

**Abstract:** The term “sandwich generation” was coined to describe baby boomers caught between caring for their aging parents and their children. The term now applies to whichever generation is grappling with the problem, today most commonly Generation Xers and older Millennials. For those in the middle of the sandwich, it may be time for honest discussions about pressing issues with the other parties.

## **Stuck in the Middle: Life in the Sandwich Generation**

The term “sandwich generation” was coined to describe baby boomers caught between caring for their aging parents and their children. The term now applies to whichever generation is grappling with the problem, today most commonly Generation Xers and older Millennials. If you’re in the middle of the sandwich, it may be time for honest discussions about pressing issues. These may involve financial matters, such as funding children’s higher education and paying for a parent’s long-term care.

Start with the “bottom” of the sandwich: your children. What’s appropriate to discuss with them will depend on their age. If they’re still minors, you’ll have most of the control over their significant decisions. By the time kids are in high school, you should be discussing their post-graduation plans and the extent to which you’ll be able to fund college or help with other financial needs.

The “top” half of the sandwich can be more challenging. Depending on their health status, finances and other factors, your parents may not welcome your involvement in their decision-making. They might minimize or dismiss your concerns and be highly resistant.

To initiate a family meeting, invite all the key players—your parents, siblings and their spouses, if appropriate. If possible, hold the meeting face-to-face. An online video chat can work if distance or other factors make this unrealistic.

What should you discuss? Cover the entire tax and financial planning gamut. The dialogue should be frank. Many issues can be sensitive, and emotions may run high, so be prepared.

One session may not be enough to accomplish your objectives. You might need to include additional family members to resolve the issues. You may even want to broaden the circle to include your CPA or attorney.