

Says Dr. Strochak, "Grandparents in these situations also have their own anger and resentment. Sometimes, wittingly or unwittingly, they foster animosity between the young parents. In many cases, circumstances dictate that a grandparent assume primary care of the child. The grandparent bonds quickly with the child, and these bonds become hard to break, which can create a tug of war when one or the other parent seeks to re-establish the basic parenting relationship on a permanent and consistent basis. It is not uncommon for children to take their parents to court (or vice versa) at some point in time over custody."

Strochak advises grandparents to view their surrogate role as only temporary, one they gladly relinquish as the teen-ager demonstrates his or her maturity into adulthood, which may mean finishing his or her education, holding down a full-time job, establishing some long-term goals or managing a reasonable social life, all the while providing the parenting the child requires. "A very tall order indeed," says Strochak.

Strochak offers some practical advice for grandparents who find themselves parenting their child's child:

- ◆ Insist that both teen-age parents take as much responsibility as possible for the care of the child.

- ◆ Don't foster anger between the parents. As difficult as it might be, don't take sides in their disagreements.

- ◆ Don't criticize the teen-agers' parenting skills unnecessarily. We all learn by making mistakes. Thankfully, most of our mistakes have harmless outcomes.

*Nancy Larkin Taylor is an attorney who practices family law in Bucks County.*