



# NOTHING TO DO WITH KIDS

*Taking time for ourselves*

## *The Sandwich Generation*

The term sandwich generation is used to describe those individuals sandwiched like a slice of ham between the care demands of their aging parents and those of their own children. Statistics Canada reports that the number of Canadians over age 45 providing care for aging parents is increasing dramatically.

Yet people have been caring for their elders for centuries—so how is the situation any different now than it has been in the past? For one thing, people are living longer and requiring care for longer periods of time. Improvements in medical science have increased life expectancy. They have also increased the length of time people can live with a debilitating illness before death. In Canada, the average life expectancy is 78 years old. Only 50 years ago it was 69. Even parents whose children are grown can end up in the sandwich generation if “boomerang” children move back home after divorce or job loss.

### Tips for “Gen-S”

- Take care of yourself and do what you need to do to stay healthy. Heavily stressed individuals are less effective and less efficient.
- Be practical. Don’t overload yourself emotionally, physically or financially.
- Take time to be with the important people in your life.
- Go on a date with your partner.

- Watch out for signs of burn-out and depression.
- Consider seeking counselling if you have symptoms of depression. Be aware of increased use of medication or self-medication through alcohol.
- Make caring for your parent a responsibility for the whole family; hold a family meeting to discuss caregiving. Make a list of all responsibilities required, then discuss who might do what tasks.
- Accept help from extended family, friends and neighbors. It is very easy to say “no” when others offer to assist you. If they are not offering something helpful, make a suggestion of what they can do to help. They truly want to help and sometimes they don’t know how.
- Become an expert. Learn as much about the medical condition you are dealing with as you can.
- Tap into the many resources out there to help.

If you know someone who is caught in the sandwich generation, the best thing to do is offer him or her support and help. They need to have some of the pressure taken off. They need solitude, space, and appreciation from both generations. They need time to do the things they want to do.

*Derek Scott is a London psychotherapist in private practice with over 25 years experience in the field. His biggest challenge is explaining what he does to his five year old daughter. If you can help, please visit him at [www.yourtherapist.org](http://www.yourtherapist.org).*



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