



STONEBAY
of Orono

SENIOR LIVING

CAREGIVERS - THE SANDWICH GENERATION



If you're part of the "sandwich generation," at that place in your life where you're caring for both aging parents and your own children (or even grandchildren), you are far from alone. In fact, you probably have family members, friends and neighbors in the same situation.

As life spans have increased and many people delay starting families in order to pursue higher education, career advancement and economic stability, playing this dual role has become more common. According to Pew Research, 47% of adults in their 40s and 50s have a parent age 65 or older and are either raising a young child or financially supporting a grown child.

Sandwich generation caregivers offer physical, emotional and financial support. But while it's rewarding to help young or even adult children meet milestones and succeed in their lives, or to experience the love and gratitude of a parent or other loved one you're able to assist, caregiver responsibilities can also be stressful.

Stress Factors of the Sandwich Generation

It is common for many sandwich caregivers to feel pulled in many different directions, physically or emotionally exhausted, or overburdened by financial concerns and a full schedule of daily tasks and responsibilities. If you're a sandwich caregiver, you may experience:

- Trouble managing your own work, relationships and hobbies
- Problems finding a balance as a spouse, parent and elder care provider
- Physical and psychological issues stemming from elevated levels of daily stress
- Feelings of anxiety, depression, guilt or isolation
- Financial strain

How Can Sandwich Generation Caregivers Manage Stress?

When you are constantly making sure everyone else is happy, healthy and safe, you may frequently neglect your own needs, oftentimes resulting in caregiver burnout. Whether those needs are physical, emotional or financial, not taking time for yourself can have potentially harmful consequences in the long term. Caregivers need support and time for self-care, too. So, what can you do to make your experience less stressful and more positive? **Here are some tips:**

- **Ask for help.** Asking for assistance doesn't mean you're weak or failing at your roles. Taking breaks and some time for yourself is essential for your health and sanity. Ask another family member to help with your parents a few hours a week. Hire respite care professionals, if you can afford it. And if you're completely overwhelmed, talk to a psychologist or counselor who may be able to offer strategies for managing stress.
- **Set realistic expectations.** You can't shuttle your kids to all their activities, take your parents to every appointment, work, clean the house, shop for a week's worth of groceries and get a homemade dinner on the table all in one day. Too long of a to-do list sets you up for burnout. Instead, talk to your children, parents and spouse about what you can do in a day, and then explore alternative plans like carpools, senior transportation, grocery delivery services and more.
- **Be frank about finances.** If you're financially strapped, explore different ways to make ends meet. Guide college-age or adult children living with you, or supported by you, to get jobs, take on their own bills and even contribute to things like grocery costs. Look into potential tax benefits and breaks for elderly parents and college-aged children. And research creative senior care financing options like investments, estate sales and more.
- **Take time for yourself.** You need sleep, proper meals and time to unwind just to function, not to mention to effectively care for others. Making time for phone calls and lunch dates with friends, a weekly class you enjoy, a night out with your spouse, a trip to the salon or even a quiet drive can make a big difference.

Sometimes, a break from caregiving can be all you need to refresh and take care of your own physical and emotional health. Stonebay Senior Living can help. Consider a short-term respite stay with us for your senior loved one. Call Stonebay Senior Living community nearest you to learn more!