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# INTERFERING RELATIVES

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There is a great deal of difference between support and interference when it comes to relatives looking after your children! Sometimes they can be really helpful, but at others it can feel as if they are breathing down your neck.

Of course many families could not manage without the regular, sometimes daily, help that relatives provide - especially grandparents. When it works everyone is a winner. The parents feel content that their child is being well looked after and the child enjoys the special love and attention from their grandparent.

However, there can be difficulties over issues such as discipline and eating. The relative might want to use their approach when the child is with them. If that is quite different to what the child is used to then that can cause friction between the adults and more worryingly confuse the child. This can result in the child acting up which is really his way of saying 'I don't know what is expected of me'.

However valid the relatives feel their approach is, it is much better for the child to be dealt with consistently. We would strongly suggest to anyone in this situation that they adapt their methods to be as similar to the parents as they can. This isn't about better or worse or about giving in. It is about giving the child the same sort of messages. This is particularly necessary when they are young. Older children are more adaptable and better able to understand that families have different ways of doing things.

**Q**

**I have a small baby just four months old. I'm due to go back to work soon but am very worried that my mother is going to ignore my wishes. I have the baby in her own little routine especially for going to sleep. My mother thinks you should let a baby cry. I can't bear the thought of this happening. I have to go back to work as I depend on the income but it is worrying me sick. How can I get it through to her to do what I want?**

**A**

It can be difficult enough to leave a new baby. This worry that your mother may not conform to your way of doing things is added pressure. All parents need to feel that their child is receiving the best and safest care when they leave them with someone else. You need to be direct, but respectful, with your mother. Tell her that looking after the baby does mean that she has to follow your routine. However much she is entitled to her views she had her opportunity when she brought you up, now it is your turn. It is especially important that she does not let the baby cry. That is the only way babies can communicate. If the carers don't respond the baby will feel abandoned. If you can't get assurances from your mother you may need to think of alternative care even if that is problematic. Your baby's welfare is of paramount importance.

