

The Sandwich Generation's Stressful Balancing Act



MORANWM.COM

Your Vision. Our Solutions.

The Sandwich Generation's Stressful Balancing Act

They are managing demanding careers, raising children, and now stepping in to care for aging parents. Their calendars are full, their rest is often interrupted, and the weight of responsibility is constant. This is the reality for [millions of Americans](#) who belong to what is known as the Sandwich Generation.

Unlike traditional generational labels such as Baby Boomers or Millennials, the [Sandwich Generation](#) is defined not by age, but by circumstance. These individuals, often members of Generation X, older Millennials, and younger Baby Boomers, find themselves caring for both their children and their parents at the same time. It is a role that is as emotionally complex as it is financially challenging.

According to [recent studies](#), nearly one in four middle-aged adults in the United States is now part of this group, a notable increase from just one in seven a decade ago. The term “Sandwich Generation” was first introduced by a social work professor [Dorothy A. Miller](#) in the early 1980s, who described the dual pressure of caring for two generations as a significant and often overlooked source of stress.



The Sandwich Generation's Stressful Balancing Act

Her words still resonate today. As the population continues to age, and with [nearly 70 percent of Americans over the age of 65](#) are expected to require some form of long-term care. As a result, adult children are increasingly stepping into roles as caregivers, advocates, and financial coordinators for their loved ones.

In many ways, the people offering the most help are often the ones who could use support themselves. This article explores the unique challenges facing the Sandwich Generation and outlines strategies that may help ease the burden while preserving their financial and emotional well-being.

Understanding the Cost — Financial and Emotional

According to [Genworth's 2024 Cost of Care Survey](#), the national median annual cost for a private room in a nursing home is \$127,750. In some states, such as Florida, the average cost is even higher. In-home care services and assisted living facilities also involve substantial monthly expenses, often totaling several thousand dollars.

These expenses are rarely covered by Medicare. Unless your parent qualifies for Medicaid or has long-term care insurance, much of the burden falls on the family. For those in the Sandwich Generation, this often means dipping into personal savings, delaying retirement contributions, or taking time off work — all while managing the financial responsibilities of raising children.

The demands of caregiving can place a significant burden on families in many ways, including emotionally, financially, and physically. Long-term care services are expensive, and many families are not financially prepared to manage these costs.

The Sandwich Generation's Stressful Balancing Act

In addition to the financial burden, caregiving often takes a profound emotional toll. Witnessing a parent's health decline can be heartbreaking, especially when combined with the day-to-day responsibilities of managing appointments, coordinating care, and navigating complex medical needs. For those also raising children or working full-time, the constant balancing act can lead to caregiver burnout. Over time, this sustained pressure can impact mental and physical health. [Studies](#) have shown that caregivers face an increased risk of depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and chronic health conditions.

While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, there are practical steps caregivers can consider to help manage the emotional and logistical challenges of supporting both aging parents and growing children.

Considerations for Supporting Parents

Taking intentional steps to prepare and communicate can help reduce stress and uncertainty as caregiving needs arise.



1. Start the Conversation Early: Discussing long-term care plans with aging parents can be uncomfortable, but it is often an important step. Asking about advance directives, wills, and long-term care insurance may help families make more informed decisions in the future. Documenting preferences in writing can reduce confusion and emotional stress when difficult choices arise.



2. Build a Support System: Caregiving is not a role meant to be handled alone. Reaching out to siblings, relatives, or close friends to help share responsibilities can ease the day-to-day pressure. In addition to logistical support, emotional support is also important. Maintaining open conversations with trusted individuals may provide a valuable outlet during stressful periods.

The Sandwich Generation's Stressful Balancing Act



3. Understand Care Options: Long-term care options vary widely in terms of cost and level of assistance. Depending on your family's needs, services may include adult day care, in-home aides, assisted living communities, or skilled nursing facilities. Learning about the choices available in your area may support more confident and timely decisions when care needs evolve.



4. Explore Financial Planning Options:

Families may benefit from working with a financial professional to review available resources, insurance coverage, and potential eligibility for programs such as Medicaid or veterans' benefits. In some cases, strategies like Medicaid planning or policies with long-term care components can play a role in preserving family finances and care flexibility.



5. Start Planning for Your Own Future: Caring for others often highlights the importance of preparing for one's own future. Establishing or updating estate plans, increasing retirement contributions, or researching long-term care options may help provide a sense of security for both individuals and their families down the road.



The Sandwich Generation's Stressful Balancing Act

Considerations for Supporting Children

Balancing your children's needs with caregiving responsibilities often requires clear boundaries and honest conversations.



1. Set Boundaries Around Financial Support: It can be difficult to say no to children who need additional financial help, especially young adults facing rising education or housing costs. However, setting realistic limits on financial support may help protect your own long-term stability. Clear, respectful conversations can help manage expectations.



2. Talk Openly About Family Finances (When Age-Appropriate): Age-appropriate discussions about budgeting or shared responsibilities may promote awareness and encourage independence over time.



3. Plan for Education Expenses Thoughtfully: If you're still saving for a child's education while supporting a parent, consider exploring flexible savings vehicles like 529 plans or financial aid opportunities. Balancing these competing priorities is challenging, but informed planning may reduce pressure.



4. Encourage Independence Where Appropriate: For parents supporting adult children, it may be helpful to have open and respectful conversations about long-term expectations. Discussing goals around employment, education, or financial contribution to the household can create a clearer path forward for everyone. Encouraging steps toward independence, even gradually, can help ease pressure on the household and support growth for both generations.



The Sandwich Generation's Stressful Balancing Act

Conclusion

Caring for aging parents while also supporting children can be one of life's most demanding responsibilities. The emotional, financial, and physical toll is real, and it can be difficult to find time to prioritize your own well-being. Many individuals are navigating this same stage of life, and it is important to know that support and guidance are available.

With open conversations, careful planning, and a network of trusted resources, it may be possible to manage these responsibilities in a way that honors both your loved ones and your future. Although this chapter can be challenging, it can also bring meaning, perspective, and deeper family connections.

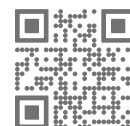
At Moran Wealth Management®, we understand the challenges of the Sandwich Generation. Our team is here to listen, guide, and help you align your financial goals with caregiving responsibilities. You don't have to manage it alone.

While this season of life may present many challenges, it also offers an opportunity to build a foundation of care, resilience, and thoughtful planning for generations to come. With the right support, you can make informed decisions that reflect both your values and your vision for the future.



Your Vision. Our Solutions.

MORANWM.COM



Sources:

- Pew Research Center. The Sandwich Generation: Rising Financial Burdens for Middle-Aged Americans. January 30, 2013. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2013/01/30/the-sandwich-generation/>
- Pew Research Center. More than half of Americans in their 40s are 'sandwiched' between an aging parent and their own children. April 8, 2022. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/04/08/more-than-half-of-americans-in-their-40s-are-sandwiched-between-an-aging-parent-and-their-own-children/>
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Sandwich Generation. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sandwich%20generation>
- AARP. What Is the Sandwich Generation? August 15, 2019. <https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/basics/info-2019/sandwich-generation.html>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living. Who Needs Care? <https://acl.gov/ltr/basic-needs/who-needs-care>
- Genworth. Genworth and CareScout Release 2024 Cost of Care Survey Results. April 9, 2024. <https://investor.genworth.com/news-events/press-releases/detail/982/genworth-and-carescout-release-cost-of-care-survey-results>

This commentary is for informational purposes only and does not constitute investment advice, a recommendation, or an offer or solicitation to buy or sell any securities. The views expressed are those of the author(s) as of the date of publication and are subject to change without notice. Past performance is not indicative of future results.

This material may have been prepared using data and analysis from a variety of sources, including but not limited to: Bloomberg, FactSet, Morningstar, S&P Global, Moody's, Refinitiv, Capital IQ, CRSP, FRED, IMF, World Bank, OECD, and other third-party research providers. Additionally, portions of this content may have been generated or reviewed with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools, including OpenAI's large language models or similar technologies. While we believe these sources to be reliable, we do not guarantee their accuracy or completeness.

Moran Wealth Management, LLC is a registered investment adviser. Registration does not imply a certain level of skill or training. For additional information about Moran Wealth Management, LLC, including its services and fees, request the firm's disclosure brochure using the contact information above or visit adviserinfo.sec.gov. Moran Wealth Management, LLC is a separate entity and not affiliated with any other entity or practice that uses the same name.