
Supporting Your Heart When You Support Everyone Else

A Workshop Workbook

Presented by Charlotte Bayala

You don't have to earn the right to care for yourself. You don't have to wait until everyone else is okay.

You are worth caring for... not because of what you do for others, but because you're a human being with a heart that's been working so hard.

What You'll Take Away

- A Heart Check-In practice you can use anytime
- Permission to feel what you actually feel
- The difference between self-care and self-love
- A 4-6 breathwork reset for your nervous system
- One personalized micro act of self-love for this week

Why February Feels "Sticky"

Let's talk about why February can feel so complicated for caregivers.

The Holiday Hangover

The holidays ask a lot of us, not just the logistics, but...

The emotional labor.

Managing expectations.

Navigating family dynamics.

For caregivers, the holidays often mean doing more of everything while pretending everything is fine.

By the time February arrives, many of us are running on empty.

The Pressure of the Season

February is saturated with messages about love, romance, and happiness. But what if your reality doesn't match that picture? What if you're grieving, not just for someone you've lost, but for the way things used to be?

The Grief That Shows Up Without Warning

This might be anticipatory grief (grieving what's coming), historical grief (old losses resurfacing), or ambiguous grief (grieving someone who's still here but different). This kind of grief doesn't have a Hallmark card.

The Mental Load

The invisible weight of keeping track of everything. Medications. Appointments. What everyone needs. This mental load doesn't take a holiday.

**If any of this is landing for you
right now: This is normal.
This is what it means to be
human in a hard season while
carrying responsibilities that
don't pause. You're not doing
it wrong. You're doing
something incredibly hard.**

The Heart Check-In

Most of us have gotten really good at checking on everyone else. But when was the last time you checked in with your own heart?

This isn't about fixing anything. It's about noticing. Giving yourself permission to feel what you actually feel.

Guided Practice

1. Settle into wherever you're sitting. Soften your gaze downward.
2. Place one hand on your heart if that feels comfortable.
3. Notice what you notice: tightness, heaviness, numbness, fluttering.
4. Ask yourself gently: How is my heart doing today?

What did you notice during the Heart Check-In?

You Might Notice...

Tiredness • Heaviness • Numbness • Grief (old or new) • Irritation •
Sadness • Longing • Guilt

Whatever is there, let it be there. You don't have to fix it or make it pretty.

Naming What's True

Here's something important about feelings: The ones that stay hidden run the show. When we name something, when we give it words, we can start to work with it.

There's brain science behind this: When you name an emotion, you activate your prefrontal cortex the thinking part of your brain and it helps regulate the emotional centers.

Name it to tame it.

Complete this sentence:

"Right now, my heart is feeling..."

Now add:

"And that makes sense."

Because it does. Whatever you're feeling, it makes sense. Given everything you're navigating, your feelings are a reasonable response to an unreasonable situation.

Self-Love Is Not Self-Care

When I say "self-love," you might be hearing "self-care." They're not the same thing. Understanding the difference might change everything for you.

Self-Care	Self-Love
About what you do	About how you relate to yourself
Actions and activities	The way you treat yourself
External	Internal
Requires time, money, energy	Requires none of those things
Can be taken away	Goes with you everywhere
For the good days	For the hard days

Examples

- Self-care is taking a bath. Self-love is not berating yourself for being tired.
- Self-care is going to yoga. Self-love is speaking kindly to yourself when you can't make it.
- Self-care is a mental health day. Self-love is acknowledging you're struggling, even when you can't take one.

Why Self-Love Feels Hard

For caregivers, self-love can feel complicated. Let's name the reasons:

1. We've Been Trained to Put Ourselves Last

Many of us grew up with messages that good people sacrifice. That caring for yourself is selfish.

2. Guilt Is Always in the Room

Even when we try to do something for ourselves, guilt shows up immediately.

3. We've Seen the Wrong Version Modeled

The Instagram version of self-love doesn't match our lives.

4. We've Lost Touch with What We Want

When you spend years focused on someone else's needs, your own become fuzzy.

5. We're Exhausted

Self-love requires energy. And you don't have any left.

Which of these resonates most with you right now?

"But I Wouldn't Change It"

If there's a voice saying "But I love the person I care for. I wouldn't change this. It's hard, but it's meaningful..."
I hear it. And it's telling the truth.

Caregiving is hard AND it's love. It's exhausting AND it's meaningful.
Both things are true. They don't cancel each other out.

Something to Understand

Caring for yourself is not turning away from caregiving. It's turning toward it with more capacity.

When you've given yourself even small moments of care, something shifts. You have a little more patience. A little more presence. A little more ability to be there—really there—for the moments that matter.

Remember

Self-love doesn't take anything away from the people you care for. It gives them a better version of you.

The people you care for, don't want you to disappear into caregiving.

They would say: "I want you to be okay too."

Self-love isn't selfish. It's sustainable. It's how you stay in this for the long haul.

Your Permission Slip

Caregivers often wait for someone else to tell them it's okay.

Okay to rest.

Okay to feel what they feel.

Okay to put themselves somewhere on the list.

You have permission to support your own heart.

- You have permission to feel tired.
- You have permission to feel grief, even complicated grief.
- You have permission to not feel joyful just because there are hearts everywhere.
- You have permission to need something for yourself.
- You have permission to take five minutes, or two minutes, to be kind to yourself today.

My Permission Slip:

I give myself permission to...

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Micro Acts of Self-Love

These are small acts, things that take under five minutes, often under one minute. They're not life-changing on their own, but every time you do one, you're sending yourself a message: I matter too.

Circle or highlight any that resonate with you:

For Your Body

- Three slow breaths with your hand on your chest
- Rolling your shoulders back and unclenching your jaw
- Drinking a glass of water slowly, actually tasting it
- Stepping outside for 60 seconds to feel air on your skin
- Putting your feet flat on the floor—feeling the ground hold you
- Stretching your arms overhead, one breath, let them fall
- Holding something warm in your hands and feeling the warmth

For Your Mind

- Saying silently: "I'm doing the best I can"
- Writing down one thing that went okay today
- Letting go of one small thing on your to-do list
- Acknowledging something you did well, even if no one noticed
- Giving yourself permission to not know the answer
- Taking something off tomorrow's list before it even starts

Micro Acts of Self-Love

For Your Heart

- The Heart Check-In: Hand on chest, "How is my heart doing?"
- Acknowledging: "This is hard." (Not solving it. Just saying it.)
- Letting yourself feel something for 30 seconds without pushing it away
- Looking at a photo that brings you back to yourself
- Texting a friend just to say hi—zero obligation for a long conversation
- Putting your hand on your heart and saying: "I'm still here. That matters."
- Telling yourself something you'd tell a friend in your situation

For Your Spirit

- Listening to one song you love—actually listening, letting it reach you
- Looking out a window and noticing one thing
- Saying thank you to yourself: "Thank you, body, for carrying me today"
- Reading one poem or quote that reminds you of something bigger
- Lighting a candle and watching the flame for one minute

It's not about the act itself. It's about the intention behind it. The act is small. The message is not.

Choosing Your One Thing

I want you to leave with ONE thing. Not a long list. Not a new routine. Just one micro act of self-love you're going to offer yourself this week.

Step 1: What's Hurting Most?

Is it your body (exhausted, tense)? Your mind (overwhelmed, ruminating)? Your heart (disconnected, sad)?

Step 2: What Appeals to You?

Look back at the micro acts. Which one made you soften a little when you read it?

Step 3: What's Actually Possible?

Not in an ideal week... in YOUR week. What could you actually do?

My Commitment

We're going to attach your micro act to something you already do. When you attach a new behavior to an existing habit, you don't have to rely on memory or willpower.

My one micro act of self-love: _____

An existing moment in my day (be specific):

Examples: Pouring morning coffee, sitting in car before going inside, washing hands, closing laptop, brushing teeth, getting into bed

My Commitment

When I _____,

I will _____.

I'm doing this because my (body / mind / heart) needs:

**Thirty seconds of real
self-love is worth more
than ten minutes of
aspirational self-love
you never get to.**

The 4-6 Breathwork Reset

This is a tool you can use anytime: at work, at home, in the car, during caregiving stress. The magic is in the longer exhale: when you breathe out longer than you breathe in, you activate your vagus nerve, like pressing a brake pedal for your nervous system.

4-6 Breathing
Breathe IN through your nose:
1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4
Breathe OUT slowly:
1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . 6
Repeat 3 times

When to Use It

- At a red light
- In a bathroom stall at work
- Before a hard conversation
- After a hard conversation
- In the middle of the night when you can't sleep
- Anytime you need to tell your nervous system:
"We're okay. We can handle this."

No one has to know you're doing it. But your heart will know.

What You're Taking With You

You've already done the hardest part, you showed up for yourself today. In a life where everyone else comes first, you took this time for you. That's not small. That's an act of self-love right there.

Your Toolkit:

- The Heart Check-In
- Right now, my heart is feeling... And that makes sense.
- Your Permission Slip
- Your One Micro Act of Self-Love
- The 4-6 Breathwork Reset

"You don't have to earn the right to care for yourself. You don't have to wait until everyone else is okay. You are worth caring for, not because of what you do for others, but because you're a human being with a heart that's been working so hard."

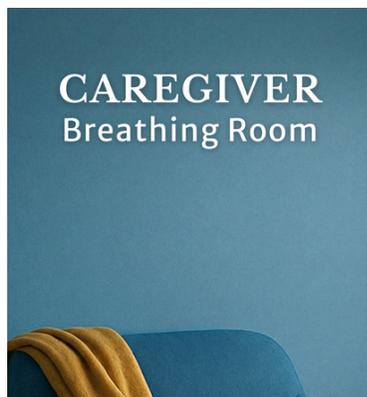
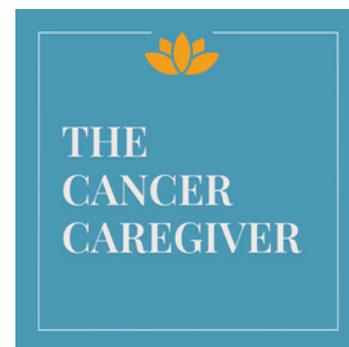
Continue the Support

If today's workshop was helpful, there are a few ways to continue building moments of steadiness into your day:

The Cancer Caregiver Podcast

Short, practical episodes designed to help caregivers feel seen while offering tools to manage overwhelm and emotional strain.

Visit: www.cancercaregiverpodcast.com



The Caregiver Breathing Room

Five-minute guided breathing resets you can use anytime—before work, after difficult moments, or when everything feels like too much.

Available wherever you listen to podcasts.

For Organizations & Teams

To learn more about caregiver-focused workshops, employee support sessions, or licensing options for caregiver resources.

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Charlotte Bayala is a caregiver educator, breathwork guide, and the host of **The Cancer Caregiver Podcast**. She brings over a decade of experience as a yoga and meditation teacher, along with lived experience as a long-term cancer caregiver, into her work supporting people who carry heavy emotional and mental loads.

Charlotte specializes in helping caregivers and caregiving employees develop practical, sustainable ways to regulate stress, protect their emotional capacity, and remain present, without asking them to add more to already full lives.

Her approach blends evidence-informed breathwork, nervous system regulation, and compassionate self-awareness, all designed to be usable in real life, including at work.

Through workshops, corporate programs, and audio-based tools, Charlotte helps individuals build steadiness in the moments that matter most. Her work is trusted by caregivers, healthcare organizations, and corporate teams seeking meaningful, human-centered support for those who support everyone else.

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