
Boundaries, Burnout & The Art of Saying No – Worksheet 1 – Recognizing Your Limits

Recognizing Your Limits

When you find yourself in a caregiving role, it's really important to take stock of your own capacity. This will allow you to put your energy where it can be used best, and do your helping work sustainably. This may include caring for a loved one who is actively suicidal, providing care for an aging parent, or engaging in helping work through your job, volunteer, or activist roles.

Without this understanding of your own capacity, you may inadvertently end up signing up for something you don't actually have the skills for. Or, you may find yourself with so much on your plate that there's no time and energy left to do the basic things you need to sustain yourself. Adapted from change readiness assessments used in organizational psychology, this chart will help you map out what you're willing AND able to do in any caregiving situation. Our willingness is about what we're prepared to offer wholeheartedly, without resentment or expectation of being somehow "paid back". Our ability is about what we're capable of, and this needs to account for our limited time, energy, and resources.

For example, if you're helping a partner with a mental health concern, you may be willing and able to lend a listening ear, but not able to offer psychological advice. In caring for an adult with physical needs, you may be able and willing to make phone calls to set up services, and not willing to be the only source of support. This will be different for everyone, and will likely change over the course of your life, from situation to situation.

Just think – what are you willing and able to do? Fill out the chart on the following page to help guide your way.



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Able and Willing	Able, Not Willing
Not Able, Willing	Not Able, Not Willing



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