

Dear Benji,

I have no idea what your parents will call you, but I, as your academic grandparent (call me 'AG' whenever you want), cannot resist the warm and fuzzy moniker I have decided on. If they, your parents, insist, I will listen to counter-arguments, but for now, you are 'my' eeny-weeny, tintsy-wintsy big cheeks, squeezable-all-over Benji. And now I have to apologize to you for not being there for you, though I think your parents pulled it off (our you out) with hopefully no hitch. Sounds like you and mom are healthy, and from what your father said, all is well. I am glad and I am happy indeed.

And now some grandfatherly advice. Your parents are adults and you are like a kid, you know? So they will come off as a bit silly at times. Do not expect much adult behavior from them as they will be pretty immature at times, speaking in a high voice whenever they close in on you. Your father will also be grinning at you with camera in hand and be poking and prodding for that smile. Give him a break and toss him a crumb. Let me tell you, he is a good guy, and you are lucky to have him as your father. I know him pretty well, and trust me on this one. One word of caution: his sense of humor is a bit, well, weird, not just weird like adults are weird, but like weird. He will say things that are a joke and you won't even know it. He is kidding. Trust me on this one. Just stay alert and you will be fine. Other than the dead-pan humor, he is just the kinda Dad you want. Play him right and you will have a good life until you go to college.

I will discuss that with you 18 years from now.

I do not know your mother as well as your father, but my few times that we have talked and broken bread together (that's adult-speak for eating) she really seems cool. She is warm and caring, and has brought, through Matt the courier, a few goodies to the lab, and so I think you will be eating well, until you go to college. We will talk about that 18 years from now. As your AG I need to warn you about her, too. She can break out into some funny sounds that adults refer to as French. Lots of nasal intonations may emanate from your mother. Trust me this will pass. And should you pick up the language in the first years of your life, it will stand you in good stead when you go off to college. We'll talk in 18 years.

Okay, so let's get it straight. You are kid and you are entering an adult world. It will seem hard to understand why you are so small and they are so big. Someday you will be as big, but you gotta' go through this awkward stage first. Don't know who made up this system, but as your father knows development is the cat's meow, no two ways about it. Hang in there, go with the program, enjoy the ride and most of all, welcome aboard...life is a wonderful thing, to be enjoyed to the fullest. Go for it!

With much love,
Your very own AG

PS - Should there be a ripple in the water, an unforeseen bend in the road, call me (my cell is below...oh yes, get a cell phone ASAP....we'll talk)

Professor Aryeh Routtenberg
Departments of Psychology, Neurobiology and
Institute for Neuroscience
Cresap Neuroscience Laboratory
Swift Hall, Room 102
2029 Sheridan Rd
Northwestern University
Evanston, IL. 60208
Telephone: -----