

Energy Psychology Self-Care for the Sandwich Generation

by Dorothea Hover-Kramer, Ed.D., RN, DCEP

website: www.SecondChanceDream.com

Recent estimates show one out of four American families are currently involved in taking care of an elderly parent. Many are at the same time raising children or nurturing their adult children which defines them as members of the “sandwich generation”—the people with family demands at on both sides of their own mid-life time.

Being a “sandwicher” is no easy matter as caregiving can vary in requirements from minimal supervision to 24/7 care that would be need to be filled by 3 full-time professional workers per day. An AARP study shows 8.7 million women in this country are caring for both one or more elderly parents and growing children at the same time. Family caretakers have twice the number of chronic conditions as non-caregivers and research suggests the multiple service roles can shorten lifespan by up to ten years.

Besides making sure there is respite care available at least one day a week, sandwich generation members can help themselves tremendously with self-care techniques from the new field of energy psychology. The central premise is learning easy-to-follow steps for maintaining your own personal vitality. This is called *Qi* or *vital life force* in the current practice of integrative medicine.

Here are a few sample suggestions for a start to daily self-help for your energy system:

- 1) **Learn to identify and let go of stressors quickly.** Opportunities for releasing negativity abound in the busy muddle of a three generation household. Treat yourself by massaging the heart area and stating, “Even though this has happened (name specific event or words), I deeply and profoundly accept and honor myself.”
- 2) **Learn to forgive yourself for mistakes.** Remember you are on a learning curve to finding out what works best in your family and no one has all the answers to complex interactive conflicts. Affirm, “Even though I made this mistake (name it), I still deeply and profoundly accept and forgive myself.”

- 3) **Choose a new option** as soon as it becomes clear that something is not working well for the family. Enlist support of family members who can assist you in thinking through possible choices. Encourage all family members to try out something new as a simple experiment.
- 4) **Energize your body and mind with quick exercise** as often as needed with the Cross Crawl (right hand on left knee, left hand on right knee while walking rapidly), rubbing the Brain Buttons (at the collarbone on each side of the suprasternal notch), or Zipping Up by moving the hands up several times from above the pubic area to below the lower lip (tracing the central meridian of the body's energy system).
- 5) **Clearly state your intention for yourself** by tapping on the upper mid-chest (thymus gland area) while stating your daily goal. Examples: "Today, I want to feel peace of mind... Today, I want to nurture my health and well-being... I attract the resources I need (courage, patience, strength, caring)."

Unlike medication, these exercises help to boost your immune system and increase your sense of personal power. Doing good for others can flow most easily when you are replenishing yourself as often as needed. Enjoy the journey with all its opportunities for your deepening personal development!

Dr. Dorothea Hover-Kramer is a psychotherapist with over 30 years of experience and the author of 6 books about energy therapies including her most recent written for the baby boomer and sandwich generations, Second Chance at Your Dream, (2009, Energy Psychology Press).