

Caregiving Companion:

A Simple Daily Framework for What Matters Right Now



How to Use This (Takes 5 minutes a day)

- Read once, then keep on your fridge, phone, or bedside.
- Do the Daily Framework once a day (morning or night). It takes 5 minutes total and gives you a clear “what’s next.”
- Use any Emotional Support tool the moment you feel overwhelmed or drained.
- **Goal:** Feel clearer, more prepared, and less alone

Today, I give myself permission to:

- Feel overwhelmed, guilty, or tired and still be a good caregiver
- Do only what’s realistic today
- Ask for help
- Rest without earning it

Daily Framework (5-Minute Check-In)

1. Patient Comfort - What does my loved one need most today?

How to: Check one comfort item, note one symptom + what helped, take one small medical step.

Why: Keeps your loved one steady and prevents small problems from growing.

- One comfort action (pain meds on time, favorite blanket, quiet time, gentle touch, favorite show, etc.)
- One symptom noted + what helped: _____
- One small medical step (appointment reminder, question for the clinic, symptom log updated)
- Enough for today? Write “good enough” and let the rest go.

2. Your Well-Being (Oxygen Mask)

How: Choose just one: 5-min breath break, nourishing snack, short walk, shower, or text a friend.

Why: You cannot care for someone if you are completely empty. One small refill prevents burnout and helps you stay calm.

[] Done today → “I refueled so I can keep going.”

3. Team & Connections

How: Reach out to one person and ask for one specific help or hold one boundary.

Why: Doing everything alone leads to exhaustion. A small team makes the load lighter and reduces isolation.

Person contacted: _____ Help asked _____

4. Evening Reflection

How: Answer quickly

1. One thing that went okay: _____
2. One emotion I felt: _____
3. One micro-win I’m proud of: _____
4. One tiny thing for tomorrow: _____

Why: This builds confidence by showing you what you did instead of what you didn’t.

Emotional Support Toolkit

You are carrying an enormous emotional load on top of everything else. This section is here so you never have to pretend you're "fine" or push feelings away. These tools are short, repeatable, and designed to help you feel less alone and more steady—even on the hardest days. Use any one that fits in the moment. You don't need to do them all.

1. The 3-Minute "Name It to Tame It" Reset (use anytime emotions spike)

1. Name what you're feeling out loud or on paper: "I feel scared about the scan results... I feel guilty I snapped earlier... I feel exhausted and alone."
2. Place one hand on your chest or belly and say gently: "This is hard. Anyone in my shoes would feel this. I'm still showing up with love."
3. Ask one small kindness question: "What do I need in the next 10–60 minutes?" (a glass of water, five minutes outside, a text to a friend, silence, etc.)

Why: Naming feelings calms the nervous system so you stop spiraling and can think clearly again.

2. Common Caregiver Emotions & Gentle Responses

- **Guilt** ("I should be doing more / I need a break / I got frustrated"): Remind yourself: "Caring this much is why I feel guilty. That same love is what makes me a good caregiver."

Quick reframe: Write or say one thing you did do today that helped, even if tiny.

- **Fear / Anxiety** (about the future, pain, losing your person): Ask: "What is one thing I can influence right now?" Then do the Patient Comfort step. Breathing tool: 4-7-8 breath (inhale 4, hold 7, exhale 8) – repeat 4 times.
- **Anger / Resentment** (at the disease, doctors, family, or even your loved one): Validate it first: "This anger makes sense. This situation is unfair."

Safe release: Squeeze a pillow, scribble hard on paper then tear it up, or step outside and say it out loud in the car. Then return with one small boundary or request for help.

- **Grief / Anticipatory Grief** (mourning losses while they're still here): Give it space: Set a 5–10 minute "grief window" each day if needed. Cry, write, look at photos, or sit quietly. Then gently close it: "I'm here now, and I can love them fully in this moment."
- **Numbness or Burnout:** This is your brain's way of protecting you. Be extra kind. Start with Well-Being step #2 and lower expectations. Even "I got through today" is enough.

Why: First-time caregivers often think these feelings mean they're failing. Understanding them is normal keeps guilt from piling up and lets you move forward faster.

Weekly Confidence Builder (Sunday or any day)

1. Three things I did that no one saw: _____
2. One feeling I allowed without judgment: _____
3. One kind thing I said to myself: _____

3. Self-Compassion Techniques (These are your private moments of kindness toward yourself. None take more than 5 minutes. You don't have to do them perfectly or every day—use whichever one feels doable in the moment.)

- **Self-Compassion Phrases You Can Keep on Your Phone** - Copy these and read one when the inner critic starts:
 - “I’m doing the best I can in an impossible situation.”
 - “My feelings are valid. I don’t have to fix them right now.”
 - “Rest is productive. Asking for help is strength.”
 - “I am not failing. I am human, and I love deeply.”
 - “This is really hard, and I’m still showing up.”
 - “Rest is productive. Asking for help is strength, not weakness.”
 - “Even on hard days, my care matters.”
 - “I deserve kindness too—especially today.”
- **Short Practices You Can Use Anytime** - The Self-Compassion Break (60–90 seconds)
 - a. Pause and acknowledge: “This is a moment of suffering.” (Say it silently or quietly.) Remember you’re not alone: “Other caregivers feel this too. I’m not the only one.”
 - b. Offer yourself kindness: Place a hand on your chest or arm and say, “May I be kind to myself right now. What do I need in this moment?” Then take one slow breath before returning to what’s next.
 - c. Hand-on-Heart or Soothing Touch When guilt, exhaustion, or self-criticism hits, gently put one or both hands over your heart or on your cheek/upper arm (the way you might comfort someone you love). Breathe slowly and repeat a phrase above. This simple touch calms the nervous system quickly.
 - d. The “Dear Friend” Letter (2–3 minutes) Write or speak as if you’re writing to your best friend in your exact situation. Example start: “Dear [Your Name], I see how heavy this week has been...” End with one kind sentence to yourself. You don’t have to save it—just the act helps shift the inner critic.
 - e. Micro-Win Celebration At the end of the day (or even midday), say out loud or write: “Today I did _____ and that was enough.” This trains your brain to notice effort instead of only what didn’t get done.
 - f. Body-Based Release for Caregiver Tension Sit or stand and gently shake your hands/arms for 20–30 seconds while saying, “I release what I can’t carry alone right now.” Then take three slow breaths. Great for moments when resentment or overwhelm feels physical.

Every time you use even one piece of this emotional toolkit, you are building resilience for both of you. That steadiness matters more than any perfect action. Come back to this section as often as you need. It’s here for you, not another task.

Trusted Lifelines :

- Family Caregiver Center of New Mexico - (505) 494-4021
- American Cancer Society: 1-800-227-2345 (24/7)
- Your oncology clinic social worker or palliative care team

