

Preventing Stress & Burnout: The Sandwich Generation & Caregiving

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The Sandwich

- Trying to be “all things to all people”
- Juggling conflicting roles
 - Demands of work
 - Responsibilities at home
 - Obligations with friends and community



Sandwich “Spreads”

- Children at home
- Boomerang children
- Spouse/partner
- Aging or disabled siblings
- Aging or disabled parents

By the Numbers

In reality, more productivity is lost from employees having to fulfill elder/parent care responsibilities than for child care ones.

Some studies indicate lost productivity and additional health costs amount to \$25,000 per caregiver employee.



Baby Boomers, the country's largest population segment, are the heart of the sandwich generation and are also known as the "silver tsunami"

In 2012, 28% of Canadians provided care to a family member or friend with a long-term health condition, disability or aging needs.

Who is in Charge?

When you become a caregiver to a parent:

- Doesn't seem natural or feel right
- Cultural expectations
- Very complicated due to
 - your past relationship with your parent
 - their current medical and mental status

Making Tough Decisions

Do I take a leave of absence from work to stay home and care for my loved one?



What are my parent's medical and financial resources?

How will caring for my loved one effect my family?

How will we be able to afford skilled medical care?

Compassion Fatigue or Burnout

- Simply ... It means you care!
- Symptoms
 - Post traumatic stress
 - Diminishing empathy
 - Emotional disengagement
- It's a normal and to be expected response to caring for others
- Unchecked, can lead to physical and mental illnesses, including depression

The ABC's of Combating Compassion Fatigue

A Definition:

Compassion fatigue is exactly what the word says it is: fatigued compassion that arises from helpers' exposure to others' suffering or trauma



Beware the Warning Signs:

The *warning signs* of compassion fatigue include, but are not limited to:

- loss of sense of humour or hope
- emotional numbness
- incivility / emotional reactivity (compulsive or impulsive reactions to perceived threats)
- difficulty relaxing
- difficulty separating work from personal life
- lowered frustration tolerance / increased outbursts of anger or rage
- negative changes in worldview - tendency to see the world as an unsafe place
- overuse of alcohol or other drugs, compulsive spending/exercising/eating, etc.
- decreased feelings of work competence
- diminished sense of purpose/enjoyment in career
- diminished functioning in nonprofessional areas of life (e.g. marriage, parenting, etc.)
- silencing response (consciously or unconsciously preventing others from sharing painful information with you because you just can't bear to hear it anymore)
- feeling depressed

Any one of these warning signs could indicate the presence of compassion fatigue.

Create Coping Skills:

Compassion fatigue *resiliency skills* can be developed in each of the following areas:

- ***Self-regulation***: learning to control the activity and intensity of our fight/flight/freeze response.
- ***Intentionality***: learning to respond intentionally (vs. reacting compulsively or impulsively), in keeping with our personal values and beliefs, in response to perceived threats.
- ***Maturing perceptions***: learning to shift the degree of perceived threat we see in our environment.
- ***Connection and support***: developing an environment or network where we feel supported, heard and cared about by colleagues.
- ***Self-care and revitalization***: becoming stronger and more mature so we are not diminished by witnessing and absorbing the pain of those for whom we care.

Sandwich Generation Self-care



Finding Time for You



Creative Problem Solving



Don't Forget About Your Partner

One of the first
“casualties” of
caregiving is
intimacy.



Breathe



Eat Well

Foods to Avoid

- Energy Drinks
- Spicy Foods
- Candy & Sweets
- Alcohol
- Coffee Drinks
- Processed Foods

Foods to Eat

- Asparagus
- Avocados
- Berries
- Cashews
- Chamomile tea
- Oatmeal
- Oysters

Stay Connected

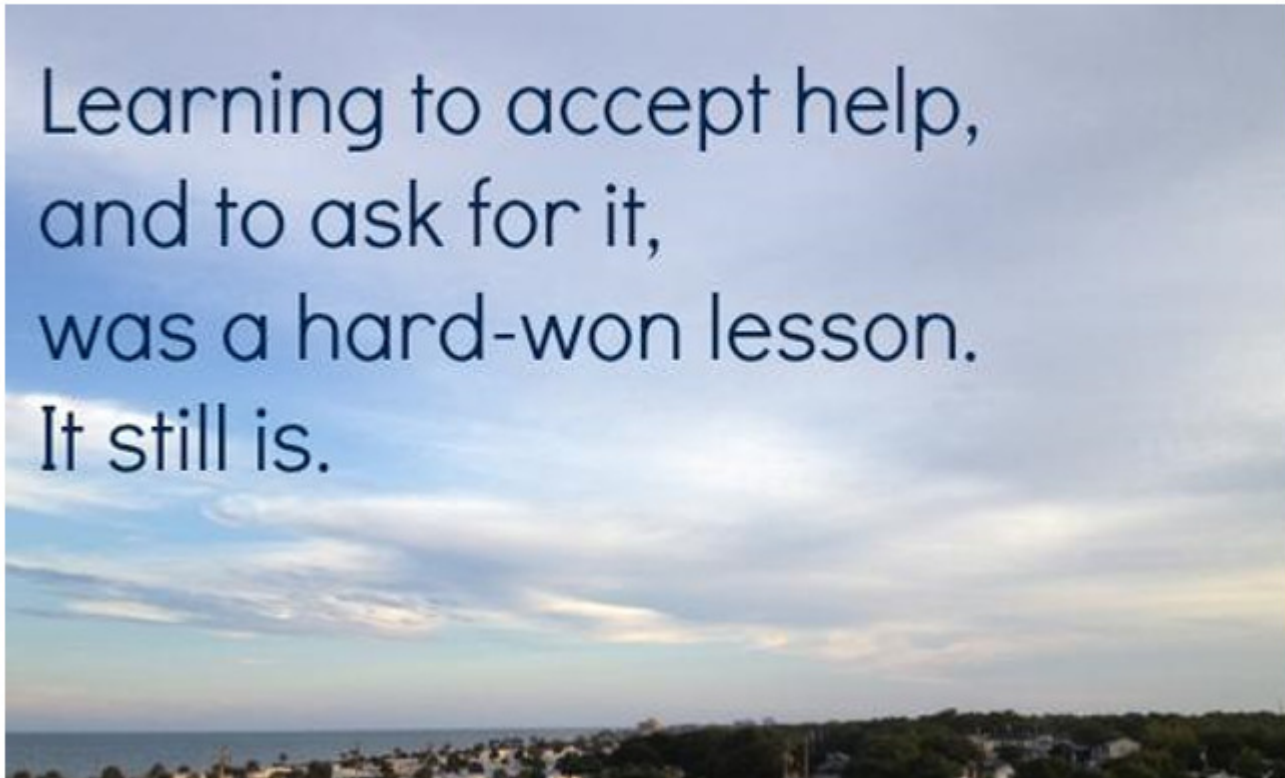


Get Moving!



Ask For and Accept Help

Learning to accept help,
and to ask for it,
was a hard-won lesson.
It still is.



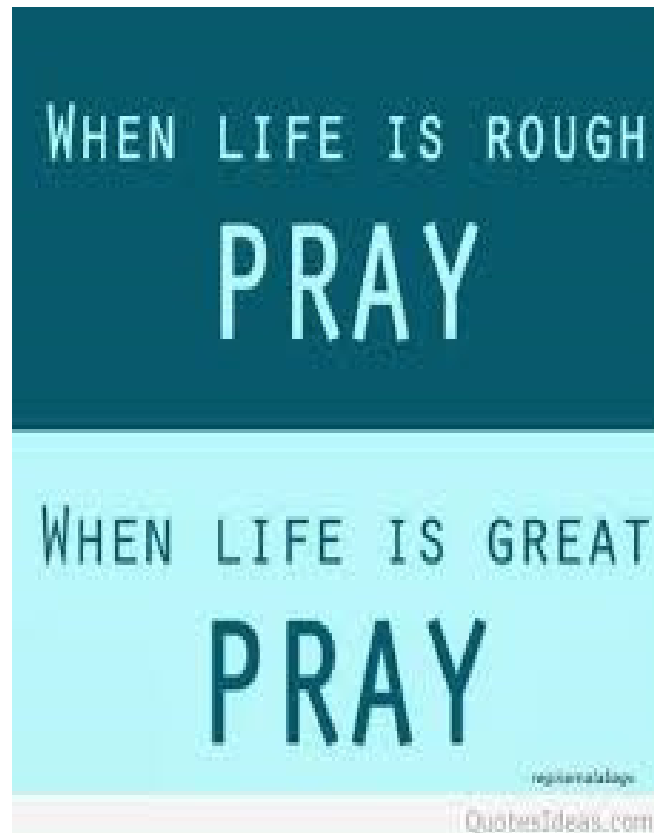
Laughter as Medicine



Adults Need Play, Too!



In Closing ...



*God grant me
the serenity
to accept the things
I cannot change —
the courage
to change the things
I can —
And the wisdom to know
the difference —*