



**BY CAROL ABAYA**  
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THE SANDWICH GENERATION

As each New Year rolls in, we are all faced with new challenges - and opportunities.

The challenges are trying to meet all our multi-generational responsibilities and at the same time retain what I call our own "I" Self. There are also multi-generational opportunities. In both scenarios, communication and self evaluation are keys to positive results.

Several years ago I came across a marvelous book "Taking Care of Me: So I Can Take Care of My Children." While this book focuses on parent-young children relationships, much of the advice spans all generational relationships.

So, as you start a New Year, think about some of the following snippets from this book. The snippets are in quotes. Following are my own comments.

\* "Every person has many unique characteristics. Like puzzle pieces, these characteristics fit together to make a whole person.... They are a part of who you are today." Understanding each person's unique character helps build positive relationships.

\* "Each person is born with a unique temperament, made up of various traits." Again, understanding temperament impacts relationships.

\* “Everyone has basic needs. We all need to feel good physically and emotionally.” In reference to elder care, emotional elements can be even more important than physical capabilities or disabilities.

\* “How we feel often affects how we behave. Sometimes feelings affect behavior very strongly. ....How we feel about ourselves on the inside shows on the outside.” This is true for both the elder, who may be losing capabilities and is unhappy about the losses, and the sandwich generationer who is stressed out by care responsibilities and maybe feelings of own guilt.

\* “Start by noticing all your feelings. When you feel good, it is usually easy to understand why you feel that way. ....At other times, it’s hard to understand what you’re feeling.” Whatever your feelings, be assured they are natural. You can get just as frustrated and angry with your parents and their behavior as you can when you are raising young children.

\* “Pay attention to all your feelings. ....they help you know when you are taking good care of yourself.”

\* “Accept all feelings.....We can’t stop ourselves from feeling... We can only control how we express our feelings.”

\* “It is important to recognize all of your feelings. Uncomfortable feelings tell you that something needs to change.”

\* “Focus on ways to make things better. Change unpleasant thoughts or actions. Begin to solve the problem.”

\* Advice is to use key phrases to redirect your feelings and then subsequent actions. “I feel.....”  
“I need....” “The kids (parents) need.....” “I can.....”

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***The Sandwich Generation is reader interactive and welcomes comments and questions. Contact Abaya via her web site [www.sandwichgeneration.com](http://www.sandwichgeneration.com) or e-mail [sandwichgen@aol.com](mailto:sandwichgen@aol.com)***