

**Abstract:** The “sandwich generation” includes people who are caught between caring for their aging parents and still raising or helping their children. This brief article encourages those in the middle part of the sandwich to initiate family discussions with the other two parts to discuss tax and financial planning issues.

## Talking about the “sandwich generation”

The term “sandwich generation” was originally coined to describe baby boomers caught between caring for their aging parents and their children. These days the term applies to whichever generation is grappling with the problem. If you’re in the middle of the sandwich, it may be time for some honest discussions with the other parties about pressing issues.

It’s a good idea to start the talks with the “bottom” of the sandwich: your children. Assuming they’re still in their formative years, make them your top priority. At this stage, you’ll still have most of the control over decisions that affect their lives. These involve personal choices that are different for every family.

The “top” half of the sandwich can be more problematic. Depending on their health status, finances and other factors, your parents may not welcome assistance. They may be dismissive of your concerns and may display attitudes ranging from cooperative to highly resistant.

To initiate a family meeting, invite all the key players — your parents, siblings, their spouses if appropriate and, possibly, others. Generally, it’s best to hold such a meeting face-to-face. But if distance or other factors make this unrealistic, an online video chat might work as well.

What should you discuss? Cover the entire tax and financial planning gamut. The dialogue should be frank and honest. Many issues can be sensitive and emotions may run high. So be prepared for some handwringing or pushback.

You may find that one session isn’t enough to accomplish your objectives. In fact, you might discover a need to include additional family members to resolve the issues. You may even want to broaden the circle to include your CPA or attorney.