



Sandwich Generation
Family Caregiver Guide





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SUMMARY

What is aging in place?

AGING IN PLACE

DEFINED BY THE **CENTERS FOR
DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION (CDC)**

The ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level.

The majority of older adults wish to age in their home and community, and will likely need help from family caregivers to do so.



Here are some common terms and definitions:

Activities of Daily Living (ADL): 6 self-care activities that people do on a daily basis to maintain independence and health, including bathing, dressing, eating, toileting, transferring, and continence.

Accessibility: A term that describes the usability of a product or service by people with disabilities.

Companion Care: This is a type of care that includes supportive conversation, planning social outings, and encouraging light exercise. This allows you to make meaningful connections around the things that personally bring you or your loved one pleasure and joy.

Personal Care: This means providing personal assistance with daily tasks like bathing and dressing, support with housekeeping, and errand and transportation services.

Person-Centered Care: Health care services delivered in a setting and manner that is responsive to individuals and their goals, values, and preferences, in a system that supports good provider–patient communication and empowers individuals receiving care and providers to make effective care plans together.

THE LANDSCAPE OF
Aging in Place

US demographic shifts are changing our population makeup, making long-term care services more important than ever before.



10,000

MEMBERS OF THE
BABY BOOMER GENERATION
ARE TURNING 65 EVERY DAY

+ 70%

OF THEM HAVE A CHANCE OF
NEEDING SOME FORM OF
LONG-TERM CARE*

** At their home or a senior living community*



93%

OF ADULTS 55+
RANKED **AGING IN PLACE**
AS AN IMPORTANT GOAL



WHICH CREATES AN OPPORTUNITY
FOR YOU TO HELP THEM
ACHIEVE THAT GOAL

By preparing ahead of time and understanding

- What needs to be done
- What your parents want

This means it's better to start that conversation sooner rather than later. We'll guide you on this and more.

A photograph of two women sitting on a green couch, embracing each other warmly. They are both smiling and looking towards each other. The woman on the left is wearing a light-colored button-down shirt, and the woman on the right is wearing an orange top. The background is dark and out of focus.

Who are family caregivers?

More than 53 million Americans are providing unpaid care to a loved one. Are you among this group?

The average family caregiver is a 49-year-old woman caring for someone who is over the age of 69. Caregivers who spend more than 20 hours a week on care tasks are more likely to be caring for their spouse.

In terms of tasks, here is a list of what family caregivers do:

- Errands and transportation
- Meal preparation
- Light housekeeping
- Laundry
- Dressing
- Grooming
- Walking
- Bathing
- Toileting assistance

Over time, family members have taken on more tasks, including medical or skilled services, like medication administration and infusions. More Americans have stepped up to take care of their parents, and Jason Resendez, CEO of the National Alliance for Caregiving summed it up: “America has become a nation of caregivers.”

This is the result of a number of factors, including:

The US is an aging nation.

Americans ages 65 and older will more than double over the next 40 years, reaching 80 million in 2040. Other age groups aren’t keeping pace.

Millennials and Gen-Z are delaying having children. These dueling forces mean that there will be more people over the age of 65 and fewer individuals younger than 18, increasing the overall dependence of older adults on working age groups.



What is the sandwich generation?

The Sandwich Generation consists of people who are balancing the responsibilities of caring for children and parents. This compounding of responsibilities creates unique challenges (and opportunities) to engage and support one's family.

As Baby Boomers continue to turn 65 and older, they will need more care from their support networks, including family. The Sandwich Generation is a select group of family caregivers that encompasses those who are caring for children and parents. This applies mostly to adults between the ages of 40-49 and in general, 23% of all adults.

If you are a member of the Sandwich Generation, you might be familiar with the following:

- Facing challenges trying to do it all at once
- Struggling to find time for yourself
- Having a hard time staying focused at work
- Feeling overwhelmed by competing responsibilities
- Trying to balance relationships with a variety of people who might not understand caregiving
- Coping with unique family circumstances, dynamics, and distribution of labor

Remember, there is no perfect or ideal situation. We prepared this guide to help you navigate this journey as smoothly as possible.

How to prepare before caregiving starts?

Caregiving can be an unexpected and uncomfortable conversation and experience, but these effects can be limited with preparation and understanding of your support/resources available.

Here are four best practices:

1 TAKE SOME TIME TO INVENTORY YOUR PARENT'S NEEDS

Before your loved ones need any type of assistance like transportation or personal care, walk through their home and see if there's anything that can be changed or modified. This could mean adding grab bars in the shower or be something as specific as writing down songs and recipes they like.





If they do need help with day-to-day tasks, picture their entire circle of support and what resources are available. Here is a starting point:

- Home modifications
- Tasks your loved one needs help with
- Medication list
- Doctor(s) and medical team contact information
- Review insurance plans for coverage

Once you have this list, you can proactively identify solutions that they may need down the road.

For example, Long Term Care Insurance coverage generally kicks in when someone needs assistance with two or more activities of daily living. That can include bathing, incontinence care, dressing, eating, toileting (getting on or off the toilet), and transferring (getting in or out of a bed/chair).

Planning ahead and knowing what's at your disposal can provide peace of mind as your loved one's needs change.

2 HAVE THE CONVERSATION ABOUT CARE & WHAT YOUR PARENTS WANT AHEAD OF TIME

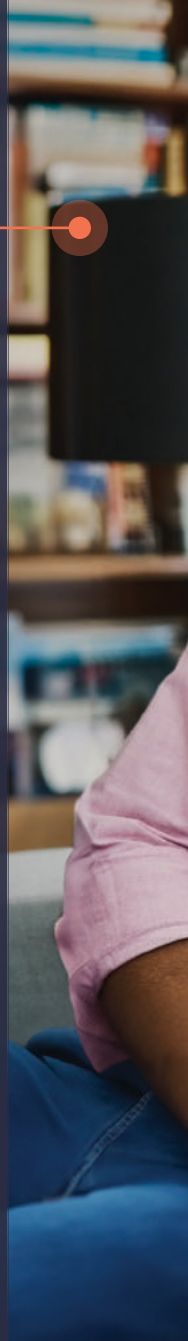
With most older adults preferring to stay in their own home (over living in a community or nursing home), families should start the conversation before a medical event triggers in-the-moment decisions.

These conversations should occur at home when everyone is relatively healthy and able to share their thoughts on what is important and how to prioritize needs. Here are a few tips:

LEAD WITH LOVE. Saying "I love and respect you, so let's discuss the best options that will allow you to safely stay at home. I know you will continue to thrive by living in the home you love," is a great place to begin.

FOCUS ON YOUR PARENTS' QUALITY OF LIFE. Let them know you're there to protect their independence.

SHARE RESOURCES. Third-party information is a good source of preparedness, and can help to jumpstart the conversation with your parents. Articles, magazines, and social media are a few places to start.





HERE ARE SOME CONVERSATION STARTERS YOU CAN USE:

- "Can I get your opinion on a couple of things, Mom?"
- "I heard of a service that can send a person to help with light housekeeping for seniors. What do you think of this idea?"
- "Dad, I'm really worried about you falling on the stairs; you've tripped a couple of times. How can I help keep you safe?"
- "Mom, can we spend five minutes jotting down ideas about getting someone else to do some work in the house?"

Family caregiving is a potentially long-term commitment, and to lessen the impacts, it is important to arm yourself with information and what your parents want.



3 WRITE DOWN EVERYTHING YOUR PARENTS NEED ASSISTANCE WITH

This makes it easy to visualize, automate, delegate to a family member, or decide when to bring in additional resources. From tasks like bringing in the mail to assisting your loved one in and out of the shower, it all counts.

It might also be helpful to note what they can do well so that you and others don't over-compensate for their strengths. Maintaining independence and a sense of purpose is key to maintaining their routine and reduces the likelihood of isolation and loneliness.



4

COMMUNICATE ABOUT YOUR ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITH OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

There is no universal journey for family caregivers; everyone's path is different. Your roles as a parent and child create opportunities and challenges as care needs change. You might work full-time now and decrease your hours as your parents need more help. Others might look for a local home care agency to supplement the care they provide.

Communicate frequently with your family (and other people involved) about what you can do, and what your limits are. Your schedule and ability to help with bathing and dressing might change. Planning ahead with your care team makes that transition easier. This could be as easy as a monthly email, phone call, or even a text message in a group chat.

Caring for a loved one

Over 53 million people are caring for a loved one in the US. Taking care of those who cared for us can be an extremely rewarding experience. If you're at this stage with your loved ones, we are here to support you every step of the way. Caregiving can become challenging, but we've prepared some tips to help you manage:

ESTABLISH & MAINTAIN A ROUTINE

The best way to help your loved one with tasks while maintaining their independence and dignity is to stick to a routine. If your mom gets her hair done every Tuesday, make sure she's able to get to the salon on Tuesdays as much as possible.

KEEP A MEDICATION LIST & WHAT THEY'RE USED FOR

Medication lists are an important part of keeping your loved one safe and healthy. Almost half of older adults take 5 or more prescriptions a day, and that can be a lot to keep track of on their own.

On top of having the list itself, read the label more closely and jot down what each medication is used for (especially if you attend medical appointments with your loved one).



EVALUATE THE HOME FOR SAFETY

Results from a survey showed that the largest share of homes were built between 1900-1945. Regardless of what year your loved one's home was built in, make sure to evaluate the home for safety. The three most important places to look for home hazards are the kitchen, bathroom, and stairs.

- Make sure that any fall hazards are removed. Loose carpets, for example, should be secured with rug tape or removed.
- If your loved one has limited mobility, see if they can have a ramped entryway (instead of stairs) installed to make it easier to get in and out.
- In the bathroom, grab bars, shower chairs, and no-slip mats are three things that can reduce your loved one's risk of fall and injury.

ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR LOVED ONE'S CARE CONTEXT

It's important at this point to acknowledge your loved one's limitations, trauma, culture, and habits to capture how that will affect the care they want. Each piece impacts how you provide care and how others will provide care to them.

Major declines aren't inevitable with age. Your loved one's ability to do certain things may require adaptations or modifications. By not holding yourself responsible for their health status, you can focus on what you can control and make an impact on. This type of grounding and context helps to set realistic goals and expectations of what you can handle.

CHALLENGES THAT FAMILY CAREGIVERS FACE (AND HOW TO GET AHEAD OF THEM)

For Sandwich Generation caregivers, you balance being a parent to your children while tending to your parents' needs. That's no easy feat! But you can do it with the right support system in place.

1. Caregiving impacts your relationship with your children, and spouse/partner.

This underscores the importance of open discussions and making time for yourself/your family. Rather than separating time for yourself from caregiving, position it as a part of your caregiving responsibilities. This will help you set a manageable schedule that meets your loved one's needs while being considerate to the rest of your family.

2. Caregiving, of course, impacts your parents.

When you start caring for them, think about what you need to be successful. This could mean that your loved one needs to trust you to make decisions on their behalf and be accepting of your support. Or, maybe you need to specify when you're talking to them as their adult child versus caregiver. These considerations will help you maintain a healthy relationship with your parents as their needs change.

3. Caregiving impacts your career and self.

Many family caregivers decrease their hours or leave jobs to meet the needs of those they care for. See if you can meet with someone in HR to discuss how they can make your situation less stressful. That could mean remote/flex work or partially paid caregiving benefits. Taking time for yourself is one of the best ways to get a break from

your responsibilities and focus on caring for yourself. Remember, you can't pour from an empty cup. Pour back into yourself too.

4. Caregiving also creates challenges in how you maintain roles and boundaries.

According to recent research, 20% of family caregivers report that caregiving has negatively affected their physical health. Others report its impact on mental health and burnout. Caregiving is hard sometimes, but burnout doesn't have to happen to you. Caregiver burnout boils down to the role or identity conflict, between what an adult child does and what a caregiver does. The compounding of these roles can create challenges. Communicate early and often with your loved one and family, about what you are comfortable doing, what resources or support you need, and most importantly, how you're doing.

"There are a lot of emotions associated with caregiving, shared Dr. Macie Smith, a licensed gerontology social worker. "There are 7 common emotions associated with caregiving, including: anger, resentment, guilt, sadness, grief, worry, and loneliness." Whether you have none or all of these, give yourself the space to feel. If you're happy with where your loved one is at in their journey, take time to celebrate that. If you're also sad, describe what's making you feel that way and give yourself time to feel it.

If what you're doing is not working or requires additional support, it is important to understand what types of care resources may be available in your community.



THE

Care Continuum

Did you know that only about 2.3% of the country's seniors live in nursing homes? Many of us worry that it's inevitable to end up living in a nursing home, and that's not the case for most older adults.

ELDER CARE OPTIONS:

FAMILY CAREGIVING

A type of care where family members (generally unpaid) support their loved ones at home or in a community.

PROFESSIONAL IN-HOME CARE

From companionship to around-the-clock care, in-home care services—like SYNERGY HomeCare—enable your elder loved one to confidently age in place in the familiarity and comfort of their own home.

RESPIRE CARE

A type of care that allows family caregivers to take a break while maintaining peace of mind that their loved one is cared for by trusted professionals.

SENIOR LIVING

The range of senior living options is larger than ever. The role of a family caregiver continues, no matter where home is for the person they care for.

HERE IS AN OUTLINE OF WHAT THE CARE CONTINUUM LOOKS LIKE:

Active adult (or 55+ community)

Independent living community

Adult day facility

Assisted living facility

Memory care facility

Skilled nursing home

Hospice home

There is another type, a Continuum of Care Retirement Community (CCRC). That's when there is more than one care type under one roof, like independent and assisted living.

Remember: Home care can be provided wherever your loved one calls home, whether that's in their original home, a hospital, or a community.

There's no linear journey when it comes to the care continuum, your loved one might stay at home for their entire life and move into a memory care community. The part of this journey that matters most is that you'll travel together as a family, and we're here to move you forward every step of the way.



Being a family caregiver
is a special and unique journey.
You don't have to do this alone.

Our parents go through challenges as they get older, but we can stay on top of things with proper planning and communication.

As a family caregiver in the Sandwich Generation, staying informed can help you balance your day-to-day responsibilities. From understanding the needs that older adults need as they age, how to prepare for caregiving, and your options, you can make the right choices for your family and yourself.

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