



THE SANDWICH GENERATION
with Volunteer Editor: Jeanette Wojcik
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Sandwiches are one of my favorite meals during this hot, humid weather, but those kinds of sandwiches aren't what we are talking about in this issue of Deeper Dive. We are talking about the millions of middle-aged adults who are caring for their parents while raising children. Often these middle-aged adults are still working full-time as well. We will take a look at some of the challenges they face as well as some resources available to make this part of life's journey a little easier. [The Pew Research Center](#) reports that approximately half of all people in their 40's and 50's have a parent age 65 or older and are either raising a child or financially support a child over age 18. Many are also providing financial support for their aging parents. As the Baby Boomers age, Generation X (those born between 1963 and 1980) make up the majority of those in the Sandwich Generation.

Being part of the Sandwich Generation places special burdens on everyone. The caregiver faces effects on mental and physical health. [Danielle Page](#) in a recent article points out that "you can't care for others if you aren't taking care of yourself." She notes that many in the Sandwich Generation prioritize everyone else's needs over their own. Depression and anxiety can develop and create a feeling of never being in control. For women, who are the majority of caregivers, their lives are like a 5-to-9 endurance training every day. And, at the end of the day, there are still a few more tasks to complete according to a study by the [University of Phoenix](#). The study reports that women who are Sandwich Caregivers use 64% of their sick time and/or PTO for caregiving. Approximately 58% have turned down educational opportunities. Almost half report that caregiving negatively affects their career.

One of the most pressing concerns for the Sandwich Generation is financial, reports [Carolyn Rosenblatt](#) for *Forbes*. Many of the elderly planned their retirement based on financial and life expectancies that are no longer accurate. Sandwich Generation caregivers worry about what happens when their parents' savings run out. With increasing costs for caregiving and the need to support children (such as with college tuition), families are having a difficult time making ends meet. This then affects the retirement savings and plans for those in the Sandwich Generation.

So, what can you do? Planning ahead has benefits if you are approaching the Sandwich Generation age. Have open and honest discussions with your parents about their financial resources and make sure they have in place all the legal documents you will need. [AARP](#) has some excellent resources on this topic. Don't try to do everything by yourself. Take advantage of community resources. If you don't know what those are, contact Ann Koegler at [Altenheim Resource Services](#). Communicate with your employer and see if you qualify for a job-protected leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act. Staying organized by keeping a master family calendar and taking notes during appointments is helpful.

Despite the challenges of being part of the Sandwich Generation, there are many blessings and [benefits](#). Sandwich caregivers develop an increased capacity for empathy, problem solving and a sense of purpose. When families work together to care for aging parents and grandparents they find a deeper family bond as they strengthen relationships and share the wisdom of older generations. Children develop a deeper understanding of aging and the importance of providing support and care to the elderly. Caring for elderly parents as well as younger family members is a commitment that should not be taken lightly but it can bring rewards that last well beyond our lives.