



PRESBYTERIAN
SENIOR LIVING

GUIDE FOR SANDWICH GENERATION CAREGIVERS

Tips for Preventing Caregiver Burnout During the Winter



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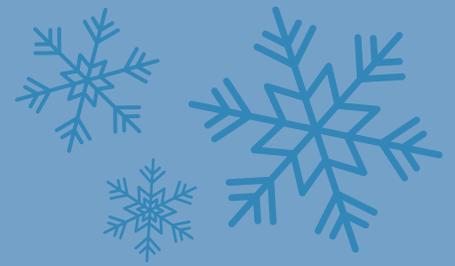
INTRODUCTION

Caregiving for a loved one can be one of life's most meaningful and rewarding experiences. But for members of the sandwich generation—those who are simultaneously caring for their aging parents and raising their own children—it can also be one of the most demanding times in their lives. Balancing all of these responsibilities, many times alongside a career, can be a struggle. It frequently brings emotional strain, financial pressure, and time constraints that leave family caregivers feeling stretched thin and coping with mental or physical wellness challenges of their own. Winter can add an extra layer of stress and anxiety.

IN THIS GUIDE

This guide provides practical strategies, emotional support, and useful resources to help you navigate the unique challenges of sandwich generation caregiving. Whether you're arranging medical appointments for a parent while managing your teenager's busy schedule, or simply trying to find a few moments of peace in a packed day, this guide offers tools to help you care for others without losing sight of your own well-being.

Who is Considered Part of the Sandwich Generation?



Many people have heard this phrase but may not be quite sure what it means. We'll begin by explaining it in more detail, and then share a profile of who typically finds themselves in this situation.

• What does the term *sandwich generation caregiver* mean?

The phrase *sandwich generation caregiver* is used to describe an adult who is simultaneously caring for their own children and for their aging parents (or another relative or a friend). They're "sandwiched" between two generations that depend on them.

With people living longer and having children later in life, more families are finding themselves in this situation. The emotional, financial, and time pressures that sandwich generation caregivers face can be overwhelming.

• You are not alone: statistics on sandwich generation caregivers

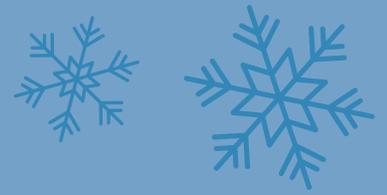
To give you a broader picture of what sandwich generation caregiving looks like, here are some statistics:

- [According to Pew Research Center](#), about 23% of adults in this country fall into the category of sandwich generation caregiver.
- Adults in their forties are most likely to be filling this dual role, with 54% of them taking it on. For those in their fifties, the number falls to 36%.
- Family caregiving generally falls on the women in the family. [Research shows](#) about 57% of them have had to cut back on work hours or take a temporary leave of absence from their job. That can create long-term financial setbacks.

While it's easy to see that being sandwiched between two generations of your family can be stressful, it's important to know that the strain of caregiving can also lead to much more serious health issues. So, let's take a closer look at what caregiver burnout is and how to recognize it.



What Is Caregiver Burnout?



Understanding caregiver burnout and its warning signs can help sandwich generation family members avoid a health crisis of their own. Here's what people should know.

• Defining caregiver burnout

Caregiver burnout refers to a state of physical, emotional, or mental exhaustion that develops from the prolonged stress of caregiving. It often happens when people devote so much energy to others that they neglect their own needs. It can lead to overwhelming fatigue and reduced ability to provide effective care. Unfortunately, [caregiver burnout can also cause](#) health conditions ranging from headaches and back injuries to depression and hypertension.

The most common causes of caregiver burnout include:

- Lack of personal time or social support
- Unrealistic expectations of oneself (“I should be able to do it all”)
- Financial stress related to sandwich generation caregiving
- Progression of the senior’s illness, especially dementia

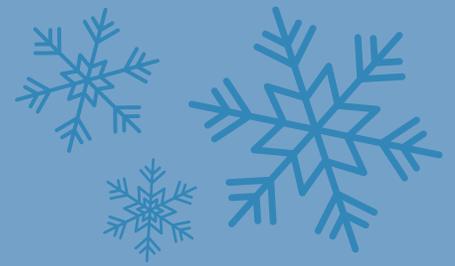
• Recognizing the signs of caregiver burnout

It's important to learn to recognize the signs of caregiver overwhelm before a crisis occurs. While the symptoms of an overwhelmed caregiver can vary, some of the most common red flags are:

- Tiredness or exhaustion that doesn't improve with sleep
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, or being trapped
- Withdrawal from friends, family, and once-enjoyable activities
- Irritability, anxiety, or anger
- New sleep problems (too much or too little)
- Loss of appetite or unintended change in weight
- Frequent illnesses due to weakened immunity



Is Caregiver Burnout More Common in the Winter?



Without a doubt, winter can be a tough time of year for many people, even those who aren't caregivers. But when you are caring for others, especially seniors with mobility challenges or dementia, the dreary days and inclement weather can have a significant impact on your mental and physical well-being.

• **Seasonal factors that influence caregiver burnout**

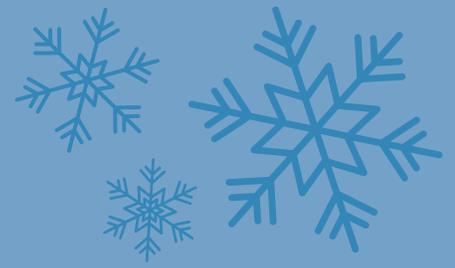
Some of the factors that can contribute to caregiver burnout in the winter include:

- **Reduced sunlight exposure:** Shorter days and less sunlight can lead to a case of the winter blues or even a more serious cause of seasonal affective disorder (SAD).
- **Cold weather:** Chilly temperatures and travel hazards can leave a sandwich generation caregiver stuck at home more. Being isolated for weeks or months on end can lead to sadness and depression.
- **Illnesses:** Winter brings with it a higher risk for illness. Colds, flus, and other viruses tend to make the rounds when the temperature drops.
- **Post-holiday blues:** It's a tough reality for family caregivers—after the hustle and bustle of family gatherings and other festivities, the cold, gray days of winter can be cheerless and long.

If you are an adult trying to support and care for both the older and younger generations of your family, taking good care of yourself during the winter months is vital.



Steps to Prevent Caregiver Burnout this Winter



Here are a few ways you might be able avoid feeling overwhelmed and worn out this winter.

• **Prioritize self-care**

Taking time for yourself might seem like a luxury, but it's crucial to realize just how essential it is to your ability to continue caregiving. Remember, letting caregiver fatigue turn into a more serious case of burnout can impact your own health and wellness. And preventing problems is far easier than recovering from a serious health condition. If you are sidelined from an injury or illness, you'll be scrambling to find ways to keep all of your responsibilities covered. That's why you should prioritize:



- **Sleep:** Both the quality and the duration of sleep are vital. When you get rest, you'll make better choices, including eating balanced meals and avoiding unhealthy habits, such as smoking or overconsuming alcohol.
- **Nutrition:** Eating well can be a challenge when you are busy. Try to find shortcuts to maintaining a healthy diet, such as home-delivered meal kits, grocery delivery services, and local restaurants that offer healthy takeout options.
- **Regular exercise:** Staying active promotes both physical and mental health. Even 15 minutes of walking most days of the week will help.
- **Sunlight:** Getting sunlight exposure provides the spirit with a boost while also helping the body produce vitamin D. That is important for bone health and energy.

- **Stay connected to friends/family**

Maintaining your personal relationships is another way you can help prevent a case of sandwich generation burnout this winter. If your duties make it tough to meet in person as often as you'd like, take advantage of video chat services and social media platforms.

- **Ask for and accept help**

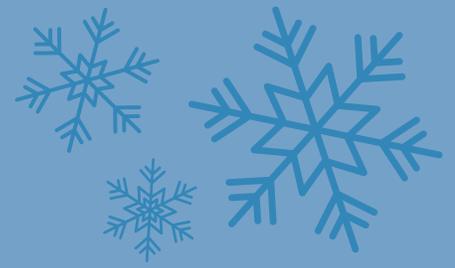
Caregivers often have a tough time asking for and accepting help. They may feel as if it is their responsibility to do it all for the people they love. Unfortunately, that's not a realistic or healthy expectation.

Instead, consider where and how you can have others assist. Think in very specific terms. Some examples might include:

- **Childcare:** Seek support with tasks related to your children/teens, such as taking them to and from school activities.
- **Respite services:** Utilize professional or informal respite services.
- **In-home services:** Consider using in-home services such as pharmacies, home health staff, groceries, and meals.



Is It Time for a Move to a Life Plan Community?



For many family members, there comes a time when trying to juggle all the demands of sandwich generation caregiving becomes unmanageable. There will likely be signs that both the caregiver and the aging parent(s) can benefit from exploring other options.

[Life Plan Communities](#) are an increasingly popular option for older adults and their families. They offer a full continuum of care on one campus. If you aren't familiar with how they improve quality of life for seniors and their family caregiver, here are a few factors to consider.



- **Benefits of assisted living or memory care**

The benefits of assisted living are numerous. Some of the leading ones are:

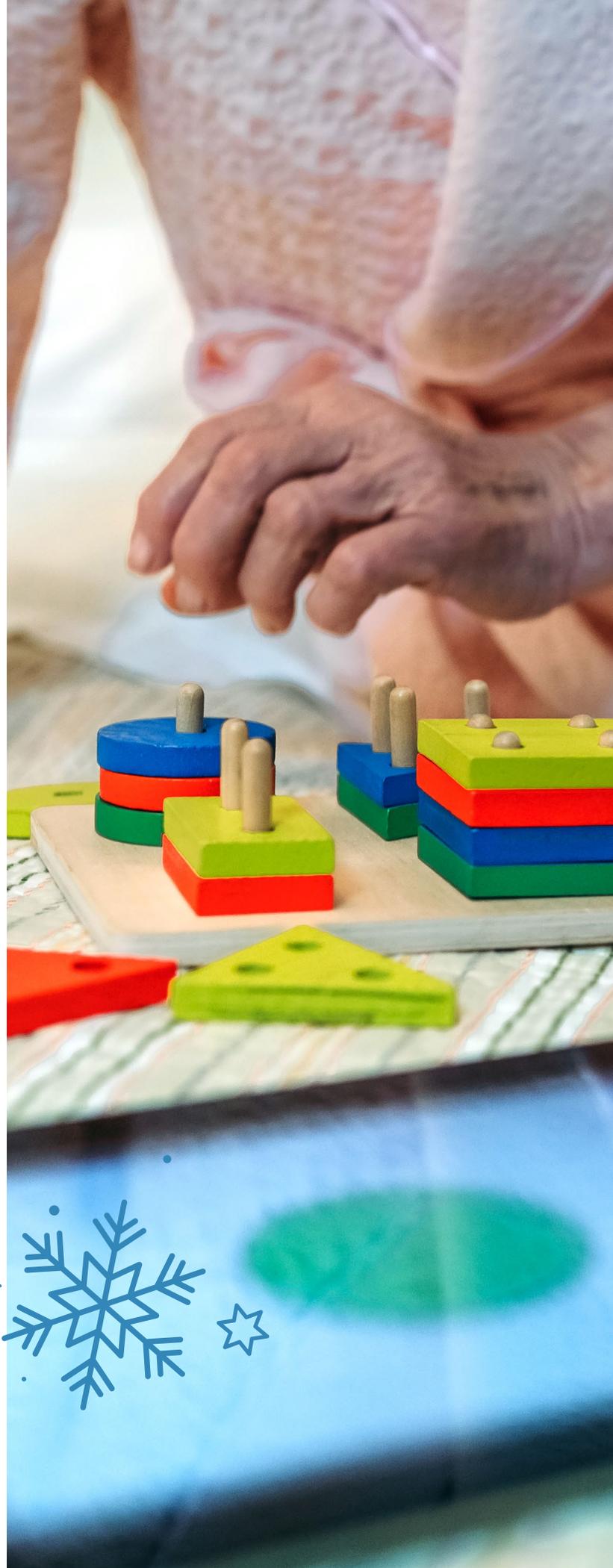
- **Nutrition:** Healthy meals, including an ability to accommodate special diets
- **Independence and support:** Apartments or suites that promote independence while also having caregivers on-site 24/7
- **Safety:** An environment with features designed to support safety, such as handrails, barrier-free showers, and accessible doorways
- **Activities:** A variety of social activities and wellness programs that appeal to different interests and abilities
- **Caregiver assistance:** A team of professional caregivers that helps with everything from personal care to medication management



If a loved one has Alzheimer's or another form of dementia, a specialized memory care program works with each resident's abilities to create an individualized plan of care. Dining services, for example, can prepare meals that are easier to eat for residents with dexterity issues. And memory care areas of a life plan community are safe and secure. Family members will have peace of mind that their loved one won't wander away and become lost.

• **Senior living as a solution for caregiver burnout**

While it can be difficult for a sandwich generation caregiver to accept, the demands of this role are tough to keep up with on a long-term basis. When a parent or other senior loved one makes a move to a life plan community, the hands-on support they receive will allow you to truly enjoy your time together. Instead of running errands or tending to their household chores, you can take in a movie or play a board game during your visit. You'll have a chance to build memories with all three generations of your family.



Conclusion

Beginning the search for care for an aging parent or other family member can be confusing and overwhelming, especially when your schedule is already hectic. To help you explore the many choices available for a senior loved one's care, we encourage you to read [Comprehensive Guide to Senior Living Options, Lifestyle and Community](#). It covers every level of care in detail.

And if you have questions or are ready to begin touring communities in person, we invite you to call a PSL location near you to set up a time!

[View Our
Community List](#)



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