



“I feel angry and resentful”

NAVIGATING DIFFICULT EMOTIONS WITHIN
CAREGIVING RELATIONSHIPS



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.



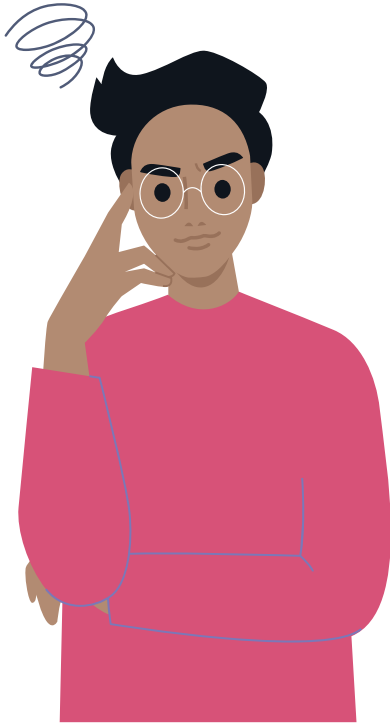
The Caregiver Role

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.



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PERSONAL CAREGIVING EXPERIENCE

When my husband required full-time care in 2010, our whole family fell into depression. As the primary caregiver, I felt it was my responsibility to lift everyone's mood. I thought the best way to do this was to only express positive feelings and constantly be optimistic and upbeat. It was tiring, but I thought I was doing everyone a favour. However, after carrying on this way for a year, I was burned out. After all, it is not natural to be positive and optimistic all the time - everyone has bad days!

I couldn't keep my emotions bottled up any longer. I had started experiencing more frequent migraines, and I was growing resentful toward my family. So, I began writing in a journal. Each night, I reflect on the sources of my negative emotions and then wrote about how I had responded to them. Gaining this insight helped me gradually open up to my family, including my husband. Although they didn't always enjoy hearing about my struggles, they understood where I was coming from. My family was then able to offer me the support I needed. This way of managing my emotions worked for me, and now I feel a great sense of relief.

Webinar Summary

Caregiving relationships often fall short of our expectations, leading to feelings of guilt, resentment, and anger. The fifth week of the SCALE webinar series will look at how these emotions impact caregivers. Participants will be supported in learning to recognize and address these emotions, enabling them to shift towards more fulfilling relationships with their care recipients.

Key Takeaways

1. Anger and Resentment are very common and normal emotions to experience as a caregiver.

Some of the contributing factors to this anger are:

- Loss of control
- Unmet expectations
- Role reversal
- Isolation
- Emotional and physical exhaustion
- Loss of self

2. It is important to remember that anger is a secondary emotion; there is always a raw emotion hiding under the surface. Uncovering that will be the first step in unpacking and addressing your anger. See the 'Anger Iceberg' image on Page 10.
3. Resentment often stems from unmet needs. By identifying which needs are being neglected or challenged in your caregiving role can help you address those needs and reduce the resulting anger.
4. An adult has about 6.5 thoughts per minute or 6,200 thoughts per day. Not all of them are helpful to us. An attuned awareness of our thoughts helps us notice and eliminate the thoughts that are unhelpful to us.
5. Cognitive distortions are irrational thoughts that shape how you see the world, how you feel, and how you act. It's normal to have these thoughts occasionally, but they can be harmful when they occur too frequently.

Activity #1:

Identify Your Cognitive Distortion(s)

Cognitive distortions are common thought patterns that often arise during times of stress or in difficult or triggering situations. Our brains may filter information in ways that can make things feel more overwhelming than they are. Identifying which cognitive distortions show up for you can help you notice when they are negatively impacting your thoughts and emotions. Self-awareness is the key to self-mastery.

Using the list of cognitive distortions below, put a check mark (✓) inside the box beside the 'cognitive distortion' that may be fuelling or amplifying your feelings of anger and resentment.

Types of Cognitive Distortions

- ☐ **Magnification and minimization:** Exaggerating or minimizing the importance of events. You might believe your own achievements are unimportant or that your mistakes are excessively important.
- ☐ **Catastrophizing:** Seeing only the worst possible outcomes of a situation.
- ☐ **Overgeneralization:** Making broad interpretations from a single or few events. "I felt awkward during my job interview. I am always so awkward."
- ☐ **Magical thinking:** The belief that thoughts, actions, or emotions influence unrelated situations. "If I hadn't hoped something bad would happen to him, he wouldn't have gotten into an accident."
- ☐ **Personalization:** The belief that you are responsible for events outside of your control. "My mom is always upset. She would be fine if I did more to help her."
- ☐ **Jumping to conclusions:** Interpreting the meaning of a situation with little or no evidence.
- ☐ **Mind reading:** Interpreting the thoughts and beliefs of others without adequate evidence. "She wouldn't go on a date with me. She probably thinks I'm ugly."
- ☐ **Fortune telling:** The expectation that a situation will turn out badly without adequate evidence.
- ☐ **Emotional reasoning:** The assumption that emotions reflect the way things really are. "I feel like a bad friend, therefore I must be a bad friend."

- ☐ **Disqualifying the positive:** Recognizing only the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive. You might receive many compliments on an evaluation but focus on the single piece of negative feedback.
- ☐ **“Should” statements:** The belief that things should be a certain way. “I should always be perfect.”
- ☐ **All-or-nothing thinking:** Thinking in absolutes such as “always,” “never,” or “every.” “I never do a good enough job on anything.”

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Activity #2:

Identify Your Secondary Emotion(s)

Anger is described as a “secondary emotion” because people tend to use it to protect their own raw, vulnerable or overwhelming feelings. Our raw feelings can be the messengers we need to teach us things about ourselves and can prompt insights into important life directions. There is something more below the surface of our anger.

Look at the image on the next page, titled “Anger Iceberg”, and try to name some emotions that may be fuelling your Anger within your caregiving role.

On the following page (pg. 11), you will replace your word for anger/unmet need with your secondary emotion (i.e., what you want and need). By recognizing the raw emotion under the surface, you can begin to uncover the unmet need that may be contributing to your resentment.

This exercise is about identifying the emotions beneath our anger to help us get one step closer to meeting our needs.

Anger Iceberg

Icebergs are large pieces of ice found floating in the open ocean. What you can see from the surface can be misleading. Most of the iceberg is hidden below the water.

This is how anger works. Often when we are angry, there are other emotions hidden under the surface.

An illustration of an iceberg floating in a blue ocean. The tip of the iceberg is above the water line, and the word "Angry" is written in large, dark red letters on it. A yellow sun is partially visible behind the left side of the iceberg. A red circle is drawn around a small section of the iceberg's tip, with a red line extending from it to the text on the right. Another red circle is drawn around the word "grief" in the submerged part of the iceberg, with a red line extending from it to the text on the right. The submerged part of the iceberg is filled with various emotion words in white text.

Angry

embarrassed scared grief
shame tricked overwhelmed
frustrated depressed disgusted
distrustful grumpy stressed
attacked rejected helpless
guilt trapped nervous anxious
trauma annoyed exhausted envious
disrespected unsure offended
disappointed lonely worried insecure
uncomfortable regret hurt

The Gottman Institute

Activity #2:

Identify Your Secondary Emotion(s)

Replace “I feel angry that” with the words, “I want/need.....”

Example 1:

I feel angry that.... my siblings aren’t helping me at all, that I have to do this alone!

I want/need.... more help. I realize I can’t do this on my own, this isn’t a job for one person.

Example 2:

I feel angry that..... my care recipient is so rude to me despite how much I do for them!

I want/need.... appreciation. I deserve to be treated with kindness, and I am not receiving that.

Fill out the following:

I feel angry that....

I want/need....

I feel angry that....

I want/need....

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. What is the situation that caused you to feel angry?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

[illegible]

4. What type of distortion is exacerbating the feeling?

[illegible]

Remember...

Anger and resentment in your caregiving role does NOT make you a bad person or a bad caregiver. It just means you are human.

Anger is a signal, not a failure.

Suggested Resources

Videos:

[Alleviating Caregiver Resentment by Dementia Careblazers](#)

[Caregivers Ask: How Do I Manage Anger by Pamela D Wilson](#)

Articles:

[Cognitive Distortions: 22 Examples & Worksheets by Positive Psychology](#)

[How to Cope with Anger as a Family Caregiver by The Key](#)

[Caregiver Resentment is Normal: Why it Happens and How to Mitigate it by Care.com](#)

[5 Ways to Manage Caregiver Anger](#)

OCO Toolkit:

OCO's [My Healthcare Journey Binder](#) Keep all the caregiving information you need in one place with the My Healthcare Journey Binder

The following resources come with a small cost. Purchasing them is not required for the program. They are offered as additional resources based on caregiver requests. If you're interested, we recommend checking your local library first.

Kurt J. Moore. Decoding Cognitive Distortions: Untangling the Threads of Negative Thoughts Patterns and Distorted Thinking: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding, Overcoming Distorted Thinking, and Strategies for Mental Clarity (2023). ISBN: 979-8872533344