

Bayside U3A

UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Offices: Beaumaris Senior Centre
84 Reserve Road, Beaumaris (behind the library)

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2022 TERM DATES

Term 1 31st January—8th April

Term 2 26th April—24th June

Term 3 11th July—16th September

Term 4 3rd October—20th December

NEWSLETTER

January 2022



Beaumaris Office:

Monday to Friday 9:30am - 2:00pm

Brighton Office (from 31st January)

Days and Times to be finalised



FROM THE PRESIDENT

We are somewhat used to living in uncertain times but it doesn't mean it's much easier. Right now it seems as uncertain and frustrating as any previous time. Hopefully the health pundits are right: we are nearing the peak; COVID cases, hospitalisations, ICUs and deaths will rapidly decrease over the next few weeks; and we will approach some kind of 'normal'.

As we commence the year's activities, it's been difficult to know the right way to do things. The big question is do we have face-to-face classes whilst the COVID case numbers are so high and so many we know are being infected? Essentially it's down to the tutor and the class so please look out for email advice from your tutor. Class guidelines are outlined on page 3 and include:

- ⇒ *Classes held inside, '1 person per 2 square metres' and mask wearing applies.*
- ⇒ *Classes outside are OK and small classes in an adequately sized room are OK.*

The Bayside U3A Committee of Management (COM) met on Wednesday 19th January and determined the following: the Defibrillator training will go ahead on Friday 21st January; the 'Grand' Opening planned for Friday 28th January has been postponed and January's Happy Hour at Hampton RSL will not be an official event. The Opening will now happen at a later date on or after the AGM, currently scheduled for Thursday 17th March. The Bayside U3A was founded/incorporated 10 years ago and we will be planning a celebration of this later in the year.

By the way, the COM has appointed two new members. Trish Smyth has rejoined the Committee and is taking on a lead role in applying for Grants. Juan Soler has also joined us. Among many other attributes, Juan is a wiz in the 'internet arena' and is already providing valuable insights into how we might improve our website and social media.

Although we have a solid base of membership renewals, there is quite a number who have not. If you haven't renewed, expect a call over the next week or two to remind you, in case it was an oversight. There will be a big focus on marketing this year as we rebuild membership numbers, including work on our website, social media, events and publicity (e.g. attending Farmers' Markets – volunteers welcome!) Word of mouth is still our most effective way of 'getting new members' so do tell your friends and relatives what you get out of Bayside U3A.

Please stay safe, happy and sanguine as we get through the last phases of COVID. If your class/es have to be on Zoom, please participate and look forward to the (hopefully) very short time before we can do face-to-face classes without limits.

Very best wishes, Tony Alpin (President)

BAYSIDE U3A HAPPY HOUR

5—6pm last Friday of the month at the Hampton RSL

***This event is 'on hold' and will not be conducted in January.
An email regarding the February Happy Hour will be circulated.***



25 Holyrood St Hampton VIC 3188

When U3A Happy Hour events resume...

- * No need to book/reply. Just turn up!
- * Drinks: Special \$6 sparkling or house wine, discount beer and some spirits.
- * Please wear your U3A name badge and bring along your RSL membership card if you have one!
- * Dinner is available for those wishing to stay on.

TELL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT BAYSIDE U3A

Do you know someone who would enjoy learning, exercising or socialising?
Have you told your friends about **Bayside U3A**?

Bayside U3A always welcomes new members – it's a low-cost, easily accessible way to learn something new, stay involved, feel valued and make friendships.

Our website: baysideu3a.org contains all the information they will need to know – our current programs and activities, our social events, how to become a member, how we operate in COVID times to keep members safe, our locations and more.

People can also drop into our office in the **Beaumaris Senior Centre** at **84 Reserve Road, Beaumaris** or the **Brighton Courthouse** at **63 Carpenter Street Brighton** and pick up a membership form, or phone **9589 3798** during the day and we will post one to them.

We encourage you to tell your friends about **Bayside U3A**. We have so much to offer them.

Your Bayside U3A badge is on its way

Are you wondering when you will receive your 2022 Bayside U3A membership badge?

Our office volunteer team is back at work this week after a summer break and will be sending out membership badges then. You can expect to receive yours soon afterwards.

If you would prefer to collect it, please let our team know by phoning **9589 3798** during the day, or you can let them know by emailing baysideu3a@gmail.com



LET'S DO DINNER

Convenor, Karen Hall

A decision on February dinners will be made closer to the time depending on the current level of crowd safety and member sentiment.



An email regarding the February Let's Do Dinner will be circulated.

COURSE and ENROLMENT NEWS**Convenor: Sue Steele**

Term one is almost upon us and the odious M. le COVID is refusing to go away. This means we need to be extra creative in the way we deal with our classes.

Zoom only classes and outdoor classes such as walking groups and lawn bowls, will operate normally.

We are reviewing each indoor class due to run during term one and deciding if and how it should proceed. There are a few overarching premises:

- * All participants in any Bayside U3A activity must be fully vaccinated and show proof.
- * Indoor density limits are currently set at 2 square metres per person. This limits some classes.
- * Masks must be worn at all times indoors at Bayside U3A venues.
- * Some of our venues have good ventilation, others not so much and this must be considered.
- * Some classes can run out -f-doors, in the gardens at the courthouse and at the covered outdoor area, at the Beaumaris Senior Centre.
- * Some classes can move online for Term 1.
- * Some starting dates will be postponed.

Members will be notified about the status of their term one classes as and when decisions are made.

THANKS FOR YOUR PATIENCE.

THE FELDENKRAIS METHOD -THE GROUND AND YOU**Tutor: Marie Arendsen*****Physiotherapist & Feldenkrais Practitioner (Retired)***

The ground is a kinaesthetic [feeling] mirror. It mirrors how we connect. Our physical response to the ground is a reflection of how we move within ourselves to respond and adapt to the world around us and the earth beneath our feet.

Our connection to the ground is what gives a sense of 'groundedness'. This connection is what grants us freedom to move.

The more 'grounded' we are, the more liberated from the ground we become. The less grounded we are the more threatening the ground.

That which supports us also threatens to break us and the more threatened we are the more rigid we become. This is not limited to our bodies and movement it extends to our thinking - our perceiving, thinking and our very way of being.

In the **Feldenkrais** classes we are exploring this relationship so that you and the body of ground you walk on, might get a little closer.

If we feel a connection to ground, we are able to soften. Our contact is more sensitive and our touch lighter. We know when we touch down and we are quick to adjust. Once we find this softness in our touch our central nervous system will spread it throughout ourselves. Our perspective shifts as we begin not only to 'feel' the ground but to be 'felt' by the ground. This is the state of unravelling where the foundation of ground is found within.

The Feldenkrais Method introduces you to a concept, that regardless of where you are in space and time and experience, the ground will always catch you. The sense of gravity is solid. Falling does not have to hurt. Your body has the intelligence to do it with grace and ease no matter the obstacle that presents itself on the paths surrounding you. This gives you a sense of resilience in an ever-changing world.

SCULPTURE GROUP

Tutor: Roy Bird



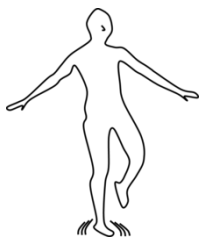
Two of our Sculpture group have kept busy by working at home.
The images of their work shown here.

Sculpture classes will resume at the Brighton Senior Citizen Centre Friday 4th February at 10.00am

Janice R.
Mosaic Glass tiles on Cement sheet



Janice L.
Nest made from Palm Tree twigs



To all my Thursday
BALANCE AND BONES
Zoomers!
Welcome to another year.

Enjoy the challenge of increasing flexibility,
strengthening muscles
and standing on one leg while juggling.
You are the result of love of thousands.
Whatever I see you doing, I love it.

Tutor: Jenneke Casson

DUTCH

Tutor: Femke Meyer

Hallo
(Hello)

The Dutch are in lockdown and museums, are closed to the public at the moment.

Daag
(goodbye)



The caption in Dutch reads
***"We are sick of seeing no one.
We are leaving the museum"***

DEFIBRILLATORS AT BEAUMARIS SENIOR CENTRE AND OLD BRIGHTON COURTHOUSE

Last Friday, 80 members attended Defibrillator sessions at the Beaumaris Senior Centre, presented by Anne Holland from Defib First.

It was a very enlightening introduction into how a defibrillator is essential in assisting people who suffer a cardiac arrest. It cannot be used for heart attack victims, but the machine recognises the difference and will only administer 'shock' treatment to cardiac arrest patients. The defibrillator talks the user through the process and repeats steps until the correct procedure has been completed before going to the next step.



A Federal Government Grant, through MP Tim Wilson, donated two defibrillators to Bayside U3A. They are installed and easily accessible.

- Beaumaris Senior Centre it is installed in the kitchen, near the entrance door.
- Brighton Courthouse it is installed on the main hall wall, near the piano.



VALE

Mary Eloise Danckert2nd July 1926 – 11th Jan 2022

A gracious lady and a dear friend to many at the Bayside U3A, Mary Danckert has died at the age of 96. Mary left this world peacefully, having been enveloped with the love of her family during her short stay in palliative care.

Mary, for the most part, lived her life with a twinkle in her eye, a zest for living life to its fullest, and a wicked sense of humor. Mary was a very social person and loved the interactions she shared with family and friends.

Mary attended a number of U3A classes, was a keen Bridge player, enthusiastic Balance and Bones attendee and a much-loved member of Creative Conversations group, where her rich understanding and competency with many textiles and crafts she enthusiastically shared with the group. Mary was an exquisite embroiderer and patchwork quilt maker.



Born Mary Eloise Plunkett, Mary's early years were spent in the farming area around Holbrook, NSW.

The family, including brothers John, Mark and Alan and sister Helen, moved to Brighton, where Mary did her schooling. She attended Mandeville Hall, Toorak, before training as a Nursing Sister.

After completing her nurse training, Mary sailed to the UK, where she worked as a nurse, experiencing the many changes in patient care following the use of penicillin. She keenly followed advances in patient care and treatment of diseases as epidemics such as polio and cholera occurred and actively worked and supported the leprosy foundation in Australia.

Mary travelled far and wide both overseas and within Australia. Visiting various countries in Europe and Asia was always a joy, one of her favorite travels overseas being to the Galapagos Islands.

On returning to Australia, Mary married Michael Danckert in Brighton. They moved to the then, newly developing area of Beaumaris, where Michael taught at numerous schools, becoming vice principal at both Beaumaris and Mentone Primary Schools and then as Principal at Cheltenham Primary. Mary and Michael had 5 children, Mary - Louise (shortened to Marylou), John, Johanna (died at 8 months), Sarah and Gerard.

Mary and Michael quickly settled into the area and became socially connected via the Stella Maris community, where Mary's children attended school, as well as the school communities where Michael taught and Mary's nursing career took place. Teaching English to lots of immigrants enriched the family's lives and many life-long friendships were developed from this. Football and tennis extended their family network to include numerous close friends.

Holidays were often spent in the Hamilton area where Mary's dearly loved brother John, had a large property. Mary often told of the love of being at the farm, the antics the kids would get up to aided of course, by Uncle John! They were happy, busy, dreamy days in open spaces glistening with the colours of summer.

As Mary's children left home and marriages occurred and grandchildren and great grandchildren came along, Mary saw her life as very rich and full. She was effervescent when talking about family occasions and there was always a sparkle of absolute joy in chatting of the events. Detailed descriptions of wedding dresses and babies christening gowns and the excitement that came with graduations, promotions, new careers etc was shared, as were other joyous occasions, sorrows, successes and failures.

The loneliness after the passing over her husband Michael, was in part overcome when brother John, sold his property and moved in with Mary. Apart from enjoying each other's company, they shared many interests, and travelled extensively around Australia. Numerous trips and month-long holidays were spent in Iluka where John would fish and Mary would hand sew her 2inch squares of material into stunning quilts. Happy days and a rich life.

Just before Christmas 2021, Mary's health declined and she, along with brother John, moved into Cheltenham Manor.

Mary's joyful nature and magical presence will live on in all who knew her.

BAYSIDE U3A WRITER'S GROUP

Tutor: Cheryl Threadgold

Word of the Month 'Once'

ONCE

by Margaret Boyes-Pringle

Once the Eye of Heaven shined
Once upon a time there lived a Wolf

Once she reached for him and he took her hand
Once, after a Queen concert, they shared a sleeping bag

Once the Walrus and the Carpenter walked close at hand
Once the Owl and the Pussycat sailed a pea-green boat

Once they snorkelled in delight on the Barrier Reef
Once they strolled the magical Millennium night

Once Barrie wrote about finding Neverland
Once, for Romeo and Juliet, the stars burnt out

Once they found their house, knowing it would be their home
Once they met, and knew they would always love each other

ONCE

by Geoff Oscar

My name is Harry. I live in heaven, full of warm and happy smells.

I love Annie. Her skin is soft and warm, her flowing hair smells lovely. I like it best when her fingers gently twine my hair, as she tenderly strokes me. Adrian is big and strong. His firm hands thrill me as they work their way up and down my backbone, fondle my muzzle and ears in fond embrace. As I lick my way up his arms, then face, I can taste the salt.

I love it when stretched out on laps on the couch. Bliss is when the hidden hand slides down at the table, sneaking a stolen fingerful of tasty treat without interrupting conversation. My warm, blanket-lined cocoon is forgotten when I am allowed inside first thing in the morning, sprinting onto the double bed, taking my rightful place.

What can be more exciting than the regular walk to the leash-free park to meet my friends – big ones, little ones, scary ones, fun ones, there to romp and sniff, to run and jump, exploring every well-visited aromatic tree trunk on the way? The only better thing is to drive to the beach, when we all gambol on the sand and race in and out of the water, free as the wind. The price of the shampoo in the laundry trough, the hosing down and the vigorous towelling and brushing afterwards is well worth it.

Things have changed a bit, but I can handle it – it's still pretty good really.

Annie had been unusually distant and a little less caring for a while, then she disappeared for a few days. Adrian was acting quite strangely too, in and out of the house like a mad thing. An older lady who I'd met before came visiting each day. She was quite friendly in her own way and even better when she produced the bag of my food, strewing my dinner onto the patio paving.

Then Annie returned, embracing a tiny blanketed animal, with Adrian acting as never before. She and Adrian were completely changed, their every moment spent adoringly admiring this little thing, uttering sounds of enchantment. I might well have not been there. On my occasional sniffs of enquiry I was gently moved away with only cursory acknowledgement.

Six months on, what has turned into a little man-baby is growing fast, sitting up, making funny noises. Ben (for that is his name) likes me. I don't mind when he pulls at my ears, grabs my tail or rolls on top of me on the carpet. He is only little, so I have to be careful not to get too excited with him, knocking him over or anything like that. He goes to bed quite often and then things are really good. I am again part of the family. My own pats, cuddles and loving flow again.

Once I got used to it, it's quite a good adventure really.

ONCE **by Vivienne Player**

It's 51 years since I fell in love. I still remember that first feeling of delight, the sense that this really could be 'the one'. My infatuation grew with each further encounter and I was very quick to make a whole-life commitment.

You know how it is, the heady excitement, the happy discoveries, the walking on air. At the end of 1970 we bought a house in a street with flowering gums. It was weatherboard with a Ti-Tree fence and plenty of lawn-space for children to play. How lucky we felt to be in this place, in this time.

But, over the years I have fallen out of love. For some time I have thought of leaving but it is not so simple when there are children, and now grand-children, to consider. And perhaps I am too old now to face up to the stress and upheaval involved, the tangle of ties that have to be unravelled before one can escape and start a new life.

No, Melbourne, I don't love you anymore. It's over. You enchanted me once but not now. You may have been named the world's most liveable city but that is a depressing thought. Is every city on the planet now less 'liveable' than this?

I know I am extraordinarily lucky to live in an affluent democracy, in a temperate climate and in peaceful times. The problem is I remember the way life was in Melbourne, once, some fifty years ago when we, my late husband and I and two small children, first arrived.

The Goldilocks city: everything pleased us. Beaumaris seemed the ideal suburb, convenient to the city but maintaining the ambiance of a seaside village with trees and birds, unpretentious timber houses, and schools with wide grassy playgrounds. My husband built a small yacht, easy to launch at the beach down the road.

For him, Beach Road was a pleasant drive to work in the city; the traffic flowed smoothly. At weekends we explored other parts of greater Melbourne, the Dandenongs, the Mornington Peninsula. Parking was rarely a problem (imagine!) and there was no cost involved in going to other than a local beach. We enjoyed getting to know 'the easy-going Australian temperament' of the people we met.

And now? How many trees have been felled by developers? How many gracious homes given way to concrete blocks, pretentious but unlovely? How many hectares of bush and market gardens have been replaced by toadstool clumps of characterless housing? Back in the days of my first love for this city, I could get to work in twenty minutes. By the time I retired, it was taking well over an hour to drive the same distance. Traffic lights have sprouted like bamboo-shoots; road works trap one unexpectedly; drivers, time-pressed, take unconsidered risks; cars and bicycles compete; road rage is rampant.

With an ever-increasing population (good for the economy!), we are faced with congested streets, parking nightmares, high and mid-density housing, social problems, schools and hospitals unable to cope, pollution, crime, stress... Melbourne, you have come of age.

Alas!

FRED **by John Maddick**

Fred saw the fishing rods Bryce had spread across the back deck. Fred had been planning to go out to the back shed for another struggle with the lawn mower. He didn't want to get irritable with his 14 year-old son. It always seemed to be Bryce who annoyed him lately.

Fred was out of sorts. It was a typical first Saturday of the school holidays. He was tired from all the last-minute correcting, and finding time to encourage the strugglers. OK, it was the price he paid: he would never give up his Year 12 English classes.

He was going to have a coffee to settle himself. Damn. Jocelyn hadn't bought more coffee. Couldn't she have noticed? She just wasn't here anymore. Two choirs on Saturdays. She'd been on this singing thing for three years.

Now Bryce had spread the drawers from his tackle box across the deck. He was just so inconsiderate. The younger two weren't as bad. Jocelyn had taken them both on play dates on her way to choir. It was just him and Bryce all day. He didn't want a running battle.

He'd take the lawn mower down to the mower shop. Probably read the Saturday paper at the coffee shop.

Picking his way across the deck, he paused.

(continued next page)

"Is that a new rod?"

"Yeah."

"Where'd you get it?"

"Bagley's. It's second-hand. It's better for fishing off the pier."

He wished old Bagley wouldn't encourage him so much. Bryce had gone fishing with his friend's dad when the two families were camping together over Christmas. Fred had hoped that would be the end of it. When Fred was eight he'd spent a long cold morning in his uncle's boat. He wasn't going fishing again.

When Jocelyn eventually returned they didn't seem to find an opportunity to talk, until she finally joined him in bed. She looked at him with that I-know-it's-your-turn look.

"So how was your day dear?"

"Oh all right. The mower wouldn't start again. I had to wait down the shops till it was fixed. Bryce had his fishing stuff out all over the back deck." She still looked interested. "You'd be proud of me. I didn't go off at him."

"Did you ask if he'd like you to take him down to the pier? You know he's got a new rod so he can fish off the pier?"

"I know."

"Well? Look if you'd just take an interest. Just once." She pursed her lips, turned away from him.

Next morning he lay next to Jocelyn for a while listening to her breathing. He imagined rolling his arm over her, as though they were still close. Then got up. He'd make her breakfast when she woke. See if that made a difference. Bryce was already in the kitchen when he went in.

"Listen Bryce, I was wondering if you'd like me to take you down to the pier today."

He looked up at his father. "When?"

"Now, if you like."



TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Renew your membership now and take advantage of our many activities on offer. Membership is low-cost and affordable and you can attend as many activities as you wish – there is no limit.

Go to our website baysideu3a.org and complete the membership and course enrolment forms.

Classes start from the beginning of February.

New courses this year include primary school mathematics for grandparents and an historical fiction book club.

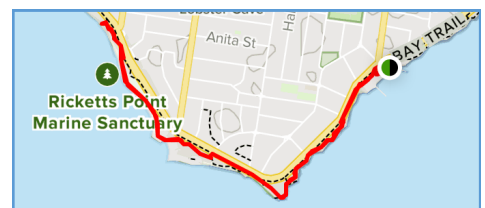
RICKETTS POINT MARINE SANCTUARY

Bayside City Council's magazine, LET'S TALK BAYSIDE highlights community events and the joys of living in Bayside. Its latest edition includes a link to a beautiful film about Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary.

Entitled 'Beneath the waves at Ricketts Point', the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's film captures the marine life that thrives in our local underwater world.

The film is part of Coastcare Victoria's 'Summer by the Sea' initiative, aiming to assist people discover our State's marine and coastal species and habitats. For your enjoyment, click the link to this amazing film

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddhXBwDxNck>





BAYSIDE BOOK LOVERS

Meeting under a tree outside Brighton Courthouse on Friday afternoon.

Tutor : Sue Steele

2022 – BITCOIN, MONEY & TIME

Tutor: Dr Juan Solertron

To many, Bitcoin seems easy to understand at first. It's just internet money, yeah?

But once you think you have Bitcoin figured out, you'll see it from another perspective and realise there are yet more ways to interpret its meaning and potential.

It has been said that you can judge the quality and importance of an idea by the vehemence of its opposition. My favourite quote in this respect is from Einstein:

'Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds. The mediocre mind is incapable of understanding the man who refuses to bow blindly to conventional prejudices and chooses instead to express his opinions courageously and honestly.'

Bitcoin has been called many things — digital gold, tulip mania 2.0, financial revolution, the MySpace of cryptocurrencies, environmental disaster, rat poison squared, libertarian idealism, apex predator of monetary technologies, the biggest bubble in history, the model-T of cryptocurrencies, a superior species of money — but it turns out that, in context of the history and nature of money, Bitcoin appears to be a distinct evolutionary leap forward.

Bitcoin is not an internet application like MySpace, it is an internet protocol. Bitcoin is not the model-T of cryptocurrencies, it is a more like a global freeway system. Bitcoin is not like any type of gold coin, Bitcoin is more like the element gold. Its integrity is protected by the inviolable laws of mathematics. Human nature is one of its core components. It is a new form of social institution. Bitcoin is a living system unto itself that adapts to environmental changes.

While this may sound mind blowing at first. Most innovations of this magnitude sound this way in the beginning as we struggle to communicate using outdated terms and analogies that cannot possibly convey their importance. However, history shows us that ignoring innovation is a terrible strategy. In light of its inherent complexity and novelty, we will view Bitcoin from many different perspectives along with all the new world products spawned by the idea of Bitcoin like the Metaverse, DeFi, NFTs and a host of nascent technologies.

If you thought last year was a bit of a roller coaster ride in the crypto markets just tighten your seat belt. It's going to be an intriguing and exciting year.

I look forward to your company as we continue the Tales from the Cryptosphere



GRANDPARENTS AS CAREGIVERS FOR THEIR GRANDCHILDREN **by: Vicki Cowling, OAM**

Worldwide, grandparents are increasingly becoming primary caregivers of their grandchildren for many reasons, including parental mental ill health and substance use problems, and also because of a growing preference for kinship care. Some grandparents choose not to identify themselves as custodial parents out of loyalty to cultural traditions, fear of stigma or concern about involvement of statutory authorities; also, in many cultures grandparents expect to look after their grandchildren and do not self-identify as carers. This means the precise number of grandparents in this role is not known.

In Australia, grandparents provide primary care for children aged between 0-17 years in at least 16,000 families, with the number increasing.

Grandparents become primary caregivers for their grandchildren for varied reasons including physical or mental illness and disability of the parents, incarceration, death of the parent, military service, family breakdown, or child abuse and neglect on the part of a parent. Of course, grandparents are willing to become primary caregivers for their grandchildren because they love them and do not consider other care options as acceptable for their grandchild.

Grandparents who become carers may be impacted in various ways. At short notice or with no notice, they are asked to, or feel obliged to, become the full-time carer to their grandchild/ren. In taking on this role, grandparents may experience loss at suddenly having to relinquish whatever their life meant at the time, such as working, travelling, or recreational activities, and they may experience grief that their son or daughter's situation has limited their capacity to parent their children themselves. Self-reflection about their own parenting occurs for some.

Physical, psychological, and social effects on grandparents depend on their age and gender, and on characteristics of the three generations involved: grandparents, parents, and children. Young, middle-aged and elderly grandparents will have different additional responsibilities and different frailties and will, correspondingly, be differently affected.

The number, age, temperament and experiences of the child/ren is important as a possible contributor to extra stressors for grandparents. An infant requiring full-time care, having unsettled sleep and childhood infections may be more demanding than a child attending school each day.

Finances and adequate housing are important issues for grandparents. Children may not be allowed to reside in senior housing settings and appropriate housing may be unaffordable. In addition, there may be a decrease in family income if the grandparent has to cut back on employment. While custodial grandparents may be entitled to public assistance, some choose not to seek this support.

Grandparents may become marginalised and isolated within their communities because they do not have time or financial means for social activities and other interests. Their peers may not welcome young children at social gatherings, and accessing and paying for babysitting may not be possible. Carrying infants, picking up toys, climbing stairs, accompanying children to school, helping with homework and taking children to extra curricular activities may all prove physically and mentally exhausting for grandparents.

The relationship grandparents have with their grandchildren will be influenced by the age of the children. A grandparent caring for a grandchild of any age may feel out of touch with current parenting practices, although becoming parent to an infant grandchild gives the grandparent the opportunity to have a parenting style that is their own. Becoming a grandparent to older children who verbally and behaviourally may overtly express distress at being taken from their parent, requires understanding and patience on the part of the grandparent.

Australian grandparents raising their grandchildren have reported the impact of grandparent care included financial disadvantage, the need to reduce working hours or cease working altogether, or the need to change housing arrangements. These changes often involved significant costs and experiences of social isolation and disrupted friendships. Approximately two thirds of grandparents in one study participated in a support group.

(continued next page)



These groups have been found to help grandparents learn from one another about legal rights and financial entitlements, as well as giving them access to social and psychological support. The grandparents also accessed other sources of information and support, such as respite care, childcare and information on helping with schoolwork. However, a lack of understanding about their eligibility made the finding of support difficult, and required a lot of enquiry and effort by the grandparents.

Becoming a grandparent carer is a significant change of role and may impact on family relationships. Grandparents may experience relationship difficulties with each other and even separation and divorce because of the demands of caring for grandchildren and the loss of time together.

Other children and adult offspring may be angry that their sibling is not taking responsibility for their own children, and grandparents may experience loss of contact with family members including their other grandchildren. The change in role from 'grandparent' to 'parent' may lead to grandparents mourning the loss of a normal grandparent relationship with the grandchildren in their care.

For many grandparents, their relationship with their grandchildren is maintained in the knowledge they themselves are growing older, with concerns about the possibility of ill health and confronting their own mortality.

On the other hand, parenting in older age can be associated with personal well-being, competent (based on years of experience) management of disruptive behaviour and positive feelings toward the grandchild, with good informal and community resources, and resilience within families supporting the wellbeing of grandparents.

When grandparents are successful in raising their grandchildren, their feelings of competence and confidence grow. Seven strategies have been identified as positive by grandmothers: maintaining effective communication, taking a strong role in the educational process, providing socio-emotional support to their grandchildren, involving extended family, involving grandchildren in selective community activities, acknowledging and working with the child's vulnerabilities and recognising the child's feelings about the absence of his/her parent(s).

Grandparents may wish to speak with a counsellor about the transition to the parenting role; they may like to have information about the differing emotional needs of children at different ages; information about parental mental illness, or drug and alcohol use may be wanted; and being linked in with social support groups can be helpful in gaining information about legal rights and how to negotiate with government departments.

In summary, many grandparents are placed, with little preparation, into the role of primary caregivers to the children of their children at a time of life when they had plans and expectations for themselves. Overall, the rate of grandparents acting as primary caregivers is increasing while their access to public assistance and support remains limited. There are challenges to be faced and positive experiences to enjoy. The support of formal and informal groups and services in the community can help grandparents fulfil their important role of caring for their grandchildren.

Reference

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