

These adults in their 40's and 50's especially are now considered the "sandwich generation". This new label is easily explained as adults are in the middle of having their own children and also having elderly parents still living. The responsibilities are endless with raising your own children in this society and even possibly having grandchildren as well. Additionally, many middle aged people have their parents still living; sometimes in their own home, in an in-law apartment, participating in day programs or adult senior centers. Some elders living alone can suffice with home health staff coming in to assist a few times per week for a couple of hours each time, and others require more care on a regular basis.

Over 55 year old communities and assisted living facilities have blossomed around the country. There are increasing nursing homes as well, to meet the needs of our elderly. Elderly loved ones may need the supervision and around the clock staff which would require placement. Many elders have dementia or Alzheimer's disease and/or other nursing needs too involved and expensive for families to pay while maintaining their loved one at home.

The day to day lifestyle stress of having children, caring for parents, being involved as a family, and visiting the elderly in various situations requires a tremendous amount of time

spent with multi-generational issues.

The Today Show recently reported an increase in the abuse of alcohol amongst young mothers who drop their children off at Day Care or Kindergarten and meet friends for lunch and have a drink or two only to return to pick up their child from their placement after drinking. Other reports show reported increases in eating disordered behaviors and/or irrational negative thinking. Some people become very depressed and feel isolated and may drink at home to manage their stress and combat loneliness. These are obviously negative coping styles. Positive coping skills can be learned just as easily as the negative ones and require practice so these patterns of behavior become easier to implement when difficult times arise.

In current economic times, there are increasing stressors: job lay offs, medical/dental health insurance increases and the failing housing market. People cannot easily retire at the age they expected due to many financial factors so people will be working longer as they age. Studies have shown recently that this stressful financial climate has led to an increase in crime and domestic violence.

Your parents may be under significant stress with full-time jobs or businesses, household and financial obligations as well as the many other involve-

ments people have with a variety of interests. We also routinely rush to drive to and from places, food shopping, helping kids with homework, family dinners, paying bills, finding time to exercise, seeing friends and finding time for the personal, emotional alone time to relax.

As you make your important wedding plans, you will likely have many variables to consider while you make choices and decisions. This is a very important and most enjoyable, memorable day for all. It is a celebration with the most important people you wish to share in your happiness. There are many more blended families with half siblings and step families. Relationship building and acceptance of new additional family members has become a way of life. Multi-cultural and diverse ethnic populations also add to the challenges of our generation. So, as you plan your special day, give serious thought to what decisions produce the least amount of stress and will satisfy the majority of people attending your wedding.



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