

2026 INTENTIONS

Theme Words for Caregivers

you
are
enough!

Your theme word isn't about becoming someone new in 2026. It's about taking better care of who you already are! ~Melissa & Lisa

1. GENTLENESS: *I treat myself with the same care I give everyone else.*

Gentleness means noticing when you're pushing yourself past exhaustion and choosing to soften instead. It's letting yourself move slower, speak kinder to yourself, and stop treating rest like a failure. Gentleness doesn't mean giving up — it means staying intact.

2. SUSTAIN: *I choose what I can maintain, not what drains me.*

This is about long-term caregiving reality. If something can't be repeated week after week without breaking you, it's not sustainable — and it doesn't belong. Sustain asks: Can I keep living this way? If not, something gets adjusted.

3. REST: *Rest is necessary, not earned.*

Rest isn't a reward for finishing everything. It's fuel. Caregivers don't rest because things are done — we rest because our bodies and nervous systems require it. Even small moments of rest count.

4. ENOUGH: *I am doing enough, even on hard days.*

Enough pushes back against the constant feeling that you should be doing more. Enough means showing up in imperfect, human ways. Some days, enough is just getting through. And that is still enough.

5. GRACE: *I release self-criticism and allow myself to be human.*

Grace means meeting mistakes, exhaustion, and emotional moments with compassion instead of punishment. You're navigating a life most people will never understand. Grace reminds you that you're allowed to struggle and still be a good parent.

6. PACE: *I move at a speed that supports my nervous system.*

Pace is permission to slow down — emotionally and physically. It's resisting urgency when it's not required. A regulated caregiver is more effective than a rushed one. Slowing down is an act of care.

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it's OK
to
say No

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7. SUPPORT: *I do not have to carry this alone.*

Support means letting go of the belief that asking for help equals failure. It includes respite, friends, professionals, and community. Support doesn't weaken you – it keeps you going.

8. PERMISSION: *I give myself permission to need help and take breaks.*

So many caregivers wait for approval that never comes. Permission means you stop waiting. You're allowed to rest, say no, change plans, and take care of yourself – without justification.

9. CALM: *I choose regulation over reaction.*

Calm doesn't mean quiet or perfect behavior. It means prioritizing safety and regulation – yours first. When your body feels calmer, everything else becomes more manageable.

10. BOUNDARIES: *Protecting my energy protects my family.*

Boundaries are not about shutting people out. They're about preserving what you need to keep showing up. Saying no, leaving early, and not over-explaining are all valid forms of self-care.

11. STEADY: *Consistency matters more than perfection.*

Steady honors showing up again and again in small ways. It's not flashy. It's reliable. And in caregiving, steady is powerful. You don't have to be exceptional – you just have to keep going.

12. RELEASE: *I let go of guilt and unrealistic expectations.*

Release is about loosening your grip on what was supposed to be, what others expect, and what you can't control. Letting go doesn't mean you stop caring – it means you stop carrying what isn't yours.