



# *The "Sandwich Generation": Taking Care of the Caregiver*

by Donna S. Freeman

**A**re you a member of the "Sandwich Generation"—those who find themselves responsible for the care of both their children and their aging parents? If this describes you, are you completely exhausted? In order to be an effective caregiver, and not burn out, you need to make sure you provide yourself with some good, old TLC as well.

Maybe professional in-home care for your loved one isn't affordable, or it may simply not be an arrangement that is acceptable. You may not want to relinquish those duties to someone else. Many seniors find themselves feeling helpless and vulnerable, and may feel safer in the care of a relative. Many levels of need may arise when seniors are unable to drive, walk without support, prepare meals, feed themselves, or do housecleaning. They may experience periods of depression.

The following may help you survive being a caregiver:

## *Quiet Time*

Take 10 minutes of quiet time every day—no radio, no voices, no television, no disturbances. You will be amazed at the rejuvenation you feel after this short break. Take time to pamper yourself. A warm bath, manicure or a massage from time-to-time will do wonders for you.

## *Eat Healthfully*

Eating well will increase your energy levels so you can continue to provide assistance. Spinach, yogurt, fish (especially salmon), lean meats and poultry, fresh fruits and vegetables, and walnuts and almonds all support lasting energy.

## *Get Sleep*

A caregiver cannot function properly, or coherently, without enough rest. Try to get at least seven or eight hours of sleep each night.

## *Exercise*

Physical activity is an important element in feeling better, enhancing stamina and relieving stress. If you cannot get to a gym, walk indoors, outdoors, or in a local mall. Do simple floor exercises at home.

## *Spend Time Away with Friends*

Do not deprive yourself of enjoyable interaction with those who are meaningful in your life. Know your limits. Be realis-

tic about how much time you can devote as a caregiver, and don't be afraid to delegate.

## *Enjoy a Hobby*

Something as simple as completing a crossword puzzle can be mentally stimulating. Knitting, crocheting, needlework, puzzles, reading, crafts, etc., can be done while on duty. Watching television is not a hobby.

## *Get Fresh Air*

Activities outdoors on good weather days can be uplifting. Have a picnic or enjoy walks alone or with your parent. It will be good for both of you.

## *Take a Vacation*

Get away for four to seven days without your parent. You may have to pay for dependable help while you are away, but the respite will be worth it.

## *Join a Support Group*

Seek support through your church or community. They may also be a good source of volunteer caregiving help.

## *Invest in a 24-Hour Monitoring Service*

For your peace of mind and your parent's safety, invest in a 24-hour monitoring system that will notify you if your parent falls or roams away from home.

Finances may be an additional worry. Investigate your options. If your parent is a veteran, or a widow of a veteran, he or she may be eligible for financial assistance programs offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Your parent's company from which he or she retired may provide employee assistance programs, which may also help with recovery from an accident or illness. There are some respite programs offered by the Alzheimer's Association and the Central Midlands Council of Governments that may help. Planning ahead, long-term care insurance pays for home care assistance. And, Medicaid benefits may provide some paid hours per week.

The full-time care of a senior can be fatiguing. Be good to yourself at every possible turn.

For more info, contact Donna S. Freeman at Comfort Keepers, 803-739-4442, or email [wcolumbia@comfortkeepers.com](mailto:wcolumbia@comfortkeepers.com).