

# GUILT METER

Managing Caregiver Guilt



COMMUNITY FOR  
CAREGIVERS

# WELCOME

Hello and welcome to this course on Managing Caregiver Guilt.

We are so excited that you are part of the Community for Caregivers and hope you find strength and support here!

This workbook provides you with all of the tools and activities we cover in this course. It also gives you space to write your thoughts and action plans as we go through each section.

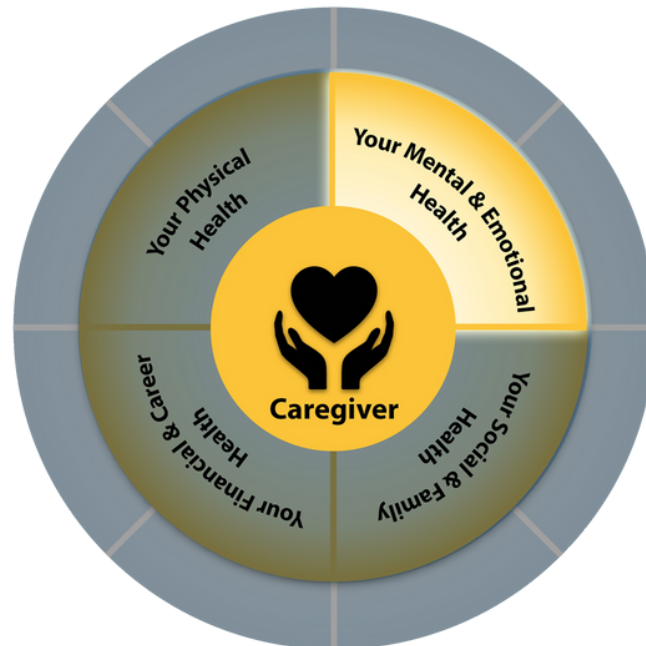
Please save a blank copy of this workbook so you always have it for reference. As your situation changes, you may find yourself wanting to revisit the principles taught in the course.

Go ahead and PRINT this now so you can begin writing. Let's get started!



# MENTAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH

## Managing Feelings of Guilt



**We KNOW that there is a strong relationship between your caregiving and your mental and emotional health.**

This course will explore ideas to help you understand and manage your feelings of guilt. It includes a guilt meter to help you assess where you are at with your feelings. There is also an activity for you to consider what things you might do to work through the feelings of guilt you are experiencing. Please remember to reach out to a health care professional if you are feeling high levels of guilt that are unmanageable.

We'll cover:

- How to observe your guilt and make notes about what events trigger those feelings
- Managing your guilt by taking action towards improving the situation or your understanding of it.

# GUILT METER

Note: This reflection activity is based on current research and therapeutic practices, but is not meant to replace the care or advice given from medical professionals. This guilt meter is to be used as a tool, the word descriptions and levels may not reflect your range of guilt and you may not experience these emotions in the sequence shown below.

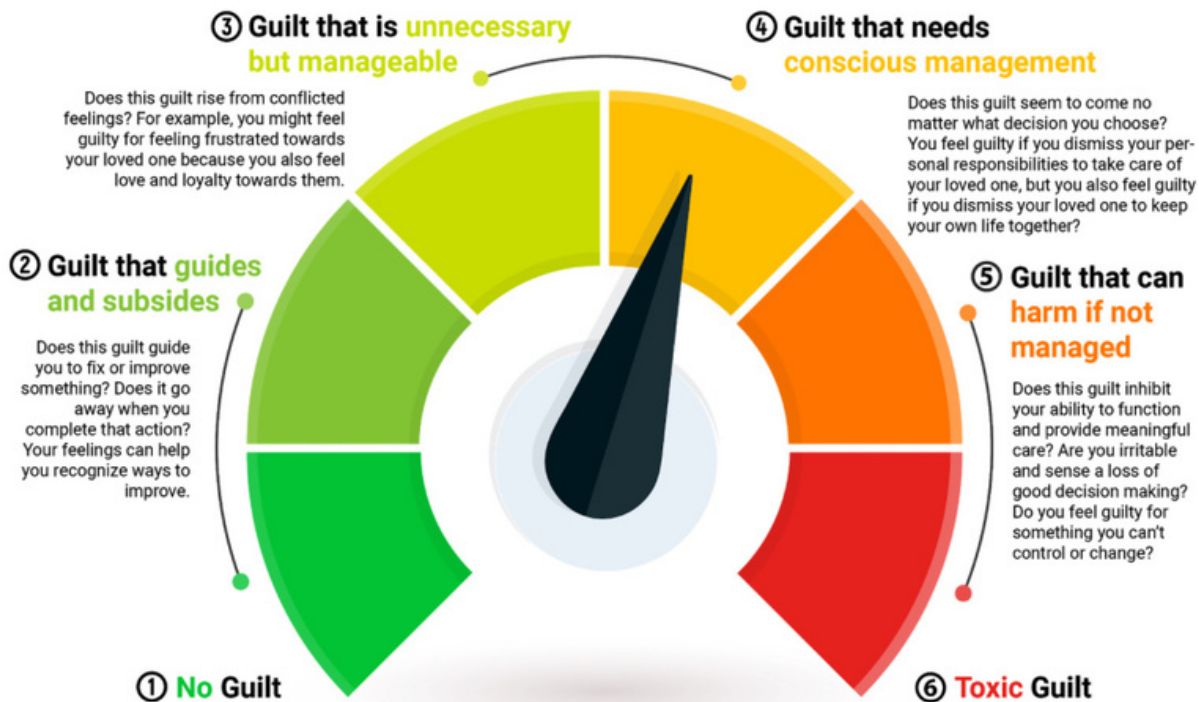


This reflection activity is a tool to help you:

- Recognize your guilt level
- Create an action plan to prevent and lower your guilt

## 1. Assess Guilt - Recognize your guilt level

Read through the guilt meter below, where do you feel your guilt levels are? Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings; they are valid. Understand that you likely won't be able to avoid guilt while being a caregiver. Let the good guilt guide you and acknowledge the rest as unhelpful and needing to be addressed.



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## 2. Take action - Create an action plan to prevent and lower your guilt

Where did you place yourself on the guilt meter? Refer to the action ideas below and determine what you will do as you notice your guilt levels rising.

### ① No Guilt



**Action idea** - Strive to be mindful of how this feels for you.

### ② Guilt that guides and subsides



**Action idea** - Continue to let moments of guilt guide you to improve yourself.

### ③ Guilt that is unnecessary but manageable



**Action idea** - Reflect on your guilt and any underlying feelings. Recognize that your guilt may be a result of conflicting feelings and not negative actions on your part.

### ④ Guilt that needs conscious management



**Action idea** - Practice self-compassion. If a friend was in your shoes, what would you say to them? Seek to change your "ideal" to a more realistic goal.

### ⑤ Guilt that can harm if not managed



**Action idea** - Recognize that you may be feeling guilt for something you can't control or change. Label that guilt as unhealthy and remind yourself, "I did the best I could with the knowledge and resources I had."

### ⑥ Toxic Guilt



**Action idea** - Find a friend or family member to share how you're feeling. Seek the help of a qualified health professional as needed.

# ADDITIONAL IDEAS AND RESOURCES

To Help Improve and Maintain Caregiver Mental & Emotional Health

**Physical Health & Activity:** A strong mind-body connection exists such that physical activity and health can directly impact mental and emotional health.

- Practicing yoga
- Visiting with medical doctors
- Psychiatrists/psychologists
- Chiropractors
- Acupuncture and other non-Western medicine providers

**Social Activity:** A strong connection exists between your mental and emotional health and your social health. Too many caregivers find themselves feeling alone and isolated.

- Join a caregiver support group
  - Local/in-person
  - Online - Be sure to join the Community for Caregivers Facebook Group
- Time with (a) good friend(s)
- Join a fitness club or interest group

**Self-Reflection and Self-Care:** It is crucial to make yourself a priority and make time for yourself.

- Get rest and respite
- Keep a journal
- Keep a gratitude journal
- Perform breathing exercises
- Spend time in nature
- Make time for yourself. What fills your tank? Make a list and do something on it. Show yourself you are important to you.

**Spiritual Practice:** Connecting with a higher power can strengthen you.

- Connect with a faith community or spiritual group
- Recognize a higher power
- Practice principles of grace, forgiveness, and peaceful problem solving
- Personal devotional/worship habits (scripture, inspirational reading, prayer, spiritual meditation)

# ADDITIONAL IDEAS AND RESOURCES

Continued

**Service:** Research shows that when we help others, we feel better.

- Volunteer for a higher cause
- There are many places you can volunteer: Community centers, libraries, hospitals, faith organizations, animal shelters, food banks, etc.
- Or informally serve people around you (neighbors, family, friends)

**Therapy & Counseling:** There are wonderful tools to help guard and improve our mental and emotional health. There is power in sharing.

- One-on-one therapy (e.g., CBT, DBT, EMDR)
- Support groups
- Many providers have both in-person and online options

**Tapping Into Your Creativity:** Being creative improves your health.

- Visual arts (e.g., draw, color, sculpt, paint)
- Knit, sew, crochet
- Write
- Musical arts (e.g., sing, dance, play an instrument)
- Create in whatever way brings you joy and helps you feel “in the flow”

## **Emergency Contacts**

- Emergency Medical Services: 911
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- SAMHSA Treatment Referral Helpline: 1-877-SAMHSA7 (1-877-726-4727)

*\*This is not a comprehensive list, and as with all that is taught in this course, you are encouraged to seek help from qualified medical and mental-health professionals to obtain appropriate assessments and corresponding treatment plans.*

