



The Sandwich Generation: How to Care for Your Parents and Your Children

by Rachel Lustbader

According to a study by the University of Michigan Department of Psychiatry, nearly one fourth of adults



who care for a parent over the age of 65 also care for at least one minor child.

These people who find themselves caring for an aging parent while also supporting their own children are members of what is called “the sandwich generation.”

If you are a part of the sandwich generation, you may find it difficult to give your family members the attention you feel they deserve or become frustrated, angry, or resentful as you struggle with meeting everyone’s needs while having minimal time to think about your own.

This is why it’s crucial for sandwich-generation caregivers to remember to prioritize their own needs. In the below guide, we provide some more background on the challenges faced by the sandwich generation, and share strategies on how you can manage the stress that comes with caring for multiple generations of loved ones.

What Is the Sandwich Generation?

The sandwich generation is a term used to describe adults who care for an aging parent while also either raising a minor child or financially contributing to a child over 18. Nearly a quarter of adults in the U.S. are believed to be a part of the sandwich generation, and 90% of those in this group are between the ages of 40 to 59, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center.

Challenges Faced by Sandwich Caregiver Families

Compared to those who take care of aging parents but not any children, members of the sandwich generation are more than twice as likely to experience financial

difficulty and have a greater chance of suffering emotional challenges. Without prioritizing their own needs and ensuring they have a support system in place, the challenges placed on sandwich generation members can negatively impact their health and quality of life.

Complicated Family Dynamics

The sandwich generation is tasked with meeting the unique needs of different generations at the same time. Their senior parents may be ill, have limited mobility, and/or need financial and emotional support and require the assistance of the sandwich generation member to remain outside of an assisted living facility or nursing home. At the same time, the sandwich generation member’s children also require monetary, physical, and emotional assistance.

Lack of Personal Time

University of Michigan researchers determined that 69% of those in the sandwich generation work outside of the home while also helping multiple generations of family members. Full-time working caregivers typically spend three hours a day caring for parents and children, which in addition to a full work day, leaves little time to relax or consider their own needs.

Guilt

It is challenging to care for aging parents and children, especially at the same time. This may result in sandwich generation members feeling like they’re not the best parent they could be or the type of child or caretaker their parent deserves.

It is also not uncommon for sandwich generation members to feel a sense of loss of independence, anger, or resentment as the caregiving needs of their family increase. This can lead to a sense of guilt for having these feelings. It is important to address and not ignore or internalize these feelings.

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Sandwich Generation *(continued from page 1)*

How to Manage Stress from Sandwich Generation Caregiving

On average, those in the sandwich generation lose thirty minutes of sleep each night and are prone to developing chronic stress. Chronic stress is linked to serious life-threatening conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and depression. To prevent this, you must not forget to enlist the help of others where you can, delay or say no to tasks that are not important, and develop a system to track and assign responsibility for essential tasks.

Delegate Where You Can

Make a list of what must be done, determine if any family, friends, or others can help, and cross tasks off as they are completed. Having a plan reduces stress, ensures everything gets done on time, and allows everyone to work together. It also enables you to take a break if others can handle tasks you would otherwise take care of on your own.

Be Specific When Asking for Help

Consider having family meetings where you can discuss what needs to be done and who is available to help out. While those who live in the same home are especially knowledgeable about routines and how they should be done, don't hesitate to reach out to family outside the household for assistance. Often these loved ones want to assist, but don't know specifically how. A list of tasks you could use help with offers actionable ideas of ways they can contribute. You can also send out emails to family and friends of areas they could help with a way to sign up for specific tasks.

Look For Ways to Simplify or Automate Tasks

Responsibilities often grow over time as parents get older and children become more involved in extracurricular activities. Consider where tasks can be reorganized or automated to free up time for other responsibilities, such as your career, or for time to relax or spend with friends.

For example, you should keep important numbers, medical information, and legal documents in one place and save them as a single document. This allows other caregivers to have easy access to information and to take on and complete additional responsibilities. Also consider scheduling pharmacy deliveries, meal planning services, and automatic payments so you have more time to spend on your job and family.

Lean On Professionals When Needed

Caregivers can talk about their feelings and concerns and receive helpful advice through professional counseling or support groups attended by other caregivers caring for aging parents and children. You can also check if your job offers benefits for caregivers or working parents or if these are available through local programs or services in your community.

Find Time for Self-Care

You should find time every day to do something you enjoy helping with handling stress while taking care of your family. You should also try to take care of your overall well-being by eating healthy food, hydrating, and staying active. You can enroll in exercise classes, walk around your neighborhood, read, or spend some time alone if you need to recharge. Taking care of your own needs makes you a better caregiver for your family.

APRIL TO-DO LIST

Wake up with gratitude & joy

Tell a joke that makes people laugh

Take time to wind down before bed

Spend time on a hobby

Do a brain dump for mind clarity



Powerful Tools for Caregivers Virtual Classes Being Held

Feeling Stretched as a Caregiver? *Powerful Tools for Caregivers* is an educational series designed to provide caregivers with the tools they need to take care of those in their care while also taking care of themselves.

This program helps family caregivers reduce stress, improve self-confidence, communicate feelings better, balance their lives, increase their ability to make tough decisions and locate helpful resources.

Classes consist of six sessions held once a week. Interactive lessons, discussions and brainstorming will help caregivers take the “tools” they choose and put them into action.

Virtual classes conducted via ZOOM will be held every Tuesday from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., April 22 through May 27. Participants receive a copy of *The Caregiver Helpbook*, developed specifically for the class.

The Program is FREE, but registration is required. Deadline to register: April 21, 2025. To register, call 812-372-6918, extension 2402, or email jferril@thrive-alliance.org.

The Aging Brain Care Program

The **Aging Brain Care Program** at Thrive Alliance is a program for Medicaid Waiver, Choice and Title III clients. The program is geared toward caregivers of clients with a diagnosis of Dementia or Alzheimer's Disease.



The ABC program is designed to help reduce caregiver stress by addressing the top caregiver stressors and developing strategies to reduce those stressors. We also utilize the caregiver stress bundle, which consists of caregiver support groups, problem solving, crisis planning, and encouraging respite care.

FREE Seminar Offered On Managing Caregiver Stress

Caregiving can be stressful —physically, emotionally, and financially. Thrive Alliance is offering a workshop for caregivers to learn about self-care strategies and techniques to increase relaxation and reduce stress. Learn how to manage the daily stresses you face as a caregiver.

Managing Caregiver Stress, part of the Powerful Tools for Caregivers program, will be offered Saturday, April 26 from 10 -11:30 a.m. at Decatur County Public Library, 1110 East Main Street in Greensburg.

Space is limited. The Program is FREE, but registration is required. To register: call 812-372-6918 extension 2402, or email jferril@thrive-alliance.org.



Name: _____ Date: _____



WORD SCRAMBLE
DIRECTIONS:
Unscramble each set of letters to discover a vocabulary word relating to the lovely month of April.

OFLO _____

BTFURTYLE _____

ARSSG _____

TPAEILRLACR _____

ERTDYAHA _____

ADRGNE _____

ANIR _____

LAGUH _____

LUIPT _____

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RECYCEL _____

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OLFERW _____

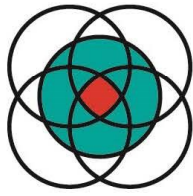
SEBLAABL _____

NSPRGI _____

OLMBO _____

NIOBR _____

Do you have an email address? Want to receive your newsletters electronically? Please submit your email address to jferri@thrive-alliance.org for future correspondence! If you desire a listing of caregiver support groups whether live or virtual please e-mail or call me at 812-399-5854. We also have a Thrive Alliance Caregiver Resources Facebook group. Please e-mail or call if you would like to be a part of the group. If you want removed from the mailings, please let me know as well.



ThriveAlliance

Enhancing lives. Building communities.

VENDOR FAIR!

Open to the public. FREE of Charge.

Wednesday, April 30, 2025

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

**Thrive Alliance Vendor Fair
The Commons, Columbus**

Participating vendors include:

**Brown County Health
and Living**

Centerwell Homehealth

Comfort Keepers

Compass Park

**Cove Direct Primary
Care, LLC**

**George's Pharmacy and
Medical Equipment**

Griswold Home Care

Infinity Home Care Plus

Just Friends

**Majestic Care of
North Vernon**

My Mobility

MyTruAdvantage

**New Beginnings at
Home**

**Our Hospice of South
Central Indiana**

**Paramount Home Care
Services**

QMedic

Seymour Crossing

**Silver Oaks Health
Campus**

**The Belmont Health &
Rehabilitation**

Vivera Senior Living

Willows Healthcare