SCALE PROGRAM

WORKBOOK WEEK 2

“I feel like I’m not doing enough”

CHALLENGING FEELINGS OF GUILT & FAILURE

THE ONTARIO caregiver ORGANIZATION

Creating Connections Counselling Services

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What is the Purpose of the SCALE Workbook?

The SCALE Workbook was created to review the material provided during the live or recorded webinar series and to help strengthen caregiver learning. The resources and strategies shared here are designed to support you in your caregiving journey.

How Does the Workbook Work?

Every caregiver journey is different! Whether you're a new or experienced caregiver, the more you know about mental health, the better. Whether you watch the live or recorded webinar series, you can access the SCALE Workbook at any time to help nurture your mental health as a caregiver.

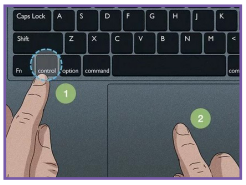
Each SCALE Workbook contains the following sections:

- **Personal Caregiving Story** that reflects the emotion outlined in each weekly title.
- **Webinar Summary & Key Takeaways** to help review each weekly topic.
- **Activities** to encourage you to take actionable steps towards managing difficult caregiving emotions.
- **Self-Discovery Questions** to reflect on the difficult caregiving emotion and actionable strategies.
- **Remember**...one final thought from each weekly topic that can continue to motivate you.
- **Suggested Resources** that relate to each weekly topic. Resources can be watched, read and/or listened to. Some resources are free while some may have a small cost (purchasing is not a requirement for the program).

The Journal Icon

In each webinar slide presentation, you will see a **journal icon** (as pictured on the right). The **journal icon** serves as a prompt for caregivers to action on a key activity, question, and resource from this workbook.

TIP



When you see something underlined in blue, press "Ctrl" and click your mouse (or mouse pad) to be taken to the material online. For example, press "Ctrl" and click your mousepad on this: Ontario Caregiver Organization and you will be taken to our home webpage.

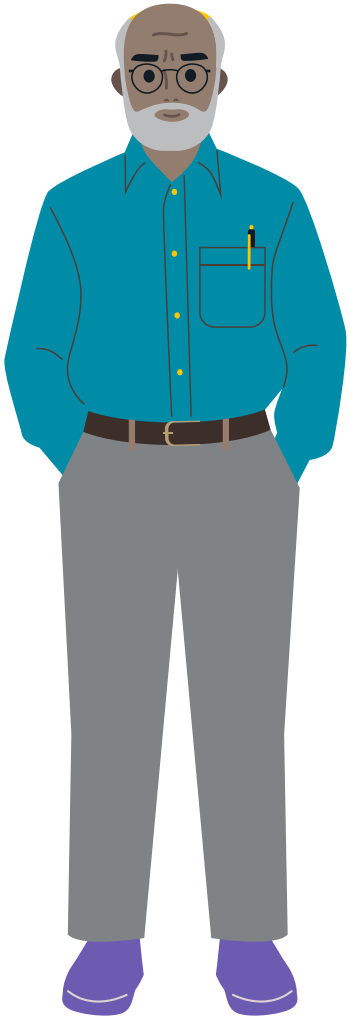
The Caregiver Role

Caregivers are unpaid, ordinary people who provide physical and emotional support to a family member, partner, friend, or neighbour.

Caregiving can include coordinating medical appointments, managing medications, arranging in-home healthcare services, and many other tasks.

A Word of Thanks

A special thanks to all the caregivers involved in creating this meaningful resource and Creating Connections for partnering with the Ontario Caregiver Organization to create the SCALE webinar series, and for providing practical resources and strategies to support caregivers on their journey.



“I feel like I’m not doing enough”

PERSONAL CAREGIVING EXPERIENCE

My wife of 35 years was recently diagnosed with terminal cancer. At first, she managed quite well on her own, but as her disease progressed, I became more involved in her care.

As her condition worsened, I often found myself awake with her during the night. I was so sleep-deprived that sometimes I would fall into a deep sleep, only to wake up and realize she had been in pain for hours. I felt guilty for not helping her. At times, she would vomit from the nausea, and I would give her the medication again, unsure if I was doing the right thing. It was incredibly difficult for me to make decisions about her care. I was afraid of either over-medicating her or under-medicating her.

I remember moments when her suffering felt unbearable, and I even found myself wishing she would pass away to end her pain. I had no one to talk to, and I felt so guilty for having those thoughts. I felt helpless. My dying wife was suffering, and there was nothing I could do to ease her pain.

In the end, what helped me was thinking about how she might feel. I knew she would not want me to carry that guilt. I wouldn’t want her to feel guilty either. Writing in my journal allowed me to express my feelings, and overtime, I came to accept that I had done the best I could for her during her final weeks. Slowly, the guilt faded, and I no longer carry it with me as heavily.

Webinar Summary

Caregivers often experience feelings of guilt and a sense of failure as they navigate their caregiving role. The second week of the SCALE webinar series will focus on the thoughts that contribute to these feelings, as well as the skills that can help caregivers feel more confident and supported in their role.

Key Takeaways

1. **Remember:** It is NOT possible to fill ALL our roles ALL the time (at 100%).
2. **A Fixed Mindset:** Refers to the belief that one's basic qualities, such as intelligence, talents, and abilities are fixed traits that cannot be significantly changed.
3. **A Growth Mindset:** Refers to the belief that a person's intelligence and abilities can grow and improve through effort, learning, and perseverance.
4. **Key Principles of Mindset Shifting:**
    - *Acknowledge* that some aspects of my thinking are of a fixed mindset.
    - *Become aware* of the triggers for your fixed mindset. Pay attention to the thoughts and situations that trigger this fixed perspective. Look at the list below for some examples to help identity these triggers.
    - *Define* what a growth mindset would look like in relations to these fixed perspectives. Use the examples in the chart below as a starting point.
    - *Challenge* the fixed mindset by replacing it with a growth mindset alternative and repeating it to yourself regularly.

Examples of Potential Caregiver Fixed Mindsets

- If my care recipient's condition doesn't improve/remain stable, then I'm failing as a caregiver.
- If I don't always stay patient, then I'm not cut out for caregiving.
- If I need to ask for help, then I'm not capable enough.
- If I forget something important, then I'm irresponsible.
- If I struggle with the emotional toll and feel overwhelmed, then I'm not strong enough for this role.
- If I don't handle every situation perfectly, then I'm not doing a good job.
- If my care recipient has a bad day, then I'm not doing my job well.
- If I can't keep the house spotless, then I'm failing to create a good environment for my care recipient.
- If my care recipient isn't happy all the time, then I'm not providing enough emotional support or I'm doing something wrong.
- If I need a break, then I'm not dedicated enough to my caregiving role.
- If I can't calm my care recipient during a crisis, then I'm not a capable caregiver.
- If I don't sacrifice my own needs, then I'm being selfish.
- If I don't meet the expectations from family or doctors, then I'm not doing a good job.
- If my care recipient expresses frustration or anger, then I'm not caring for them properly.

Activity #1:
Mind Set Quiz

This short quiz is designed to help you gain insight into your mindset. The more honest you are with yourself, the more helpful it will be for your self-awareness.

You'll see a series of statements below. For each one, choose the response that feels most true for you: **Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree**. As you go, write down the number that matches your choice.

Strongly Agree= 0	**Agree= 1**	**Disagree= 2**	**Strongly Disagree= 3**

Statement	**Answer**
If I feel overwhelmed, then I am not strong enough to be a caregiver.	
I often get angry or annoyed when I get negative feedback about my performance.	
Talented people don't need to work so hard.	
You're either the type of person that can be a caregiver or you're not.	
Good caregivers can manage their caregiving and other roles without stress.	
A caring caregiver wouldn't ever feel resentment towards their care recipient.	
If I need help, it means I'm not capable of being a good caregiver.	
Total	0

Use your total score to get a better sense of whether your mindset currently leans more toward a fixed or growth perspective.

19-21 Strong Growth Mindset

14-18 Growth with Some Fixed Ideas

8-13 Fixed with Some Growth Ideas

0-7 Strong Fixed Mindset

Activity #2:
My Mindset Shifts

After listening to the webinar and learning more about examples of fixed mindsets that may be impacting your life, list in the left column are some examples from the mindset list that may sound familiar to you or note any fixed mindsets thoughts that you've experienced today or this week. Then, using the growth mindsets examples below as a guide, challenge yourself to come up with a growth mindset alternative to each fixed mindset thought.

Examples of Fixed Mindset & Growth Mindset

Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
"If I don't always stay patient, then I am not cut out for caregiving."	"If I don't always stay patient, I can learn from those moments and find ways to improve- caregiving is a continuous learning process"
"If I forget something important, then I am irresponsible"	"If I forget something important, I can use it as an opportunity to improve my organization skill or ask for assistance- it doesn't define my capability as a caregiver, it just means that I can always improve and learn more as I encounter challenges in life."
"If I don't handle every situation perfectly, then I'm not doing a good job."	"If I don't handle every situation perfectly, I can learn and grow from these experiences- perfection is not required to be a good caregiver."
"If my care recipient has a bad day, then I'm not doing my job well."	"If my care recipient has a bad day, it's not a reflection of my caregiving- it's a part of the process and I can focus on doing my best for them."
"If I can't calm my care recipient during a crisis, then I'm not a capable caregiver."	"If I can't calm my care recipient during a crisis, I can stay calm and try different approaches- each situation is a learning experience."

Values List

Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset

Self-Discovery Questions

The following reflection questions are designed as journaling exercises or prompts for personal introspection. Taking time for self-reflection can help reduce stress and support mental wellness, providing you with space to process your emotions and experiences.

If journaling isn't your preferred method, you can still use these questions as a guide by setting aside time to reflect on your caregiving journey. Remember, these questions can be revisited as your caregiving role evolves and as your values shift. Self-discovery is an ongoing process, and these reflections can offer valuable insights along the way.

1. Reflect on a challenge you faced today in your caregiving role: What did you learn from it? How can you use it to help you grow?

2. Think about a mistake you made this week: What can you learn from this mistake? How can you use it as an opportunity to improve or learn something new?

3. Describe a time when you persisted through difficulty: What motivated you to keep going, and how did it change you?

4. Think of someone you admire: How do they demonstrate a growth mindset? What can you learn from their approach to challenges?

5. Identify a limiting belief (fixed mindset belief) you realize that you hold: Write down some ways in which you can challenge and change this belief to support a shift to a growth mindset?

Remember...

Be kind to yourself; you are doing great things, but don't expect the impossible. Remember to focus on progress not perfection.

Suggested Resources

Videos:

OCO Webinar - Taking Care of Yourself While You Care for Others

OCO Webinar - Nonviolent Communication: Transforming Caregiver Guilt & Resentment Through Self-Empathy

Articles:

You're Not Meant to Do It Alone by Creating Connections

Why your mindset matters as a caregiver by Dr. Aaron Blight

Managing Caregiver Guilt by Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia

The Emotional Side of Caregiving by Family Caregiver Alliance

Books:

The following books are available in Ontario's public library system, either at your local library or through interlibrary loan.

Carol. S. Dweck, Mindset: *The New Psychology of Success* (Penguin Random House, 2019). ISBN: 9781400062751

Brianna Wiest, *The Mountain is You: Transforming Self-sabotage into Self-mastery* (Thought Catalog Books, 2020) ISBN: 9781949759228

Elaine Elliott-Moskwa, *The Growth Mindset Workbook: CBT Skills to Help You Build Resilience, Increase Confidence, and Thrive Through Life's Challenges* (New Harbinger Publishing, 2022) ISBN: 9781684038299