

## Are You Feeling the Squeeze?

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We have heard of the “baby boomers”, the “silent generation”, “generation X” and the “Millennials (Generation Y)”, but there is yet another generation out there that several of you may be a part of and didn’t even know it. 16 Million Americans can now fit into the “Sandwich Generation”. Are you one? Webster defines it best...Sandwich Generation is: A generation of people who are caring for their aging parents while supporting their own children. They are “sandwiched” between two generations, and as you can imagine, just trying to make ends meet.

As the baby boomers age we will see an increase in elderly Americans who will need some sort of care. This is where the “sandwich” caregiver comes into the picture. So who are these caregivers? Most likely female, still working full time and will devote an advantage of 20 hours a week just to caregiving, not to mention all the other things that will still need to be done. Over time this will affect your work life, personal life and home life.

Many of the people that fall into this generation feel lost, over worked and under-appreciated. They need help but don’t know where to go or what to do about it. Some even feel it is normal or it is their duty or job to take care of their parents as they age. Yes, we all want to be there for our loved ones and we get pressured into handling it all, after all, they raised us and where there for us, so we owe them right?

The most important thing anyone in this “sandwich” generation needs to know is that they are not alone and yes there is help and resources out there. If you fit the definition of “sandwich” generation, here are some tips to help you stay sane and make it enjoyable for all parties.

1. **Put Yourself First**—Because you’re both a conscientious parent and a dutiful child, you may be tempted to put your own needs after those of your aging parents and adult children if you find yourself in a sandwich generation scenario. Don’t.
2. **Draw Strength from Faith** – More than 60 percent of Baby Boomers cite the power of prayer in helping them cope with stress associated with caregiving, particularly for aging parents. Turning to your faith can help you emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Not to mention the church community that can possibly help with some of the thousand things you have on that to do list.
3. **Seek Family Support** - Maintaining open communications with immediate family members and siblings lets them know how you're feeling. Doing so gives you a chance to ask for help with tasks such as housekeeping, calling for prescriptions, or assisting with homework for a young child in your household.
4. **Talk to Your Employer** - With the majority of the sandwich generation employed full-time, the responsibilities of caregiving inevitably can affect work schedules. One of the biggest mistakes caregivers make is to hide their responsibilities from their employers. They may work with you and your schedule.

- 5. Get Professional Assistance -** Talk to your loved one's doctor about what to expect regarding his or her condition, and ask about concerns related to medications, schedules, diet and exercise. You should also be sure to contact your own doctor when you're feeling stressed about your caregiving role. Your doctor can suggest ways to alleviate stress ranging from a variety of physical activity programs, such as yoga or brisk walks, to obtaining assistance from community and social service organizations. Many communities offer free support groups or discussion groups where you can get resources, and share with each other.

Jarman Center is starting up a Children of Older Persons (CHOPS) support group to address these needs in our area. Come to the first meeting Thursday Feb 21 at 6 pm. A free chili supper sponsored by Jarman Center with time to meet each other, a short presentation on care taking and self care, and a brainstorming session to determine what kinds of resources we need, how often to meet and structure the group. The purpose is to address the needs of our Sandwich generation in our area. You can also bring your "Older person" for supper with the residents and fun in the resident's lounge area. This is a time for both you and your elder. Call 253-2325 to let us know you are coming - or email at [jarman.center@netcare-il.com](mailto:jarman.center@netcare-il.com). If you are on face book, like us at Jarman Center Senior Living, and go to the CHOPS event page. We will use our email newsletter to keep people informed -sign up at [www.JarmanCenter.com](http://www.JarmanCenter.com).