

CAREGIVERS IN THE MIDDLE

MAKING IT WORK FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY



The squeeze is on the sandwich generation because many couples choose to start families later in life. Even parents whose children are grown can get sandwiched if they have to care for grandchildren on a full- or part-time basis. And when adult children move back home, a caregiver could find herself caring for aging parents, adult children and grandchildren—all at the same time. How can you make it work for everyone, including yourself?

Communicate openly. The worst thing you can do is suffer in silence. Talk with your aging parent about his wishes and priorities. Find out if he's made plans or decisions about what should happen next. Talk to your siblings about how they envision helping out. Ask the same of adult children who are living with you.

Don't leave younger kids out of the discussion. Find out how they feel about the time you spend caring for your parent. They might feel left out. Maybe they'd welcome a bigger role in helping you care for your parent. Or perhaps what they really need is a guarantee of a half-hour of your time each evening before bed. You may not be able to fulfill all your child's requests, but just having this discussion may help.

Don't assume it's best for your parent to move in with you. This may seem like a tempting option because everyone would be under one roof, but ask yourself some questions first. Do you have the space—and is it accessible for someone with limited mobility? What if it doesn't work out?

If your parent moves in with you, make sure you establish clear house rules and roles about issues such as: eating schedules, cleanup responsibilities, laundry duty, transportation, quiet time, and privacy.

Discuss finances. The financial squeeze can be especially tight if you're caught between needy parents

and children. How can you afford a housekeeper for Dad when you're trying to save for your daughter's first year in college? Discuss the cost of different care arrangements with all parties. If your mother can't manage alone any more, it's time for her to tell you about her financial situation. Forecast income and expenses over the short and long term.

Remain flexible. Expect care arrangements to change. For many families, one decision rarely settles the matter forever. Your teenagers may go off to college; your mother may move in with you. But someday, she might need more care than you can provide. Or maybe she'll decide she needs a quieter place to call home. Respect everyone's needs and adjust to changing conditions.

Don't neglect yourself or your family to care for your parent. This is the toughest advice to accept. Plan outings with your partner, with your kids and by yourself. Let your employer know what's going on, but try not to let your performance suffer.

Take advantage of outside help. Respite care is often available for caregivers on a weekly basis or for a family vacation. Don't be afraid to ask other family members and friends for help.

Many communities have caregiver support groups, where you can learn how other people juggle their competing demands. Support groups offer the comfort of talking with others who experience similar struggles. The groups are often free, and you don't need to commit to regular attendance.

Whatever you do, don't give up on the plans you made for how to spend your middle years. Maybe you wanted to travel across country or enroll in cooking school. Settle for a shorter trip, if that's what it takes, or tuck in a course here and there when you can manage it. You may not attain your dream, but you'll be less resentful if you fulfill at least part of it.

Source: *Workplace Benefits*. (2001). *Sandwich generation: Caregivers in the middle*. Raleigh, NC: Author.

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READY FOR QUITTING TIME?

QUITTING SMOKING ISN'T EASY, BUT THESE 5 STEPS CAN HELP YOU PREPARE



Quitting works best when you're prepared. Before you quit, **START** by taking these five important steps:

S = Set a quit date.

T = Tell family, friends, and co-workers that you plan to quit.

A = Anticipate and plan for the challenges you'll face while quitting.

R = Remove cigarettes and other tobacco products from your home, car, and work.

T = Talk to your doctor about getting help to quit.

1. Set a quit date.

Pick a date within the next two weeks to quit. That gives you enough time to get ready. But it's not so long that you will lose your drive to quit. Think about choosing a special day:

- New Year's Day
- Independence Day (July 4)
- The Great American Smokeout (the third Thursday of each November)

2. Tell others your plan to quit.

Quitting smoking is easier with the support of others. Tell your family, friends, and co-workers that you plan to quit. Tell them how they can help you. Here are some ideas:

- Ask everyone to understand your change in mood. Remind them that this won't last long. (The worst will be over within two weeks.) Tell them this: "The longer I go without cigarettes, the sooner I'll be my old self."

- Does someone close to you smoke? Ask them to quit with you, or at least not to smoke around you.

- Do you take any medicines? Tell your doctor and pharmacist you are quitting. Nicotine changes how some drugs work. You may need to change your prescriptions after you quit.

3. Anticipate and plan for the challenges you'll face while quitting.

Expecting challenges is an important part of getting ready to quit. You may be more tempted when you are stressed or feeling down. You should also expect feelings of withdrawal. Withdrawal is the discomfort of giving up nicotine. It is your body's way of telling you it's learning to be smoke-free. These feelings will go away in time.

4. Remove cigarettes and other tobacco from your home, car, and work.

Getting rid of things that remind you of smoking will also help you get ready to quit. Try these ideas:

- Make things clean and fresh at work, in your car, and at home.
- Throw away all your cigarettes. Give or throw away your lighters and ashtrays.

5. Talk to your doctor about getting help to quit.

Quitting "cold turkey" isn't your only choice. Talk to your doctor about other ways to quit. Most doctors can answer your questions and give advice. They can suggest medicine to help with withdrawal. You can buy some of these medicines on your own. For others, you need a prescription.

Source: Smokefree.gov. (n.d.). Online guide to quitting. Retrieved August 6, 2007, from <http://www.smokefree.gov>

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Teens need to know that you love them. Never assume that they know. Give them a gentle touch, a smile, or a loving word. Love is important for healthy development. Research shows that teens who feel close to their parents are more likely to make good decisions about sex, drugs, drinking, cigarettes, and violence (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 1998). The strong bond that you have with your young adults gives them confidence to go out into the world and succeed.



SHOW THEM THE LOVE

THEY MAY NOT ACT LIKE IT, BUT TEENS NEED TO KNOW THAT PARENTS LOVE THEM

- Love them even when they push you away. Adolescence is also a time when young adults are pushing for more freedom. Sometimes it can feel like they are shutting you out. Be patient. Don't forget to tell them how much they are loved.
- If your teen argues with you, stay calm. Try not to lose your temper. Stay on the subject. Explain your point of view and then stop. Don't yell. If you yell, they will yell back.
- If you lose your temper, apologize. It will show them it's OK to make a mistake and apologize.
- Don't frighten them with threats. Don't hit them. It may crush their spirits. They may think showing anger and violence is the way to solve problems.
- Teach respect to your teen. Be respectful. Expect your teen to be respectful, too.
- Never hold back love as punishment. Young adults need to know they are loved, even when they make mistakes. Putting them down will make them feel badly about themselves. Then they will be more likely to make poor decisions.
- Show love when you are happy, sad, and even when you're mad. Teenagers can be moody and argue. Don't let them bait you into saying things you don't mean.
- Do not confuse love with giving into whatever they say they want. Don't give in to them because you feel guilty.
- Keep a sense of humor. Don't use sarcasm or mean teasing. It hurts their self-esteem.

Instead of saying: "I'm sick of you always being irresponsible."

Try saying: "I love you. It's your behavior I don't like."

Instead of saying: "You spend too much time with your friends."

Try saying: "I enjoy your company and want you to spend some time with me."

Instead of saying: "You'll do it because I said so."

Try saying: "You've given me your point of view and I've given you mine. I made the decision that I think is best for you because I love you."

Instead of saying: "I hate you, too."

Try saying: "I love you and it hurts when you tell me you hate me. I can't accept that kind of talk from you."

Be there for young adults. It can make a real difference.

Reference: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (1998, August). *Strong school, family ties protect teens from violence, drugs, suicide, and early sex. Research on Today's Issues*, Iss. #8, p. 1.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Office for Family, Youth, & School Success (OFYSS). (n.d.). *Tips on raising your preteens and teens: Telling your teen you love them*. Retrieved July 16, 2008, from <http://www.health.state.ri.us/>

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