

The Stoic Caregiver

A free gift from Esther Kane, CAPS, C.D.S.

A Mini-Devotional 7 Days of Calm

A mini-devotional for caregivers who need steady ground

Dear caregiver,

Caring for someone you love can be both a gift and a heavy load. Over 2,000 years ago, the Stoic philosophers taught simple ideas that still help people stay steady when life feels out of control.

This mini-devotional gives you one idea a day for seven days. Each day has a short quote, a reflection, a small practice, and space to write. It takes about five minutes. Read it with your morning coffee, in a waiting room, or before bed.

You don't have to be perfect at this. Just show up for yourself, one day at a time.

*With care,
Esther Kane, CAPS, C.D.S.*

This devotional is for encouragement and general education. It is not a substitute for medical or mental health care. If you feel overwhelmed or hopeless, please reach out to your doctor or a counselor. Quotes from Marcus Aurelius and Seneca are from the public-domain translations by George Long and Richard M. Gummere; Epictetus quotes are from the W. A. Oldfather translation.

DAY 1

Know What Is Yours to Carry

"Some things are under our control, while others are not under our control."

Epictetus, Enchiridion 1

Reflection

Caregiving can make you feel responsible for everything. The diagnosis. The mood. The outcome. But much of that was never yours to control.

Epictetus taught that peace starts with sorting life into two piles. What you can control: your choices, your effort, and how you respond. What you can't: other people's actions, the course of an illness, and what already happened.

When you stop carrying what isn't yours, you have more strength for what is.

Today's Practice

Draw a line down the middle of a page. On the left, list what you can control today. On the right, list what you can't. Give your energy to the left side.

My Thoughts

DAY 2

It's the Story, Not the Situation

"It is not the things themselves that disturb men, but their judgements about these things."

Epictetus, Enchiridion 5

Reflection

Your mother asks the same question for the fifth time. Your father refuses his walker again. The event is small. The story you tell yourself about it can make it huge: "She's doing this on purpose." "I'm failing."

The Stoics didn't ask us to pretend things are fine. They asked us to notice the thoughts we add on top.

When you catch that extra story, you get to choose a kinder, truer one.

Today's Practice

The next time you feel upset, pause and ask: "What happened, and what am I telling myself about it?" Write both down.

My Thoughts

DAY 3

Expect the Difficult Moments

"Begin the morning by saying to thyself, I shall meet with the busy-body, the ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial."

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 2.1

Reflection

Marcus Aurelius was an emperor, and he still started his day expecting to deal with difficult people. This wasn't pessimism. It was preparation.

If you care for someone who is critical or stubborn, you already know they may not change. Trying to fix them wears you out.

When you expect the hard moment, it loses some of its power to surprise and hurt you.

Today's Practice

Tomorrow morning, take one minute to picture a hard moment you might face. Decide now how you want to respond.

My Thoughts

DAY 4

Your Time Is Precious

"Nothing, Lucilius, is ours, except time."

Seneca, Letters to Lucilius 1

Reflection

Caregivers give away hours without counting. Appointments, phone calls, laundry, waiting rooms. It adds up fast.

Seneca reminds us that time is the one thing we truly own. Giving it with love is a gift. Letting it slip away without noticing is a loss.

Protecting a little time for yourself isn't selfish. It's what keeps you able to keep giving.

Today's Practice

Look at your week. Find 15 minutes that can belong to you. Write it on the calendar like any other appointment.

My Thoughts

DAY 5

One Day at a Time

"Do not disturb thyself by thinking of the whole of thy life."

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 8.36

Reflection

When you think about the months or years of caregiving ahead, it can feel crushing. "How will I keep doing this?"

Marcus Aurelius had a simple answer: don't carry the whole road at once. Just handle what is in front of you today.

Today is manageable. You have handled every single day so far.

Today's Practice

When worry about the future shows up, say to yourself: "Just today." Then name one task you can finish in the next hour.

My Thoughts

DAY 6

Most Fears Never Arrive

"We suffer more often in imagination than in reality."

Seneca, Letters to Lucilius 13

Reflection

Caregivers are experts at "what if." What if she falls at night? What if the money runs out? What if I get sick?

Planning ahead is wise. Worrying in circles is not. Seneca noticed that most of what we dread never happens, yet we suffer through it anyway.

Turn a worry into a plan, then set it down.

Today's Practice

Write down your biggest "what if." Next to it, write one practical step that would help if it happened. Then let the rest go for today.

My Thoughts

DAY 7

Find Your Inner Retreat

"It is in thy power whenever thou shalt choose to retire into thyself."

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 4.3

Reflection

You may not be able to take a vacation right now. Marcus Aurelius knew that rest doesn't always need a beach or a mountain.

You can find a quiet place inside yourself: a few slow breaths, a favorite memory, a moment of gratitude.

That calm spot is always with you, even in a hospital hallway or a busy kitchen.

Today's Practice

Three times today, stop for five slow breaths. Notice one thing you are grateful for each time.

My Thoughts

Looking Back on Your Week

Take a few minutes to notice what shifted.

Which day's idea helped me the most?

One thing I'm letting go of:

One way I'll keep caring for myself:

Keep going

If these seven days helped, *The Stoic Caregiver* book series offers 60 lessons for the caregiving journey. Find the books at **TheStoicCaregiver.com**. For practical home safety help, visit **SeniorSafetyAdvice.com**.