

Emotional Issues: Challenges or Rewards?

Intergenerational living seems to generate positive feelings of care and accomplishment combined with stress. That's what recent Home Instead Senior Care research indicates.

Consider the following:

- Those who live with their senior loved ones say the best thing about being a caregiver is providing the best care possible (30 percent), followed by a sense of accomplishment (27 percent) and staying connected/becoming closer (22 percent). Seventy-two percent of these caregivers believe that caring for their relative has been rewarding.
- The worst thing about being a caregiver is finding no time for themselves (41 percent). Seventy-two percent of those who said they lived too close to their loved ones rated their stress as a 5 on a scale of 5.

Matthew Kaplan Ph.D., Penn State Intergenerational Programs extension specialist, and Home Instead Senior Care, offers these tips:

1. **Take a family partnership perspective.** Everyone needs to be informed and to give input into household arrangements.
2. **Set expectations right away.** Avoid conflict by working to ensure upfront that family members see eye-to-eye about each person's roles and responsibilities.
3. **Ask for help.** Engage children in responsibilities around the home and make it clear to adult siblings that you want them to be involved. If extended family will not help with respite care, arrange for a professional caregiver service.
4. **Make family unity key.** Strive for routines, rituals and traditions that bring the family together including family movie night or a walk.
5. **Find threads of common interest and build on those to develop family activities that are conducive to building deeper relationships.** Focus on something very simple that seems to generate a common bond, such as ethnic cooking, family history, health or wellness.

6. **Keep lines of communication open.** Recognize the importance of private time and family time for every member of the household. Visit www.4070talk.com for more information.
7. **Distinguish between private space and shared space.** Shared space should be stocked with material inviting for all ages and items that could stimulate discussion, such as a child's project or "brag book" of photos. Make clear rules regarding the private spaces set aside for each member of the household.

For more about the emotional issues of intergenerational living, log on to www.makewayformom.com or contact your local Home Instead Senior Care office for the free "Too Close for Comfort?" handbook.