

# Support Group Discussion Guide: **Unexpectedly Parenting Again**



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We thank them for their generosity!*



# Purpose

The purpose of this session is to normalize the myriad of feelings we, as relative caregivers, experience around parenting again unexpectedly – including resentment, guilt, and even shame.

“How do I explain that I have my grandkids because my son is addicted to meth?”

“I love my grandchildren with all my heart, but this wasn’t what I’d planned for my life.”



On average, relative caregivers have 48-72 hours to make the decision to take in children, a decision that will change the whole course of their lives. They are often expected to agree without hesitation. It can feel like the “love is enough” expectation puts unrealistic pressure on caregivers to downplay feelings or challenges they may be experiencing.

The hope is that this discussion guide will provide prompting for safe and non-judgmental exploration of issues we’re facing and help give voice to the very real, normal, and understandable feelings we all struggle with. You are encouraged to share strategies you have used to work through the more difficult moments and find the support you need.



# Introduction to Topic

## Unexpectedly parenting again? You're not alone.



At any given time in Wisconsin, a reported 79,000 children are living in a home where the head of household is a relative other than the parent. For perspective, that's enough people to fill Lambeau Field. Over 22,500 Wisconsin grandparents are reported to be caring for grandchildren. For every child being raised by a relative in foster care, there are at least another nine children living with kin outside of foster care.

Although you're in good company, it can certainly feel isolating.

In this session, we're going to explore the realities, both joyful and challenging, of parenting again unexpectedly.

In the video included in this session, a grandmother shares how the decision to take in four of her grandchildren, two permanently, changed all the plans she and her husband had for retirement. She emphasizes, "The rewards and love you get from the children outweigh any of the difficulties you have."

Although the sentiment is admirable, it doesn't negate the fact that caregiving comes with considerable grief, loss, and sacrifice.



## **No Matter What Video:** **How Parenting Again Changed Our Lives**

When Pam and her husband were asked to care for her grandchildren, they didn't hesitate to say yes.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wel-gO0aZo4>

Click link to play video









