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The Enabler or The Caretaker Clinical Practice Workbook

A clinically branded, function-preserving edition retaining the original exercises, psychoeducation, checklists, logs, planning tools, and response space.

DSM-5-TR · ICD-11 CLINICAL ALIGNMENT

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How to use this workbook

- Use this workbook selectively and collaboratively; it is educational and does not replace individualized assessment, diagnosis, treatment, medical care, or crisis services.
- Skip, pause, or modify any activity that increases distress, danger, shame, or loss of functioning. Adapt language for culture, disability, neurodivergence, health, resources, and lived context.
- Ratings in this workbook are reflection tools unless a named, validated measure and interpretation are explicitly provided.

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Self-Assessment

The following are common signs you might be an enabler. Rate each statement on a scale from 1-5 (1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree”):

Statement	Rate (1-5)
1. “I often make excuses for my loved one's harmful or irresponsible behavior.”	1-2-3-4-5
2. “I tend to take on responsibilities that should belong to my loved one to prevent them from failing or facing stress.”	1-2-3-4-5
3. “I avoid confrontation even when I feel taken advantage of or hurt by my loved one's actions.”	1-2-3-4-5
4. “I frequently lend money to my loved one or pay their bills, even when it puts my own financial stability at risk.”	1-2-3-4-5
5. “I often lie to others to cover up for my loved one's mistakes or issues.”	1-2-3-4-5
6. “I feel guilty when I think about setting boundaries with my loved one, fearing they won't be able to cope without my help.”	1-2-3-4-5
7. “I fear that if I don't help, my loved one will suffer serious consequences that they won't recover from.”	1-2-3-4-5
8. “I believe that my loved one's happiness and well-being are entirely dependent on my support.”	1-2-3-4-5
9. “I have neglected my own needs, health, or well-being because I am too focused on helping my loved one.”	1-2-3-4-5
10. “I feel resentful towards my loved one for their behavior, but I still continue to help them avoid consequences.”	1-2-3-4-5

Score: ____/50

The score reflects the severity and impact of your enabling behavior.

1. What statements resonated with you more than the others?

2. Which of the identified patterns or habits from the questionnaire do you feel most interested in working on changing?

Identifying Your Enabling Behaviors

- List specific actions or patterns of behavior that may be enabling. The following are some common examples. Check off the ones you often engage in or add more to the list:

- ☐ **Making Excuses:** Defending the individual's problematic behavior to others.
- ☐ **Minimizing the Issue:** Downplaying the seriousness of the behavior or its consequences.
- ☐ **Denial:** Refusing to acknowledge there is a problem.
- ☐ **Avoiding Confrontation:** Choosing not to address the issue to keep peace.
- ☐ **Blaming Others:** Attributing the person's behavior to outside factors or other people.
- ☐ **Covering Up:** Lying or covering up evidence of the person's behavior.
- ☐ **Financial Support:** Providing money that allows continuation of the behavior.
- ☐ **Taking Over Responsibilities:** Performing tasks the individual should be managing themselves.
- ☐ **Ignoring Negative Behavior:** Turning a blind eye when the individual behaves inappropriately.
- ☐ **Rescuing:** Saving the person from crises or legal trouble.
- ☐ **Failing to Enforce Boundaries:** Not sticking to set limits or consequences.
- ☐ **Prioritizing Their Needs:** Consistently putting the individual's needs above your own.

- ☐ **Tolerating Abuse:** Accepting verbal, emotional, or physical abuse from the individual.
- ☐ **Neglecting Self-Care:** Focusing so much on the individual that you ignore your own health and well-being.
- ☐ **Suppressing Emotions:** Keeping your emotions in check to avoid upsetting the individual.
- ☐ **Maintaining Secrecy:** Keeping the individual's behavior a secret from others who may be able to help.
- ☐ **Offering "One More Chance":** Repeatedly giving the individual another chance without any change in behavior.
- ☐ **Misguided Love:** Believing that protecting the individual from hardship is an act of love, when it may hinder their growth.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

- Think about times when you may have prevented your loved one from experiencing the natural consequences of their actions. Write down specific examples.

- What feelings or fears surface when you consider not stepping in to help your loved one?

Enabling Behavior Log

- Create a log to record instances of enabling behavior as they occur. Include the situation, your action, and the immediate outcome.

Situation	Your action	Immediate outcome
<i>e.g., partner missed work because of hangover</i>	<i>I called their employer and claimed they are ill, asking for a sick day on their behalf.</i>	<i>My partner kept their job and was relieved that they didn't have to face the consequences of their drinking. However, I prevented them from recognizing the severity of their behavior's impact on their professional life.</i>

Situation	Your action	Immediate outcome

The Enabling Cycle

1. Trigger Identification

- Consider the circumstances or emotions that often trigger your enabling behavior. The following are some common examples. Check off the ones you relate to or add more to the list:

- ☐ **Fear of Conflict** - Avoiding confrontation with the person.
- ☐ **Guilt** - Feeling responsible for the person's problems.
- ☐ **Denial** - Refusing to acknowledge the severity of the person's issue.
- ☐ **Love** - Wanting to protect the person from harm or discomfort.
- ☐ **Sympathy** - Feeling sorry for the person and their circumstances.
- ☐ **Control** - Trying to manage the situation or the individual's behavior.
- ☐ **Hope** - Believing that this "one last time" will truly be the last.
- ☐ **Desperation** - Feeling that there is no other option but to help.
- ☐ **Rescue Fantasy** - The belief that your help will save or cure the person.
- ☐ **Social Pressure** - Concern about how others will view the situation.
- ☐ **Financial Dependency** - Relying on the person financially, motivating you to keep them stable.
- ☐ **Emotional Dependency** - Relying on the person emotionally to such an extent you can't see them fail.
- ☐ **Shame** - Feeling embarrassed by the person's behavior and trying to cover it up.
- ☐ **Naivety** - Not understanding the nature of the problem or its consequences.

- ☐ **Tradition or Cultural Norms** - Believing that you must always support family or partners regardless of the situation.
- ☐ **Manipulation** - Falling for manipulative tactics from the person with the issue.
- ☐ **Lack of Boundaries** - Having trouble setting and maintaining clear boundaries.
- ☐ **Insecurity** - Fearing that not helping will result in the person leaving or loving you less.
- ☐ **Misguided Helpfulness** - Genuinely wanting to help but not realizing you're doing more harm than good.
- ☐ **Lack of Knowledge** - Not knowing alternative ways to genuinely support the person's recovery.
- ☐ **Avoidance** - Not wanting to deal with the stress or fallout of the person's behavior.
- ☐ **Time Pressure** - Believing that taking over tasks will be quicker and easier than letting the person face the consequences.
- ☐ **Misinterpretation of Duty** - Believing you have a moral duty to alleviate all suffering for the person.
- ☐ **Pity** - Feeling that the person cannot cope or succeed without your intervention.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

2. Rate Your Triggers

For each trigger listed, rate the intensity of the emotional response you expect or have experienced using a scale from 1 (minimal discomfort) to 10 (severe distress).

The Costs of Enabling

1. Emotional Costs

- Identify the emotions you experience as a result of your enabling behavior (e.g., guilt, anxiety, sadness, anger).

2. Physical and Health Costs

- Record any physical or health-related issues you have experienced that you believe are related to stress from enabling (e.g., sleep disturbances, headaches, fatigue).

3. Relationship Costs

- Examine the impact your enabling behaviors have had on other important relationships in your life (e.g., with a spouse, other family members, friends).

4. Financial Costs

- Detail any financial burdens that have resulted from enabling, such as loaning money that is never repaid or paying for things that enable the continued problematic behavior. Reflect on how these financial strains have affected your quality of life and future planning.

5. Your Loved One's Costs

- List the ways in which your enabling behaviors may have prevented your loved one from facing necessary challenges and growing from them.

What You Can Control

Understanding what you can and cannot control can help reduce the compulsion to enable and increase emotional well-being. The following are some examples.

Things I Can Control	Things I Cannot Control
- My actions, words, beliefs, boundaries - The time and energy I dedicate - How I respond to other people's actions - The way I communicate my feelings - Decisions about my finances, who I spend time with - My attitude towards recovery, change	- Other people's choices, feelings, behaviors - The consequences of someone else's actions - How others react to boundaries, perceive me - The pace at which someone else recovers, changes - Others' commitments to sobriety - The need for others to hit rock bottom, have an epiphany

Behavioral Replacement

- List specific enabling behavior you often engage in that you want to change:

- Identify the need or desire it fulfills for you (e.g., feeling needed, avoiding conflict).

- Propose a healthier alternative that meets the same underlying need without perpetuating dependency.

- Consider actions that encourage independence, for both you and the person you've been enabling. The following are some examples. Check off the ones you think will be helpful or add more to the list:

- ☐ **Encouraging Responsibility** - Encourage the person to take responsibility for their actions and consequences.
- ☐ **Offering Support for Treatment** - Help them connect with professional support services or treatment programs.

- ☐ **Expressing Concern** - Share your worries about their behavior in a loving and non-confrontational way.
- ☐ **Facilitating Self-Help** - Direct them toward self-help groups where they can gain insights from peers.
- ☐ **Modeling Healthy Behaviors** - Set a good example with your own behavior.
- ☐ **Reinforcing Positive Changes** - Acknowledge and praise positive steps they take.
- ☐ **Empathy Without Rescue** - Offer emotional support without fixing their problems.
- ☐ **Redirecting Help** - Point them to resources and encourage them to use these tools when they need help.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

- Develop an action plan detailing how you will practice these new behaviors.

- Brainstorm coping strategies to manage these uncomfortable feelings (e.g., deep breathing, talking to a supportive friend, journaling).

Setting Boundaries

1. Personal Values and Limits

- Determine your limits by reflecting on past experiences where you felt discomfort, resentment, or loss of control due to lack of boundaries.

2. Recognizing Enabling Patterns

- List situations where you notice a pattern of enabling behavior. Describe how the absence of firm boundaries contributes to the enabling dynamic.

3. Defining New Boundaries

- Clearly define the boundaries you want to set in each scenario identified above. Be specific about what you will and will not accept or do in these situations.

4. Emotional Preparedness

- Reflect on the emotions you anticipate feeling when enforcing these new boundaries.

- Prepare responses for managing feelings of guilt, fear, or anxiety that may arise when setting or maintaining boundaries.

5. Communication Strategies

- Plan out how you will communicate your boundaries to others. Consider using “I” statements to express your needs assertively without blame.

- Think about possible reactions from others and how you will handle them while standing firm in your decisions.

Assertive Communication - Expressing needs

Example Scenario: Refusing a Request to Borrow Money

Communication Style	Description	Example
Passive	Avoiding expressing one's own opinions or feelings, protecting one's rights, and identifying and meeting one's needs.	"Oh, it's okay, I guess you can borrow money." (even though you need it)
Aggressive	Standing up for oneself in a way that is inappropriate and violates the rights of others.	"No! I won't lend you money! You always ask and never pay it back. Can't you manage your own finances?"
Passive-Aggressive	Appearing passive on the surface but in reality acting out anger in a subtle, indirect, or behind-the-scenes way.	"Sure, I'll lend you the money..." (Then later neglecting to give the money on time.)
Assertive	Expressing one's opinions and feelings and advocating for one's own rights in a way that is honest, direct, and appropriate, respecting others.	"I understand you need financial help right now, but I really need the money right now. Let's find another way to help you address your situation."

1. Self-Reflection on Communication Styles

- Reflect on past situations where you might have engaged in non-assertive communication (passive, aggressive, or passive-aggressive). Identify the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that led to these non-assertive responses.

2. Identifying Your Needs

- Write down recent instances where you felt disregarded or overlooked and had difficulty expressing your needs. Describe what need was unmet and why it is important for you to have that need addressed.

3. Practicing "I" Statements

- Use "I" statements to express your feelings and needs directly and respectfully (e.g., "I feel [feeling] when [situation], and I need [need].").

4. Role-Playing Scenarios

- Create hypothetical scenarios where you might typically enable someone else. Script out assertive responses using "I" statements and other assertive communication techniques for these scenarios.

5. Anticipate Reactions

- Predict how others might respond to your assertive communication.

- Plan for healthy ways to hold your ground if your assertive communication is met with resistance or hostility.

Saying No

1. Understanding Your Patterns

- Reflect on a time where you wanted to say no but instead agreed to something against your wishes.

- Analyze why you felt unable or reluctant to say no. Was it fear of conflict, guilt, a desire to be liked, or not wanting to let others down?

2. Exploring the Impact

- Consider the consequences of not saying no. How did it affect your emotions, time, and personal wellbeing?

- Identify how these instances may have enabled the other person's dependency or negative behaviors.

3. Developing Your 'No'

- Phrase your no clearly and succinctly. Practice writing it down: "No, I can't do that," or "No, that doesn't work for me."

- Avoid over-explaining or justifying your no. Remember that "No" is a complete sentence.

4. Visualize Saying No

- Imagine different scenarios in which you need to say no. Envision yourself saying no firmly and calmly.
- Reflect on how you feel after visualizing these scenarios. Recognize any discomfort and remind yourself that it's okay to prioritize your needs.

Managing Guilt

1. Identifying the Guilt

- Describe a recent situation where you felt guilty about not enabling someone or thinking about not enabling them.

- Examine why you felt guilty. What beliefs or assumptions underlie these feelings?

2. Challenging Guilty Thoughts

- List your thoughts associated with the guilt. The following are some common examples. Check off the ones you relate to or add more to the list:

- ☐ "I know I shouldn't do this, but I can't seem to stop myself."
- ☐ "If I don't help, who will?"
- ☐ "They might get hurt if I don't step in."
- ☐ "I feel responsible for their well-being, even though I know it's not my fault."
- ☐ "I fear they'll reject me if I stop helping."

- ☐ "I hate seeing them suffer, so I do what they ask, even though it's not good for them."
- ☐ "I can't stand the thought of them being angry with me."
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

- Challenge each thought by asking yourself: "What would I tell a friend in the same situation, having the same thought"

- Rewrite the thought in a way that is more accurate and balanced.

3. Self-Compassion Break

- Practice a self-compassion break. Acknowledge your difficult feeling ("This is a moment of suffering"), offer yourself kindness ("May I be kind to myself"), and remember that imperfection is part of the shared human experience ("I'm not alone").

- Notice any changes in your feelings of guilt after this exercise.

4. Behavioral Experiments

- Design small experiments to confront situations that trigger your guilt, such as saying no or setting a boundary.

- Predict how you'll feel and what the outcomes will be, then compare this with what actually happens.

What actually happened

- Use this information to update your beliefs about the necessity and impact of your enabling behaviors.

Identifying Supportive Relationships

1. Relationship Inventory

- List all your current significant relationships (family, friends, colleagues, etc.). Next to each name, note how you feel after interacting with each person (e.g., energized, drained, respected, used).

Relationships	How you feel after interactions

2. Characteristics of Supportive Relationships

- Reflect on what qualities you value in a relationship, such as trust, respect, empathy, mutual support, and healthy boundaries. Write these qualities down and consider which relationships from the chart above embody them.

3. Assessing Relationships

- Evaluate which relationships are reciprocal and which are primarily one-sided.

4. Communication Patterns

- Reflect on the communication styles present in your relationships. Are they open and honest, or do they involve enabling?

- Identify ways you can improve communication within these relationships to make them more supportive.

6. Cultivating Supportive Relationships

- Choose at least two relationships that you believe have the potential to be more supportive. Create a plan for how to strengthen these connections, such as scheduling regular check-ins, engaging in shared activities, or offering mutual support.

Self-Care Strategies

1. Assessing Self-Neglect

- List areas in your life where you may be neglecting your needs due to enabling behaviors.

- Reflect on the impacts of this neglect on your physical, emotional, and mental health.

2. Physical Self-Care

- Identify physical activities that you enjoy and that can enhance your well-being.

- ☐ Enjoy a long walk or hike in nature.
- ☐ Practice yoga or stretching exercises.
- ☐ Take a dance class for fun and fitness.
- ☐ Get a massage or visit a spa.
- ☐ Take a relaxing bath with Epsom salts.
- ☐ Prioritize sleep with a consistent bedtime routine.
- ☐ Try a new sport or physical activity.

- ☐ Prepare a nutritious and delicious meal.
- ☐ Stay hydrated throughout the day.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

3. Emotional Self-Care

- Reflect on activities that soothe and replenish your emotional energy.

- ☐ Write in a journal to express your feelings.
- ☐ Read a book that inspires or relaxes you.
- ☐ Watch a movie or show that lifts your spirits.
- ☐ Practice mindfulness meditation or deep breathing.
- ☐ Talk to a friend or family member about your feelings.
- ☐ Engage in creative expression like painting or crafting.
- ☐ Laugh! Watch a comedy or spend time with someone who amuses you.
- ☐ Allow yourself to cry when needed and sit with your emotions.
- ☐ Listen to music that resonates with your current mood.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

4. Mental Self-Care

- Think about ways to stimulate and rest your mind.

- ☐ Read non-fiction books to learn something new.
- ☐ Attend a workshop or lecture on a topic of interest.
- ☐ Solve puzzles, crosswords, or play strategic games.

- ☐ Write articles or stories on subjects you're passionate about.
- ☐ Explore a new hobby or skill.
- ☐ Watch documentaries or listen to educational podcasts.
- ☐ Join a club or group focused on a shared interest.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

5. Social Self-Care

- List social activities that contribute to a sense of connection without feeling draining.

- ☐ Have coffee or a meal with a friend.
- ☐ Call or video chat with someone you care about but haven't seen in a while.
- ☐ Join a social group or club where you can meet new people.
- ☐ Volunteer for a cause you're passionate about.
- ☐ Attend community events or gatherings.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

6. Spiritual Self-Care

- Consider spiritual or philosophical practices that provide you with comfort and a sense of meaning.

- ☐ Meditate to find inner peace and connect with your values.
- ☐ Attend religious services or study spiritual texts.
- ☐ Spend time in reflection or prayer.

- ☐ Practice gratitude by listing things you are thankful for.
- ☐ Connect with nature by gardening or simply spending time outdoors.
- ☐ Use affirmations to reinforce a positive self-belief system.
- ☐ Engage in acts of kindness and altruism.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

7. Monitoring Your Self-Care Plan

- Track your self-care activities and their effects on your overall mood and health.

Day	Mood (1-10)	Self-care activity	Effectiveness
e.g., Monday	6	30 min brisk walk	Felt energized

Relapse Prevention

1. Recognizing Warning Signs

- Define your personal warning signs that indicate you are slipping back into enabling behaviors. Note physical, emotional, and situational cues that may serve as red flags. (e.g., guilt, fear of letting go, unreasonable optimism, etc.)

2. Coping Strategies

- Develop a list of healthy coping strategies that you can engage in when you notice warning signs. These might include reaching out to a friend, practicing self-care activities, or setting clear boundaries.

3. Support System

- Identify individuals who understand your goals and can provide support when you're struggling with enabling tendencies.

4. Boundary Setting Practices

- List the boundaries you need to maintain to prevent relapse into enabling behaviors. Role-play scenarios in which you assert these boundaries, perhaps with a friend, or in front of a mirror.

Forgiving Yourself

1. Acknowledgment of Enabling Behaviors

- List instances where you recognize you've engaged in enabling behaviors.

- Describe the impact these behaviors have had on both you and the other person involved.

2. Understanding Your Intentions

- Reflect on what motivated your enabling behaviors (e.g., fear, love, avoidance of conflict). Acknowledge that while your intentions may have been good, the outcomes were not beneficial.

3. Accepting Responsibility

- Take responsibility for your part in the enabling dynamic without descending into self-blame.

4. Compassionate Reflection

- Write down compassionate responses to each instance of enabling behavior you listed. How would a compassionate friend respond to these situations?

5. Lessons Learned

- For each enabling behavior listed, write down what you've learned and how you can apply this knowledge going forward. Identify new behaviors or responses to replace enabling ones.

6. Making Amends

- If your enabling behavior has harmed others, consider ways you might make amends or communicate your realizations to those affected.

2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: No diagnosis under this title · not a DSM-5-TR diagnosis
- ICD-11 CDDR: · not an ICD-11 mental disorder diagnosis
- This workbook is non-diagnostic. A title, checklist, or completed activity never establishes a diagnosis.

Pages requiring the updated interpretation

- The audit identified source pages 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 12, 13, 16, 17, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

Diagnostic and differential limits

- Assess specific symptoms, chronology, impairment, coercion and safety, PTSD/complex PTSD where applicable, depression/anxiety, grief, substance use, family-system context, and culturally shaped roles.

Document-specific corrections

- Identify ·enabler/caretaker· as a family-systems or popular role label, not a diagnosis.
- Replace blame-oriented enabling language with a functional analysis of safety, dependency, disability, caregiving duties, coercion, culture, and available resources.
- Do not prescribe detachment, boundary setting, or saying no where retaliation, neglect, or dependent-person safety has not been assessed.
- Define relapse prevention as return-to-pattern planning, not substance-use relapse unless a substance disorder is actually present.

Measures, scoring, and permissions

- Pages [1, 3, 4, 5, 12, 29]: identify each measure and rights holder; verify intended population, reliability/validity, scoring and cutoffs, reproduction permission, and current license. If these are author-created items, label them informal, remove diagnostic cutoffs, and do not claim validation.

Intervention scope and contraindications

- Pages [2, 7]: require topic-qualified clinical review for consent, readiness, contraindications, escalation thresholds, and whether clinician-guided use is necessary.

Crisis and current resources

- Use local caregiver, substance-use, disability, and domestic-abuse resources according to the actual context.

Authoritative references

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm>
- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077263>
- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/updates-to-dsm/updates-to-dsm-5-tr-criteria-text>
- <https://icd.who.int/browse/2026-01/mms/en>
- <https://988lifeline.org/>