentation of his life, this new developmental archive of stills and videos, and the accessibility of sharing it with his "hungry" grandparents. Seeing him play, and being included in his play when we FaceTime fosters pleasurable connections with Grandma and Grandpa, who feel more fully engaged. Increasingly, Ipsy feels known and loved, thus incorporating us into his life and his mind. Clips of him learning to walk, sledding down a hill, making funny faces with his Mom and Dad, material for kvelling and re-telling, enriches our mutual supply of memories.

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Adult Psychoanalytic Fellowship Program

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