



Employee Assistance Program Services Newsletter

SUMMER 2006

The Sandwich Generation: Role Changes in Caring For Aging Parents

What is the Sandwich Generation? It is a demanding time when a couple or single parent is still dealing with parenting issues, thinking about their own retirement, and is also facing the issues of coping with aging parents. Deciding which has the highest priority can be extremely stressful.

An estimated 22 percent of the American population can be classified as the "Sandwich Generation," meaning they are parenting their own children and is taking care of their parents at the same time. Some estimates show that nearly two-thirds of the baby boom generation will be taking care of an elderly parent in the next ten years. It has been reported that the average woman spends 17 years raising children and 18 years helping aging parents.

Many "Baby Boomers" are finding themselves as part of the "Sandwich Generation". Raising children while providing care for aging parents is becoming a common occurrence.

While this may offer the opportunity to "give back" to those who raised us, it also poses unique and sometimes stressful problems. With our children, there is a certain amount of control as the role of parent assumes physical, financial and emotional power over children. While my child may not want to go to a doctor, as a parent, I can get her or him to comply with my wishes because I am the parent. If I want my father or mother to see a doctor, as the adult child, I can ask, beg or insist, but my power to make it happen is limited. Emotionally, it is difficult to "force" a parent to comply with our wishes by virtue of a lifetime of being in the child role. With more than 22.4 million households providing care for someone age 50 or older, the "Sandwich Generation" is struggling to care for longer living and, more often, ill parents. With parents living longer than ever before, adult children are faced with helping parents handle physical and mental illnesses.

As adult children, it is hard to take on the role of "decision-maker" for our parents about their healthcare, finances, living situations or other issues. Becoming involved in our parent's finances, medical

Summer Safety Tips

When the weather is hot, your body works overtime to keep cool. Heat stroke occurs when the body's natural temperature control system fails. Symptoms may include agitation, confusion, racing pulse, hyperventilation, convulsions and eventually loss of consciousness.

Prevention is your best defense against heat stroke:

- ⇒ Wear light colored and light weight clothing.
- ⇒ Limit vigorous activity during hot, humid weather.
- ⇒ Exercise in the morning or evening hours when the temperature is cooler.
- ⇒ Drink plenty of water before, during and after exercising.

To avoid mosquito and other bug bites, prevention is the key. Apply insect repellent containing DEET when you go outdoors even for short periods of time. Be especially vigilant from dusk to dawn, peak mosquito bite time. Remove or clean objects on your property that can collect water. Standing water is fertile breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Source: Tri-City Consortium
on Aging-June, 2006



Sandwich Generation - Cont.

decisions and daily business may seem intrusive. This "role reversal" may be accompanied by some grief over the loss of that parent as an advisor or a mentor. Then, there may be several issues that are discovered that could have been avoided if only we had inquired sooner. Just as our parents looked after our best interests, we look after the best interest of our own children and must do the same for our parents as they age. This role reversal is awkward for the parent as well as the adult child. Here are some ideas that may help:

- ⇒ Discuss caregiving issues with parents before the need arises. These discussions can help guide decision making in the future.
- ⇒ Communicate with parents about their preferences, taking into account realistic circumstances.
- ⇒ Have your parent(s) strongly consider having a living will, Power of Attorney for Healthcare, and/or Power of Attorney for Finances.
- ⇒ Review wills and living wills including their philosophy of quality of life issues; discuss funeral arrangements.
- ⇒ Compile healthcare information. What medications are they taking? What is their family health history? What doctors do they see?
- ⇒ What health and life insurance plans do they have? Have this information readily accessible in case of emergency.
- ⇒ Where do they keep important information or papers?

No one likes to address these issues because it reminds us of the mortality of our parents. These can be useful steps in preserving dignity and respecting the wishes of our aging parents. For the Sandwich Generation and the Older Generation, communication and pre-planning can help reduce stress for all involved. For more information, call AssistNOW for an appointment at 216.431.4140.

Calling is a valuable first step in obtaining a reliable assessment of the care needs of the elder person and assistance in matching community resources to the person's needs and abilities. The counselors at AssistNOW can help you locate these services.

Coping Tips:

- ◇ Spread the wealth – ask for help!
- ◇ Pay attention to your own stress level.
- ◇ Take care of yourself so you can care for others.
- ◇ Remember to "be" with the elder person – talk, reminisce, share good times.
- ◇ Plan for the future but don't worry about it.
- ◇ Identify what you can control and try only to control that.
- ◇ Let go of the unimportant things – simplify the rest of your life.
- ◇ Use the "rainy day" money.
- ◇ Take breaks.

Source: www.sandwichgeneration.com

SMOKING MYTHS

It's just a matter of will power.

Wrong. The nicotine in cigarettes is addictive, and it isn't easy to break that addiction. But it can be done – half the people who once smoked have now quit.

Smoking low-tar cigarettes is healthier.

Not so. Smoking so called "low tar" cigarettes only seem that way in machine tests. People don't smoke like machines. They smoke low tar cigarettes differently than high tar cigarettes, inhaling more deeply and smoking more of them.

If you fail to quit the first time you try, you'll never be able to quit.

No. It takes on average, six quitting attempts before a person actually succeeds in breaking the habit. You learn something each time you try and each time you try, you are more likely to succeed.

The best way to quit is "cold turkey".

Fact. The most effective way to quit smoking is by using a combination of counseling and nicotine replacement therapy or non-nicotine medicines. Your health care provider or smoking cessation clinic is the best place to go for help with quitting

To learn more about how to quit smoking, call AssistNOW at 216.431.4140. We can help!

source: www.cancer.org

Remember,
for confidential assistance
call
AssistNOW
The EAP Division of
Recovery Resources
216.431.4140
1.800.840.4654