



## **Employers – How to be sensitive to the “Sandwich generation” employee**

### *What is the Sandwich generation?*

The Sandwich generation, in a nutshell, are the growing number of people who are caring for their both their parents and children.

With the increase of life expectancy, the growing number of women in the workforce, the trend of couples having children later on in life, more people than ever before are faced with juggling these high stress responsibilities.

Balancing the responsibilities of having an aging parent, children of your own, and work can be overwhelming. Employers' actions and behaviours highly impact the lives of their employees, and can help sandwich generation employees by taking action to help manage the struggles they face in their lives.

An employer can actually help their business by fostering a stress-controlled environment. The issue of juggling elder and childcare can affect people of almost any age, and often are people who are of high value to a company. These employees may feel burnt out which in turn can affect work performance. They can potentially become agitated at work, or become unproductive in the work place if they are feeling overwhelmed.

### *Have an Open Door Policy*

In order to have healthy and happy employees, an employer should to be able to communicate with them about their hurdles and stressors inside (and in some cases outside) the work environment. If you are an employer, make it known to your employees that they can talk to you, and that you will try to accommodate them if they are going through a difficult period. You can't fix what you're not aware of. In some work environments, accommodations might not be possible. However, by fostering a company culture of openness and you will be able to better understand and navigate through roadblocks.

### *Flexibility*

Being an employer often means being a boss, and sometimes being a boss means needing to be structured and provide a disciplined approach. However, managing a hectic timetable can be challenging for a worker who is being pulled in all different directions. If it is within your ability, perhaps offer your employees the option of a more flexible schedule so that they can accommodate doctor's visits, picking up the kids from school, and other personal appointments. Many employers offer 'flex-time', where employees can work extra hours during the work week, and in turn take an extra day off to care for loved ones. Some employers also offer a limited of "Family Days", as a catch-all to cover family obligations.

#### *Provide Resources to your Employees*

Many people are unaware of their available options for support. Make resources readily available for your employees which can come in the form of written material, or in-person support with third party professionals who can help your employees.

#### *Provide Eldercare and Childcare Benefits*

Increasingly companies are providing child and eldercare benefits as the need for them becomes more widespread. You might want to consider extending your benefits packages to include child and eldercare to better help your employees manage their family lives.

As a closing summary, there are various ways that employers can show their empathy and support for their employees who are feeling the pressures of being in the "Sandwich generation". Home to Home offers in-house seminars at the offices of employers who wish to provide some educational support to their employees on how to handle aging parent issues. To enquire further about these Lunch and Learn seminars, please contact Home to Home through the contact details below.

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