

Carrying, Coping, and Choosing Gentleness

Naming the Emotional Load

Caregivers often carry more than what others can see. For your eyes only...

Right now, I'm carrying:

What feels most exhausting lately:

What I haven't had space (or dared) to feel or say:

I hate to admit it, but...

Recognizing My Pattern (Pain Cycle)

When emotional load builds, our nervous system moves into protective patterns. These are patterns—not personal failures.

When I feel overwhelmed, I usually respond by *(pushing through, shutting down, controlling, avoiding):*

Underneath that, I think or feel *(unloved, unseen, unappreciated, alone, not enough, unsafe):*

The Cost of Endurance

Patterns are protective—but they often come at a cost.

When I just follow my pattern, it impacts me by:

It impacts my relationships by:

What would really help in those moments is:

Choosing Gentleness (Peace Cycle)

Restoration begins when we respond with truth instead of pressure. Small shifts move us from pain to peace.

The truth(s) I need to remember about myself is/are *(I am allowed to need care too. My worth is not based on how much I carry.):*

Because that's true, I can choose to *(rest, ask for help, set limits, slow down, receive support):*

Four Steps Practice (Say It Out Loud)

Practice speaking these—this slows reactivity and builds regulation

1. **When I feel...**

2. **I usually cope by...**

3. **The truth I need to remember about myself is...**

4. **Right now, I choose to...**

Letting Support In

Caregivers often give support—but struggle to receive it.

One person I could safely reach out to is:

One small way I could ask for support is:

One boundary that would protect my energy this week:

Closing Reflection

You are not meant to carry everything alone. Caregiving without gentleness leads to burnout.

Caregiving with awareness creates space for restoration.