



“I feel like nobody appreciates me”

**SETTING BOUNDARIES WITHIN
THE CAREGIVER RELATIONSHIP**



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 father suffered a stroke in 2008, it came as a shock to our family. I was 38 years old at the time and working in an important job, striving for a promotion to a more senior role. At first, my mother was able to care for my father, but after only a few months, she was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's. As their only child, I was left to care for both of my parents. I have always been a high achiever who is driven to succeed, so I refused to reduce my work hours. I assumed that I could handle both caregiving and working full-time.

After a few months of working around the clock - at my paid job during the day and caregiving at night - I began to feel burned out. Although everyone seemed supportive at first, I soon sensed that my co-workers were becoming annoyed when I had to leave meetings abruptly to take my parents to medical appointments.

One day, I decided that I had to talk to my boss about reducing my work responsibilities. I knew this might impact my career, but I knew it was necessary. To my surprise, my boss was very supportive. She talked me through all the available options; including taking time off work and shifting to more flexible part-time hours. I recognize that not everyone receives the same level of support at work, but I felt a great sense of relief knowing that my boss understood my responsibilities at home and valued my contributions at work. My parents are now living in long-term care, and while I continue to visit them regularly, I've returned to work full-time.

Webinar Summary

Balancing your own needs while supporting someone else's can be one of the most complex aspects of caregiving. In week 7 of the SCALE webinar series, caregivers will learn to establish and maintain healthy boundaries to prevent the blurring of roles and responsibilities. This webinar will discuss the emotions involved in boundary-setting and will support caregivers in establishing healthier, more balanced, relationships.

Key Takeaways

1. Identify your internal boundaries, your values and needs that need to be protected.

- When I notice I'm starting to feel [emotion or trigger] ...
 - Example: "When I notice I'm getting frustrated..."
- Instead of [unhelpful behavior] ...
 - Example: "Instead of raising my voice..."
- I will [new action or behavior aligned with my values] ...
 - Example: "I will take three deep breaths and walk away for a moment to calm myself."

2. Be as clear and as straightforward as possible. There is no need to raise your voice to preserve a boundary.

3. State your need or request directly in terms of what you'd like, rather than what you don't want or like. Use phrases such as:

- "I'd like to ..."
- "I'd rather..."
- "..... works for me."
- "I'm more comfortable with... "
- "I've decided that..."
- "I can only do this/meet/ talk on.... "
- "This is what's best for me..."

4. Be aware of and normalize for yourself any discomfort that arises as a result, whether it's guilt, shame, or remorse.

Activity #1: The Personal Space Map

This boundary setting exercise will help you visualize and establish boundaries to manage your time and energy effectively. Find a quiet space so that you can take the time needed to work through and reflect.

Reflecting on your Current Boundaries

Before completing the Personal Space Map below, spend a few minutes to think about your daily caregiving tasks and interactions. Consider where you feel overwhelmed or stretched too thin. Write down specific situations where you feel your boundaries are being crossed or where you struggle to say no.

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.

Activity #1:

The Personal Space Map (continued)

Below is a blank Personal Space Map. The larger circle on the next page is to represent yourself - your personal protected space. The smaller circles represent different areas of your life, such as caregiving tasks, work, family responsibilities, personal time, and social activities.

Identify Your Limits:

Within each area of the smaller circles on your map, note specific examples of where you need to set boundaries. For instance, in the “Caregiving Tasks” section, you might write “I need to limit caregiving tasks to the hours of 10-4” or “I will delegate certain tasks to other family members.”

Example:

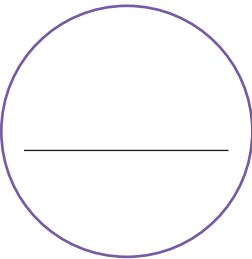
1.

Caregiving Tasks

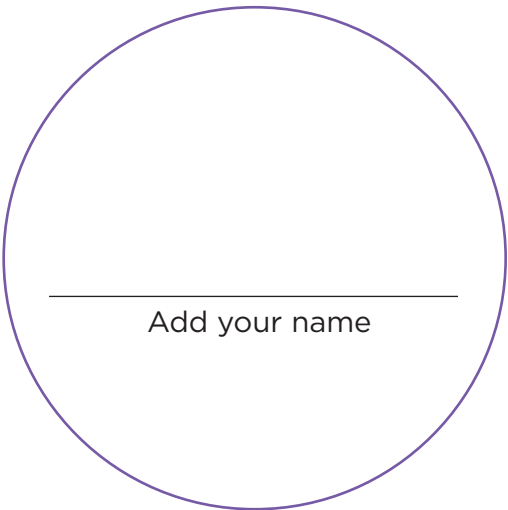
What’s your limit? (1)

I need to limit caregiving tasks to the hours of 10am to 4pm.

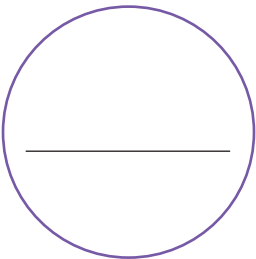
My Personal Space Map



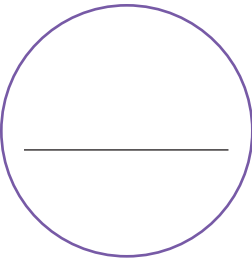
What's your limit? (1)



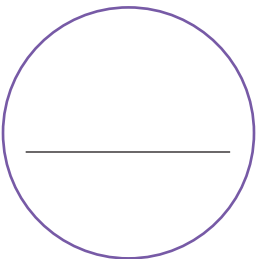
Add your name



What's your limit? (2)



What's your limit? (3)



What's your limit? (4)

Activity #2:

Bringing Boundaries into Action

A. Define Your Boundaries

For each area where you identified a need for boundaries in your Personal Space Map, on the next page, write down clear and actionable steps to bring these boundaries to fruition.

For example:

- “I will ask for help with grocery shopping once a week.”
- “I will schedule at least 30 minutes of personal time each day.”
- “I will set specific times when I am available for phone calls and limit them to those times.”

B. Communicate Your Boundaries

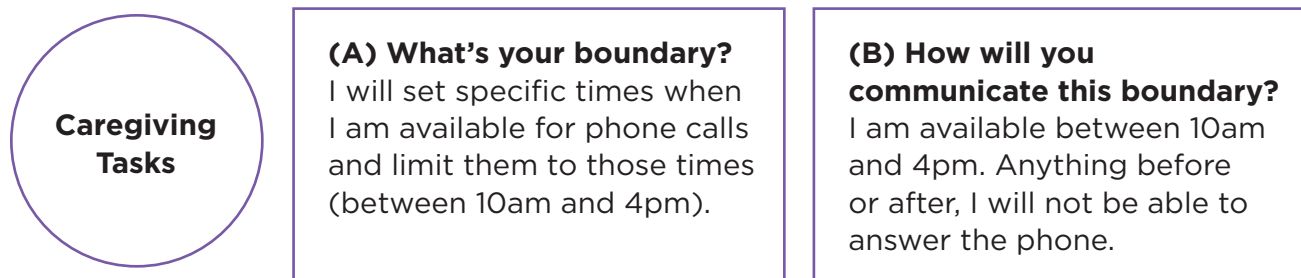
Next, write down how you will communicate these boundaries to others. Make sure you use “I” statements to express your needs clearly and calmly.

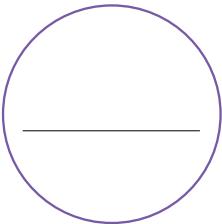
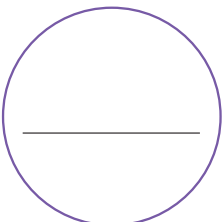
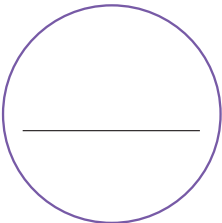
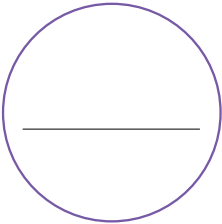
For example:

- “I need to take a break for 30 minutes each day to recharge.”
- “I can help with this task, but I need to finish my work first.”

Example:

1.



1.	(A) What's your boundary?	(B) How will you communicate this boundary?
		
2.	(A) What's your boundary?	(B) How will you communicate this boundary?
		
3.	(A) What's your boundary?	(B) How will you communicate this boundary?
		
4.	(A) What's your boundary?	(B) How will you communicate this boundary?
		

Activity #2:

Bringing Boundaries into Action (continued)

Reflect and Adapt

Put your boundaries into practice and observe how they impact your well-being and caregiving. Stay flexible – check in with yourself regularly to assess if the boundaries are working or if further adjustments are needed.

After a few weeks, review your Personal Space Map and the effectiveness of the boundaries you've set. Reflect on what's working well and what might need adjustment. Make any necessary changes to better support your needs and maintain a balanced caregiving role.

1. How did setting these boundaries impact my stress levels and energy?

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.

2. Were there any challenges in communicating my boundaries to others?"

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.

3. What additional support or resources might I need to maintain these boundaries effectively?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue 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.

4. Are there any adjustments I need to make?

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.

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. Was my care for myself and for my care recipient balanced today? What can I do differently for tomorrow to create more balance in my life.

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.

2. How do I feel when I try to set boundaries with my time or with others? What emotions come up?

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.

3. What beliefs or mind-sets might be preventing me from setting effective boundaries?

[illegible]

[illegible]

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.

Remember...

**You don't have to explain
or apologize for setting
boundaries. Your needs matter
just as much as anyone else's.**

Suggested Resources

Videos:

[Boundaries by Brene Brown](#)

[How to Set Boundaries as a Caregiver by Psych Hub](#)

[Setting Boundaries: Mental Health Lessons by RTÉ Player Original](#)

Articles:

[Why Boundary Setting is Important for Caregivers by Family Carers BC](#)

Books:

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

Carolyn A. Brent. *The Caregiver's Companion: Caring for Your Loved One Medically, Financially and Emotionally While Caring for Yourself*. (Hanover Square Press, 2021). ISBN: 9780373893096