

# The Guilt Stops Here!

## Supporting the Career/Life Choices of Parents/Caregivers



Presented by:

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# Agenda

Setting the  
Scene

Guilt  
Experiences

Coping  
Strategies

Theoretical  
Application





**SETTING THE SCENE**

# The Situation for Parents

25% of parents have been questioned by other parents

69% of couples in dual-earner families

23 pangs of

75% of parents

1 in 5 parents admit to competing with other parents on social media by posting photos and videos of their "happy" family

ed to be "perfect"

Sources: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2015001/article/14202-eng.htm>  
and <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/the-guilty-truth---new-research-reveals-top-reasons-for-parental-guilt-300518923.html>





# The Situation for Caregivers

Caregivers provide transportation (73%), housework (51%), home maintenance (27%), support with appointments (31%), finances (23%), and personal care (22%)

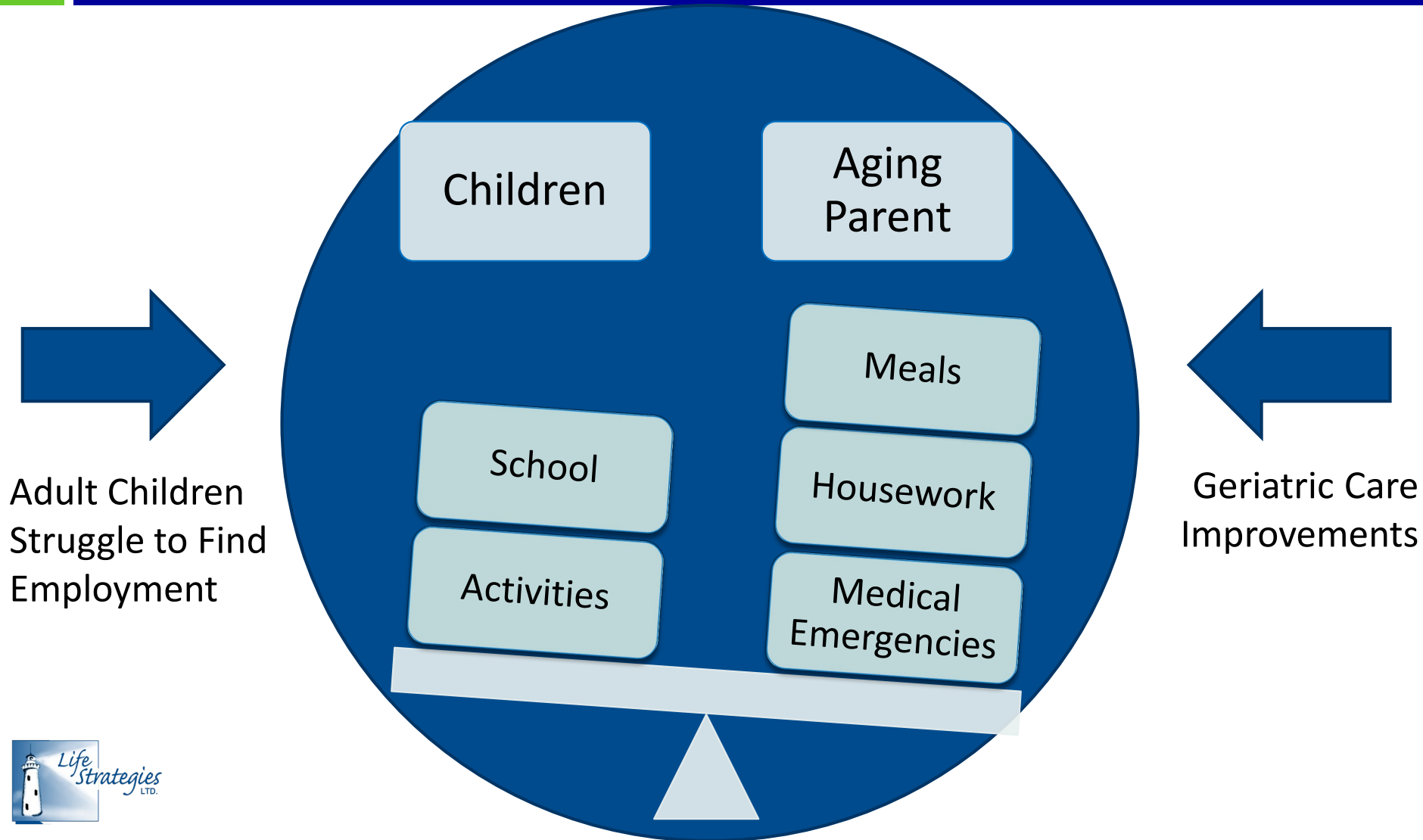
73% of employed caregivers were satisfied with their current balance between work and home life

73% of Canadians 15+ have provided care to a family/friend with a long-term health condition, disability or chronic illness

Caregivers reported having multiple responsibilities (60% employed / 28% had children under 18)



# Sandwich Generation

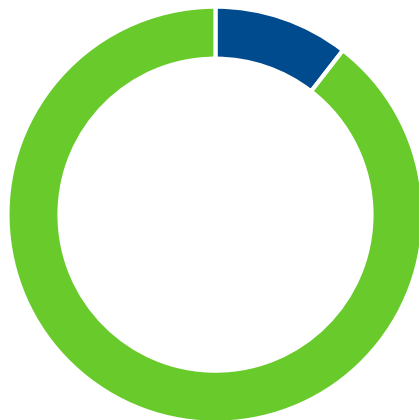




**GUILT EXPERIENCES**

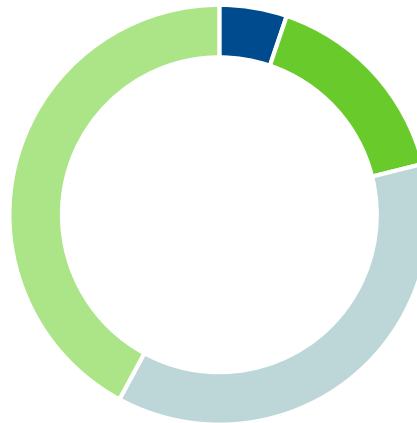
# A Look at Our Participants (N = 19)

## Gender



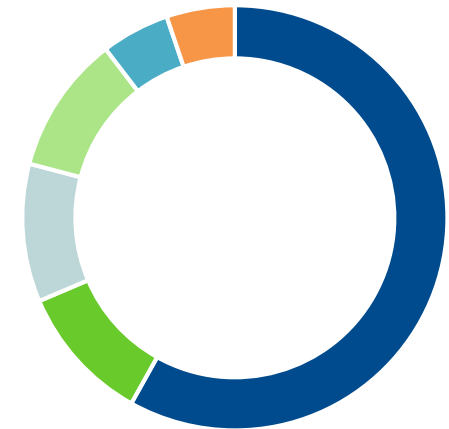
■ Male ■ Female

## Age



■ Traditionalist (74+)  
■ Baby Boomer (55-73)  
■ Generation X (43-54)  
■ Millennials (23-42)

## Location



■ BC ■ AB ■ SK  
■ ON ■ NL ■ NS



# Our Respondents' Guilt Experiences

Abandonment

Missing Out/Time

Being Isolated

Making Imperfect Choices

Being Angry / Dealing with Anger of Others

Helping cope with anger from the aging parent and realizing it is coming from a place of fear.  
How dare you ask someone to come in and care for me!  
vs. I am afraid of strangers looking after me.

# Top 20 Sources of Guilt

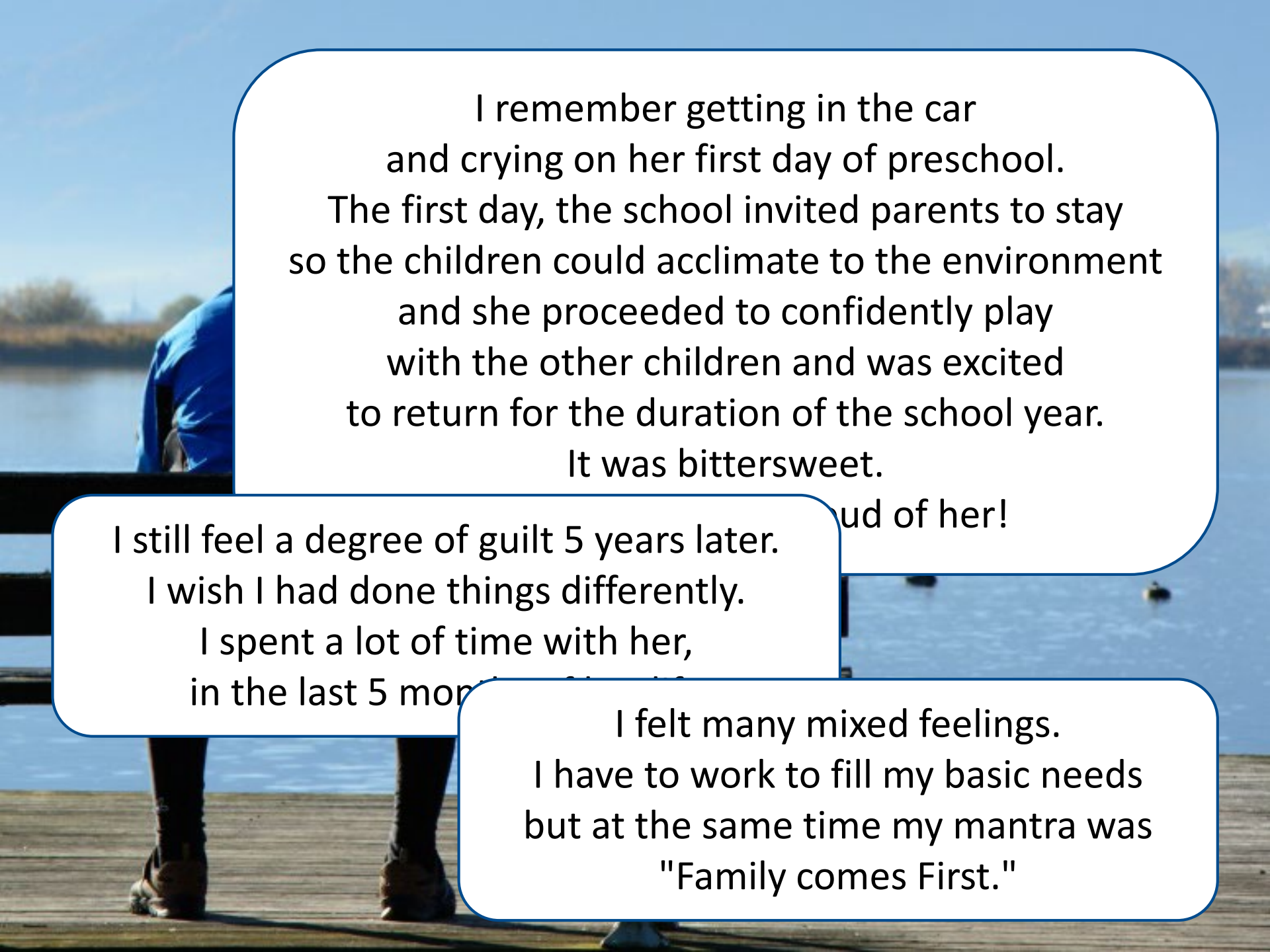
<b>I wasn't there enough</b>	I didn't listen	<b>I was too focused on house/work</b>	I wasn't affectionate enough	I was critical
I yelled, hit, and blamed	<b>I was a bad role model</b>	I didn't take the time to understand	<b>I wasn't consistent</b>	I pushed too hard
I didn't push enough	I spanked	I drank	I was depressed	I fought with my child's dad/mom
I got divorced	I said hurtful things	<b>I was selfish</b>	I ignored my child	I didn't protect my child



Source: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/healthy-connections/201109/are-you-guilty-parent>

# Our Respondents' Emotions



A person wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and dark pants is standing on a wooden pier or dock. The background shows a calm body of water under a clear blue sky. The person's back is to the camera, and they appear to be looking out over the water.

I remember getting in the car  
and crying on her first day of preschool.  
The first day, the school invited parents to stay  
so the children could acclimate to the environment  
and she proceeded to confidently play  
with the other children and was excited  
to return for the duration of the school year.  
It was bittersweet.

I still feel a degree of guilt 5 years later.  
I wish I had done things differently.  
I spent a lot of time with her,  
in the last 5 months.

I felt many mixed feelings.  
I have to work to fill my basic needs  
but at the same time my mantra was  
"Family comes First."

... proud of her!

# Our Respondents' Perspectives

## What Contributes to Guilt Experiences?

Stress of  
balancing  
roles

Fear of  
abandoning /  
harming

Societal

I love spending time with him so any extra time away from him is a big contributing factor. I know he won't always want to spend time with me so I have to drink it in while he does.

Limited time



# I “Should” . . .

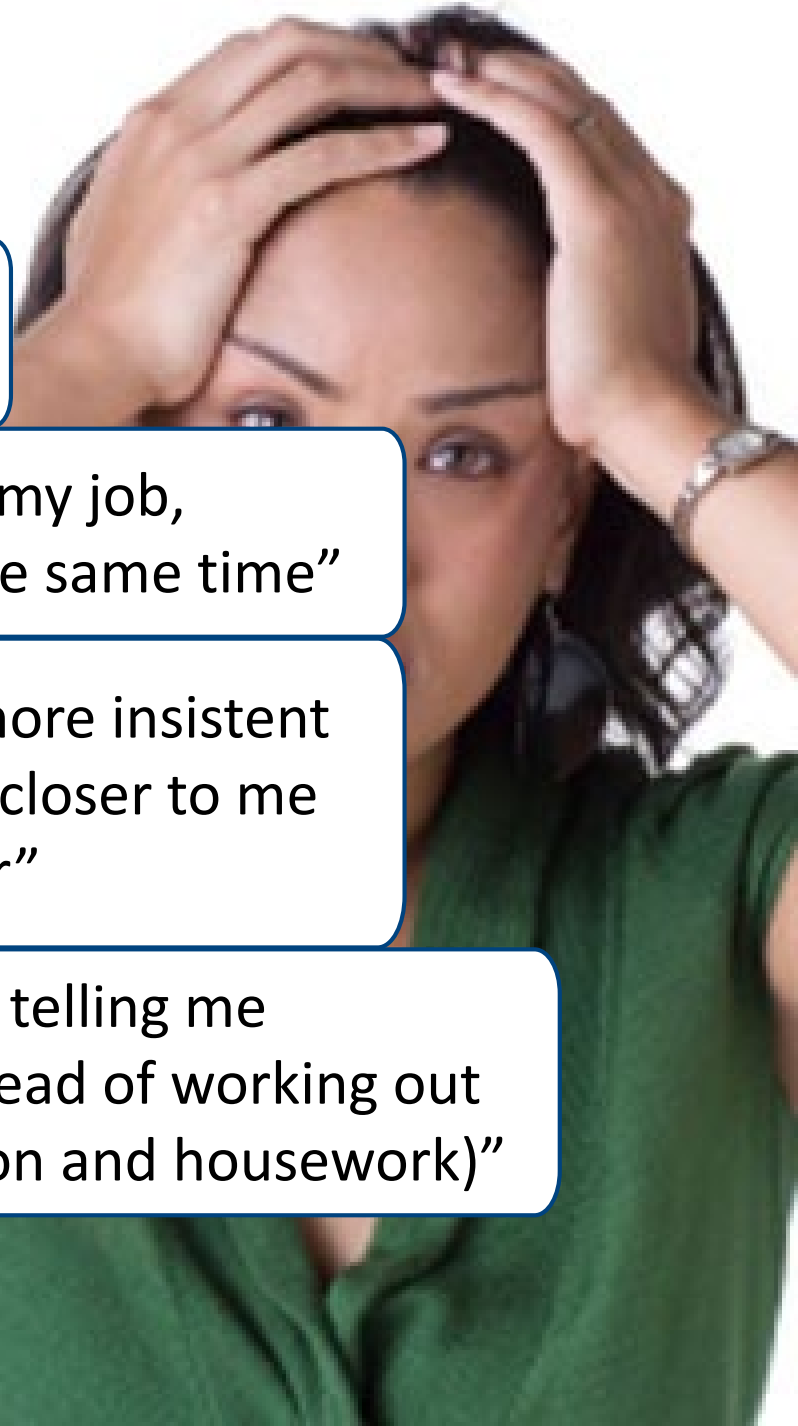
“my own expectations of what I **should** accomplish”

“I **should** be able to do my job, be a mom and a student at the same time”

“I think I feel like I **should** have been more insistent that she move earlier so she could be closer to me and I could take care of her”

“my mom constantly telling me what I ‘**should**’ be doing instead of working out (i.e., spending time with my son and housework)”

“I **should** have been more careful”

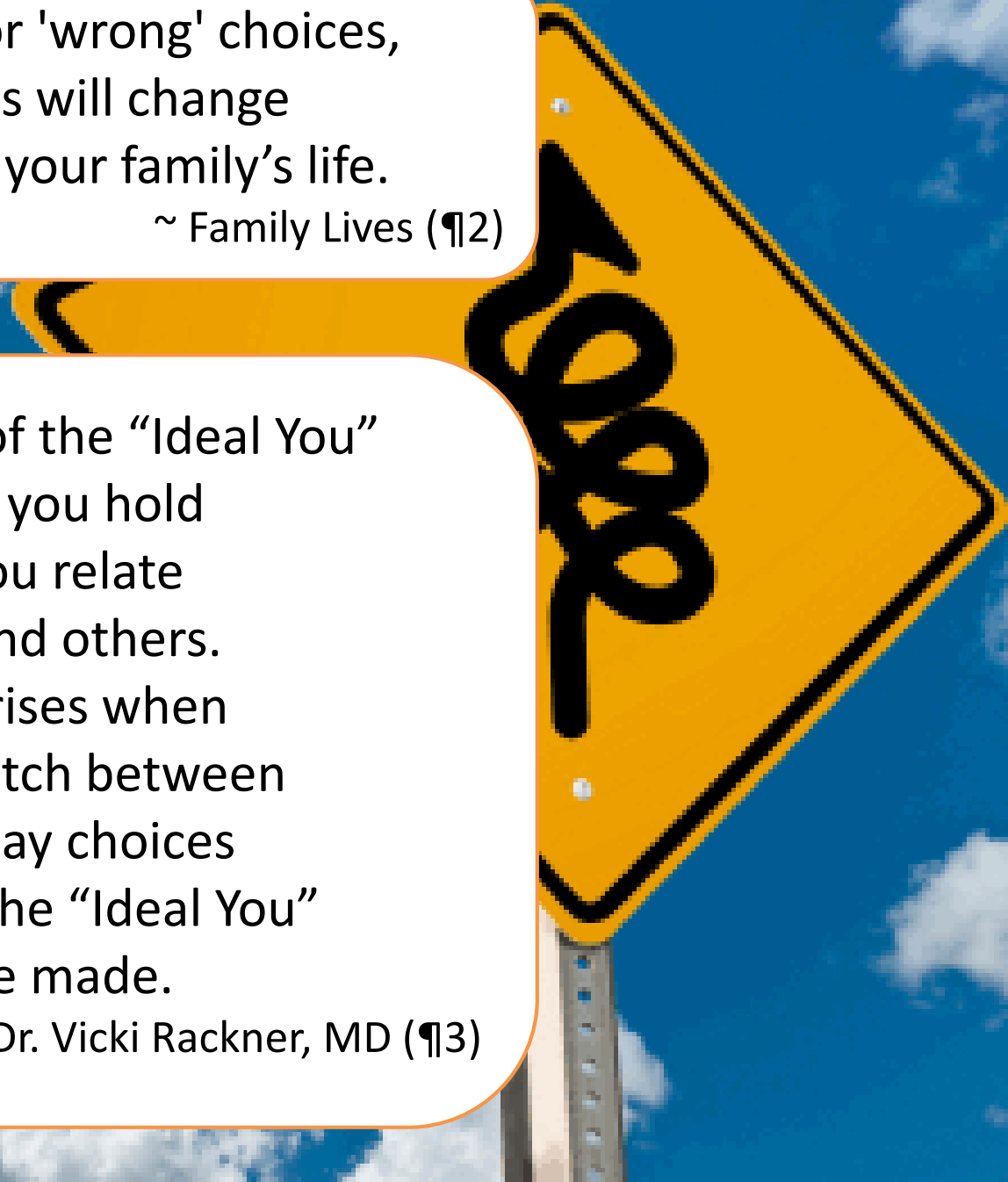


There are no 'right' or 'wrong' choices,  
and your choices will change  
at different stages in your family's life.

~ Family Lives (¶12)

You have a picture of the “Ideal You”  
with values you hold  
and how you relate  
to yourself and others.  
Guilt often arises when  
there's a mismatch between  
your day-to-day choices  
and the choices the “Ideal You”  
would have made.

~ Dr. Vicki Rackner, MD (¶13)





# **COPING STRATEGIES**

# Our Respondents' *Effective* Coping Strategies

Tangible Items

Self-Care

Self-Talk/Self-Reflection

Social Support

Research

Distraction/Avoidance

Improvement Focus

“Just try not to think of it most of the time. It's heartbreaking no matter what you do”



# Our Respondents' *Ineffective* Coping Strategies

Obsessing about it

Avoiding/dissociating from it

Emotional outbursts

Blaming others

Shutting people

“Asking for help, advice or guidance.  
I have to trust myself first.  
No one knows my situation as I do. I  
know what is best.”



# Ways to Handle Negative Feelings

Suppression

- Conscious pushing down of feelings

Repression

- Unconscious pushing down of feelings

Expression

- Verbalizing or venting

Escape

- Avoiding feelings



Source: <https://elizz.com/caregiver-resources/caregiving-tips/caregiver-guilt-feelings-negative-emotions>

# Coping Tips

Avoid distracted caregiving

Institute routines and family traditions

Don't abandon discipline / boundaries

Keep it light; see the humour where possible

Focus on priorities

Maintain balance and self-care

Avoid second-guessing / worrying about what you can't change

Don't let stereotypes complicate your life



Sources: <https://www.inc.com/minda-zetlin/busy-parents-quality-time-raising-successful-kids.html> and <https://www.inc.com/jessica-stillman/5-tips-to-stop-feeling-guilty-as-a-working-parent.html>

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# Coping as a Long-Distance Caregiver

Acknowledge feelings of inadequacy/guilt are normal

**Stay connected with a video chat or letter**

**Accept limits to what you can do from afar**

**Work collaboratively to identify what you can do**

Forgive and seek forgiveness

**Support primary caregiver**

Stay motivated by love/compassion, rather than obligation/duty

Inspire independence, community involvement

Maintain healthy boundaries

Access supports for aging parent and yourself



Source:

<https://www.care.com/c/stories/5593/9-tips-for-coping-with-remote-caregiver-guilt/>

# Caregiving & Work Challenges

## Are Less “Visible” at Work than Colleagues

- Arrive late / leave early
- Work odd hours / at home

## Assumed Less “Committed” by Superiors

- Prioritize other responsibilities over career
- Miss opportunities / promotions

## Neglect Self-Care Activities

- Sleep less
- Personal health/wellness not priority



# Coping Tips for the Sandwich Generation

Practice self-care

Update family efficiently

Delegate tasks

Ask/hire help

Talk to your employer

Prioritize what matters

Give yourself permission to be selfish

Lean on support

Stay in the moment







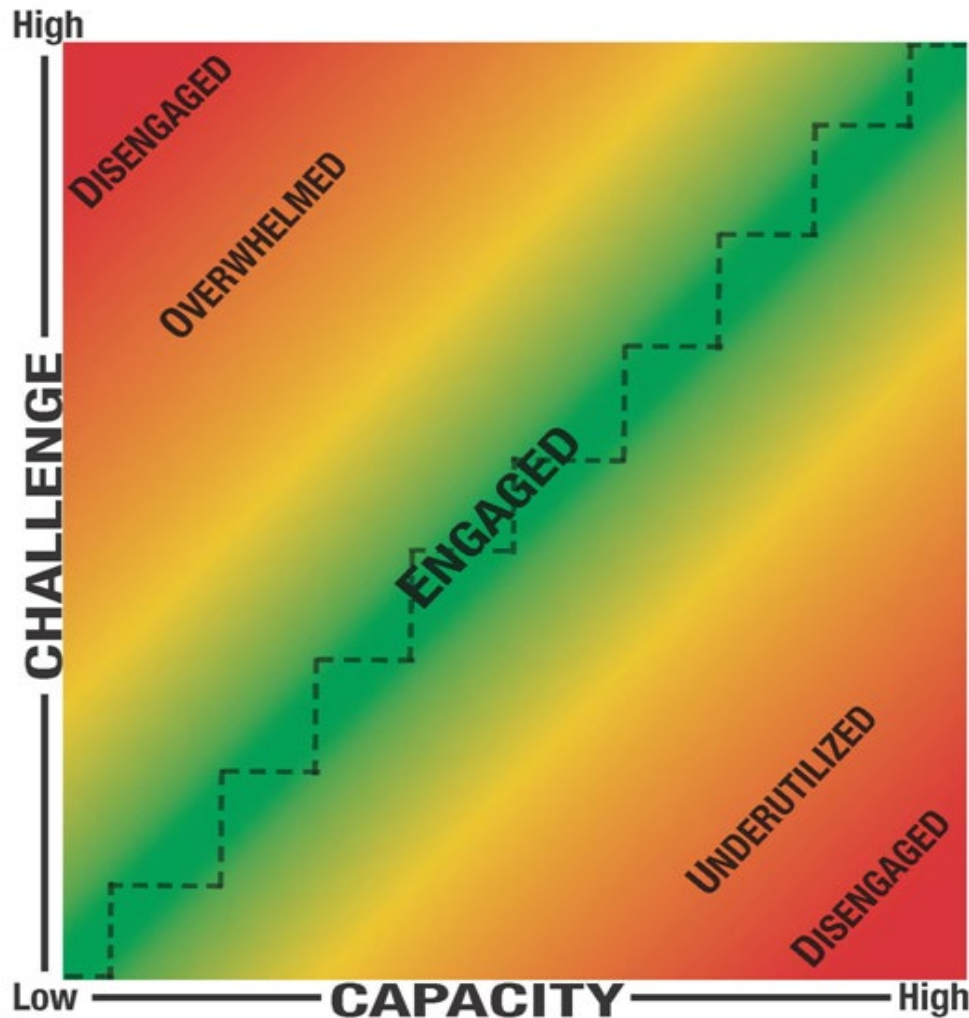
**THEORETICAL  
APPLICATION**

# Meet Joanne



40-year-old wife and mother of one  
Recently re-engaged in pharmaceutical sales industry after being a stay-at-home mom for 5 years  
Husband works in construction locally  
Her mother recently diagnosed with early stages of dementia; no other family locally

# Career Engagement: A Conceptual Framework



# Systems Theory Framework

Career development is dynamic and complex

Interconnecting systems

- Individual
- Social
- Environmental-societal

Process influences

- Recursiveness
- Change over time
- Chance



# Bridges' Transition Model

## Ending Zone

How will you help clients get closure?

What support might they need?

## Neutral Zone

What challenges might be experienced?

How will you help clients cope?

## New Beginning

How will your client know he or she has "arrived"?

How will s/he celebrate?



# The 4S Model of Transitions

Situation

- What's happening?

Self

- To whom?

Support

- What help is available?

Strategies

- How can the individual cope?



# Integrative Life Planning



Finding work that needs doing

Maintaining health and wellbeing

Connecting family and work

Valuing pluralism and inclusivity

Exploring spirituality and life purpose

Managing personal transitions and organizational change

*"Weaving our lives into a meaningful whole" ~ Hansen, 2011*

# Happenstance Learning Theory

Uncertainty is  
natural

Stay curious /  
learn  
constantly

Take action to  
create “lucky  
breaks”

Acknowledge /  
overcome  
barriers



Understand that you will be  
a more effective caregiver  
when you care for the caregiver first.

Loved ones neither want  
nor expect selfless servants.

As a caregiver,  
when you care for yourself,  
you increase and improve  
your own caring.

Yes, guilt is part of caregiving,  
but this guilt can help you become  
the caregiver you and your loved one  
want you to be.

~ Dr. Vicki Rackner, MD

