

with+for

## Care for the Carer

Reflections and rituals for people who hold too much

Created by With + For Consulting

## A Note on Support and Care

This booklet was created as a companion, not a cure.

It offers space to reflect and release, but it is not a replacement for mental health care or cultural healing practices.

If you're carrying more than feels manageable, please know that seeking support is not a weakness, it's a continuation of care. You are not meant to hold everything alone.

Your healing may come from many places:

- a therapist or counsellor
- an Elder or Knowledge Keeper
- a friend who holds space
- the land itself
- your cultural or spiritual practices

All are valid. You are valid.

If you're in crisis or navigating something too heavy, we encourage you to connect with someone who can walk alongside you.

You matter. Your well-being matters. And there is help.

This booklet was created on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded lands of the M̓athexwi and Sema:th First Nations, in what is colonially recognized as Abbotsford, BC, Canada. We also acknowledge the ongoing relationships between Indigenous peoples and these lands since time immemorial.

With + For Consulting honours the stewardship, resistance, and knowledge of Indigenous communities and commits to practices that reflect accountability, repair, and relational care.

We invite you to reflect on whose lands you are on and how you can apply the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action 18 to 24 in the spaces you hold as you engage with this work.

Welcome.

This is not a workbook. This is a soft place to land.

*Care for the Carer* was created for those who hold work on the frontlines, supporting people when it isn't always easy. For those whose work doesn't always end when the shift does and still come back the next day. Whether you're in scrubs, in a clinic, in ceremony, at the bedside, in the field, or behind a desk - this is for you.

We live and work in systems shaped by urgency. Systems that reward productivity and often overlook pain. This booklet invites you to take back a moment of your time, not to process everything, but simply to name what you've carried, notice what mattered, and to lay some of it down.

You won't find to-do lists here. Instead, you'll find gentle prompts, reminders, and pauses. A space to breathe.

What you hold matters, and we know that you hold a lot.

Let's unpack your day.

## Before You Begin

Some days are full of good things. Others... not as much. But no matter what kind of day you've had, you've made a difference just by showing up.

This space is here to help you notice the bright spots: a moment that mattered, something that felt like care.

You don't need to write anything down, but feel free if it's helpful. This is about what works best for you. Take a breath and let yourself name a few of the day's best moments.

They're worth holding onto.

## Reflections

You don't have to answer them all. Just start where it feels right.

- What felt good today?
- What moment made me smile, even a little?
- What kind thing did I offer?
- Where did I speak up, or stay present, so someone felt safer?
- What kindness did I receive?
- How did I honour a person's dignity today, especially when the system didn't?
- What felt like connection?
- What did I *not* do because I knew it wouldn't be safe or respectful?
- What felt like impact?
- When did I feel most like myself?
- What helped me breathe easier today?
- What's one thing I want to remember about today?
- Who did I make feel heard today?
- Who had a positive experience with this system because of me?
- Where did I make space for someone else to be fully human?
- What did I offer that might ripple outward, even if I never see it?
- Where did I speak up, or stay present, so someone felt safer?

## Ways to Come Back to Yourself

You shapeshift all day. From listener, to advocate, to translator, to witness. It's a lot. Even when you love the work.

This section isn't about "self-care." It's about coming back to your body and your breath, especially after being stretched thin by systems that can take more than they give.

Try one of these little rituals at the end of a shift to remind yourself that your work day is done and you're just you again.

### Mark the Transition

- **Draw a line.** In your mind or across the floor. Step over it. Work stays behind.
- **Uncloak.** Imagine removing an invisible cloak of care. Hang it up. Let it rest.
- **Write one sentence.** "That was enough." "Let it stay at the door." Toss the page. Done.
- **Play your "I'm off" song.** No guilt, no shame. Let music help you shift.

### Use Your Body

- **Change your clothes.** Even just socks. Let your body feel the difference.
- **Peel something off.** Badge, bra, compression socks, whatever marks "work."
- **Wash your hands or take a quick shower.** Let the water carry the day away.
- **Take three deep breaths.** In through your nose, out through your mouth.

### Ground in the Present

- **Touch the ground.** Grass, carpet, concrete. Let something hold you.
- **Hold an object.** A stone, a key, a coin. Feel its weight. Say: *I'm here now.*
- **Sip something warm.** Tea, broth, water. Let it slow you down.
- **Turn off your notifications.** Or just put your phone in a drawer for a bit.

### Visualize Release

- **Picture a container.** Put the day inside. Seal it. Walk away.
- **Close the door with intention.** Say (in your head or out loud): *I'm done for today.*
- **Imagine smoke, water, or wind carrying away what's not yours to hold.**

## Create Your Own

Ask yourself:

- What helps me feel like myself again?
- What tells my body it's safe to rest?
- What reminds me I'm more than my shift?

Then do that. Or at least part of it.

## Why It Matters to Leave Work at Work

You don't need to carry everything home.

It's not about caring less. It's about lasting longer and being able to show up again tomorrow without burning out.

When you leave work at work, you create space for the rest of your life. Your family, your pets, your friends, your hobbies. Eat a meal without rushing. Read a book or take a nap.

Most importantly, you make time for yourself outside of the job. Leaving work at work doesn't mean you aren't dedicated. It simply protects your ability to come back tomorrow with something still left to give.

## Containment Practice: Letting It Rest for Now

Some days leave residue, the kind you carry in your chest or jaw or dreams. This practice helps you set it down.

**Step 1: Visualise** an impenetrable container. It can be anything:

- A locked safe
- A soft pouch in space
- A stone vault under a tree
- A box made of light

The only thing that matters is that it's perfect for you. Don't overthink it.

**Step 2: Name** the experiences you want to leave in this container and not take home with you?

**Step 3: Visualise** sealing your container, place it back where it'll be safe, and walk away.

**Step 4: Remind** yourself that this isn't yours to carry. You did enough, You were enough, and your workday is done.

**Step 5: Breathe.** Inhale 4. Hold 4. Exhale 6. Feel your feet. Feel your body. Feel the shift.

## Stay Connected

This reflection guide was created by With + For Consulting, a small practice rooted in equity, care, and real-life system change.

We support frontline workers, teams, and communities through:

- Trauma-informed education
- Patient and caregiver engagement
- Equity strategy and communication
- Systems navigation and advisory support
- Lived experience consulting and facilitation
- Tools like this one designed to hold space, not take it up

It was developed by Meghann Hernandez, a healthcare leader, equity strategist, and someone who believes deeply in relational work, safe systems, and creating space for people to be themselves.

If something in these pages resonated, we'd love to hear from you.

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Thanks for the work you do. And for all the ways you do it.