

Balancing Self-Care & Caregiving in Midlife



A reflective guide for women navigating responsibility, guilt, and self-permission.

1. Naming the Roles You Hold

Midlife often brings overlapping roles that pull in different directions.

Prompt:

List the caregiving roles you currently hold (formal or informal).

Examples: parent, partner, adult child, friend, colleague, community member.

My roles:

Reflection:

Which of these roles feels heaviest for you right now?

2. What Self-Care Actually Means For You

Self-care isn't indulgence — it's maintenance, regulation, and sustainability.

Prompt:

Write down 3 forms of self-care that genuinely support your nervous system.

Reflection:

What changes in you (emotionally, physically, cognitively) when these needs are met?

3. The Guilt-Obligation Loop

Guilt often comes from automatic thoughts shaped by old patterns, expectations, or family systems.

Prompt:

When you consider taking time for yourself, what thoughts show up?

Examples:

- "I should be doing more."
- "Other people need me."
- "It's selfish to rest."
- "I'll disappoint someone."

My automatic thoughts:

Next: Identify the emotion each thought creates.

(e.g., guilt, anxiety, fear, pressure)

My emotions:

4. Reality Check: Is This Thought True, Helpful, or Kind? (Reframe)

Choose one thought from above and explore it.

Thought I'm examining:

Is this thought 100% true?

Is it helpful?

Is it kind?

A more balanced, compassionate thought would be:

(Aim for "gentle truth," not forced positivity.)

5. Values Check-In

Guilt often pulls us toward **obligation**. Values pull us toward **alignment**.

Prompt:

What values matter most to you in this season of life?

Examples: steadiness, presence, health, connection, authenticity, rest, creativity.

My core values right now:

1
2
3

Reflection:

Which caregiving actions align with these values?

Which self-care actions align with these values?

5. The Both/And Reframe

Midlife often requires holding two truths at once.

Prompt:

Complete these statements:

I care deeply about others **and** I also deserve care.

I want to show up for people **and** I need space to recharge.

I feel guilty sometimes **and** I'm learning to honour my limits.

Write your own:

6. Your Nervous System's Signals

Your body often tells you when you're overextended before your mind does.

Prompt:

What signals show up when you're depleted?

- irritability
- brain fog
- fatigue
- resentment
- anxiety
- physical tension
- emotional numbness
- overwhelm
- trouble sleeping
- other: _____

Reflection:

Which of these signals are showing up most often?

7. Small, Values-Aligned Action

Choose one small action that honours both your caregiving responsibilities **and** your own wellbeing.

Examples:

- A 10-minute walk
- Asking for help
- Saying "not today"
- Scheduling rest
- Setting a gentle boundary

My small action for this week: _____

Why this matters to me: _____

8. A Self-Compassion Statement

End with a grounding phrase that feels true.

Examples:

- "I'm allowed to take up space in my own life."
- "Caring for myself supports the people I love."
- "Rest is not a reward — it's a need."

My self-compassion statement:

*With care,
Christine*

New Paths Counselling

