THE SANDWICH GENERATION

PRESENTED BY YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE AND WORKLIFE PROGRAMS

November 9, 2026

PSC | Federal Occupational Health

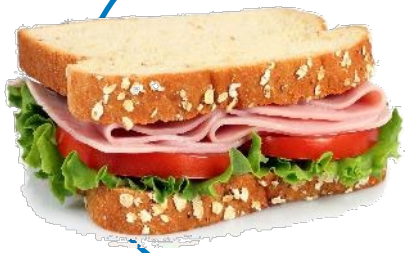
OBJECTIVES

- Define the Sandwich Generation and highlight common caregiving challenges
- Identify signs that an aging loved one may need additional support
- Suggest effective communication strategies when discussing care needs
- Identify ways to support a loved one's independence while planning for future needs
- Share a variety of tools, resources, and support networks to help address caregiver stress
- Review self-care strategies that improve resilience and prevent burnout

WHAT IS THE SANDWICH GENERATION?

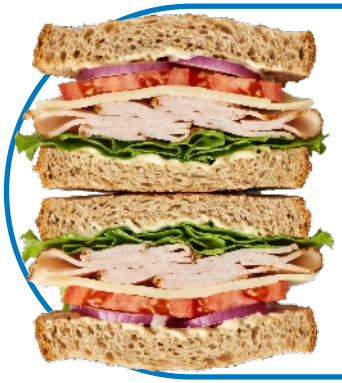
Adults balancing care for:

- Aging parents or loved ones
- Children or grandchildren
- Work and family responsibilities



Traditional sandwich

Adults who simultaneously care for aging parents and dependent children at home



Club sandwich

- 50-60-year-olds managing aging parents, adult children, and grandchildren
- 30-40-year-olds managing aging parents, grandparents, and young children



Open-faced sandwich

Friends, neighbors, or extended family who step in to support older loved ones

THE NUMBERS TELL THE STORY



47% Have both an aging parent and child responsibilities

1 in 3 Report feeling constantly rushed

24 hours Of unpaid care each week, on average

$470 billion+ Annual value of unpaid caregiving

SECTION 1

CARING FOR OLDER LOVED ONES

BE PROACTIVE



Observe patterns, not isolated incidents



Watch for changes in:

- Memory
- Mobility
- Nutrition
- Hygiene
- Driving ability
- Social engagement



Seek professional assessments



Include your loved one in decisions

COMMUNICATE WITH COMPASSION



Start conversations early



Lead with concern, not criticism



Listen to understand



Use specific examples



Respect preferences and dignity



Speak ***to*** your loved one, not ***about*** them

SUPPORT INDEPENDENCE



Focus on abilities, not limitations



Offer support without taking control



Introduce changes gradually



Encourage participation in decisions



Respect your loved one's autonomy

SECTION 2

CARING FOR YOURSELF

THE HIDDEN COST OF CAREGIVING

- Caregiver stress is common
- Guilt can make self-care difficult
- Burnout affects physical and emotional health
- Your well-being affects the quality of care you provide
- Self-care is a necessity, not a luxury



PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING CAREGIVING



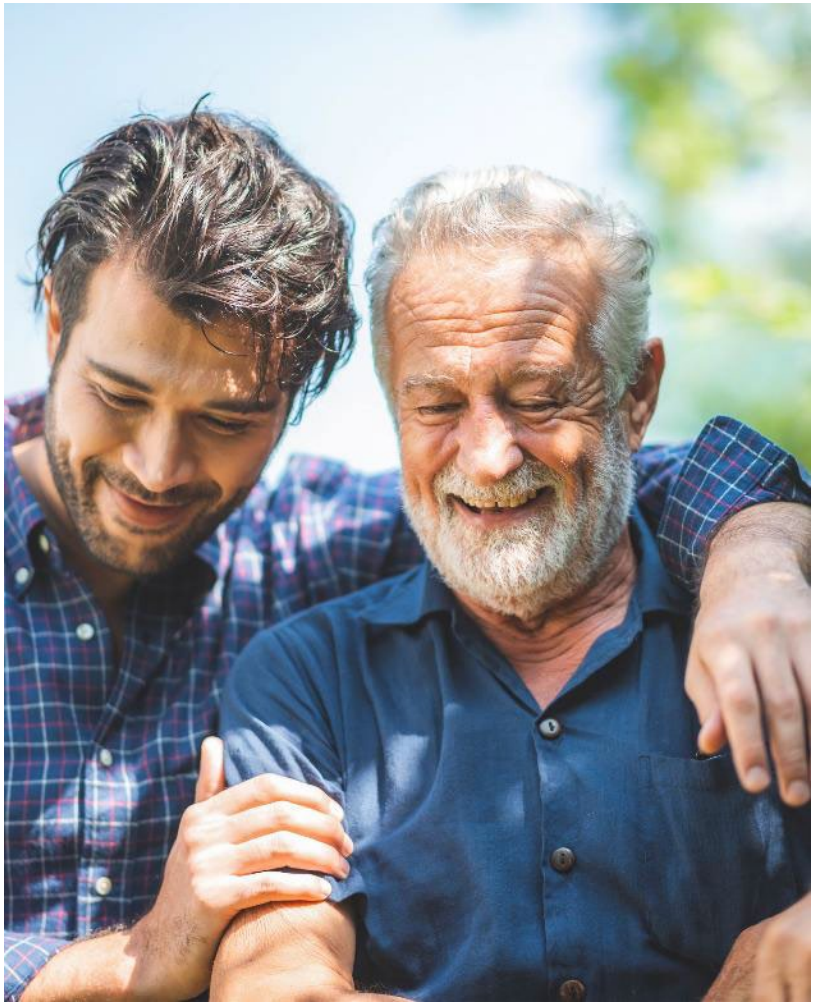
- Set realistic expectations
- Prioritize what matters most
- Ask for and accept help
- Use technology to stay organized
- Take short breaks throughout the day
- Remember: progress beats perfection

PROTECT YOUR WELL-BEING

- Eat nutritious meals
- Prioritize sleep
- Keep your own medical appointments
- Stay hydrated
- Make time for activities you enjoy
- Let go of guilt when taking care of yourself



SMALL MOMENTS MATTER



- Take breaks when opportunities arise
- Practice mindfulness or gratitude
- Stay flexible when plans change
- Look for moments of joy and humor
- Focus on what you can control

PREPARE A CAREGIVER GO-BAG

Pack a bag with:

- Healthy snacks
- Water
- Phone charger
- Reading material
- Journal or notepad
- Comfort items (e.g., music, pillow, photo, etc.)



SECTION 3

GETTING SUPPORT

BUILD A NETWORK OF SUPPORT



Professional

- Counselors
- Geriatric care managers
- Healthcare teams



Community

- Your area's Agency on Aging
- Eldercare Locator
- AARP Caregiving
- Family Caregiver Alliance



Peers

- Local support groups
- Online caregiver communities

YOU ARE NOT ALONE



Lean on your community, professional services, and peer networks



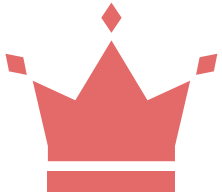
Your well-being matters, for you and everyone you care for

Asking for help is one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself and those who depend on you



Reach out to a friend, counselor, or community group





You carry this role with more grace than you give yourself credit for



The most important step is simply the first one: Letting someone help you carry the load

SUMMARY



- Get professional assessments and involve your loved one in the process
- Communicate openly and respectfully
- Address challenges before they become crises
- Facilitate autonomy rather than taking over
- Self-care is essential to sustainable caregiving
- Be mindful, nourish yourself, laugh, and embrace flexibility
- Reach out, ask for help, and let others carry the load with you

RESOURCES

Books

- Chicken Soup for the Caregiver's Soul
  - Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, and LeAnn Thieman
- Passages in Caregiving: Turning Chaos into Confidence
  - Gail Sheehy
- The Caregiver's Companion
  - Meyer and Derr

Websites

- Family Caregiver Alliance
- AARP Caregiving
- Eldercare Locator
- National Alliance for Caregiving

Online Articles

- Caregiver Stress: Tips for Taking Care of Yourself
- Caring for Yourself When Caring for Another

Podcasts/Videos

- Caregiver SOS on Air
- Happy Healthy Caregiver Podcast
- AARP Caregiver Video Series
- Family Caregiver Alliance Webinars

Apps

- Caring Village
- Lotsa Helping Hands
- CareZone
- Medisafe

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