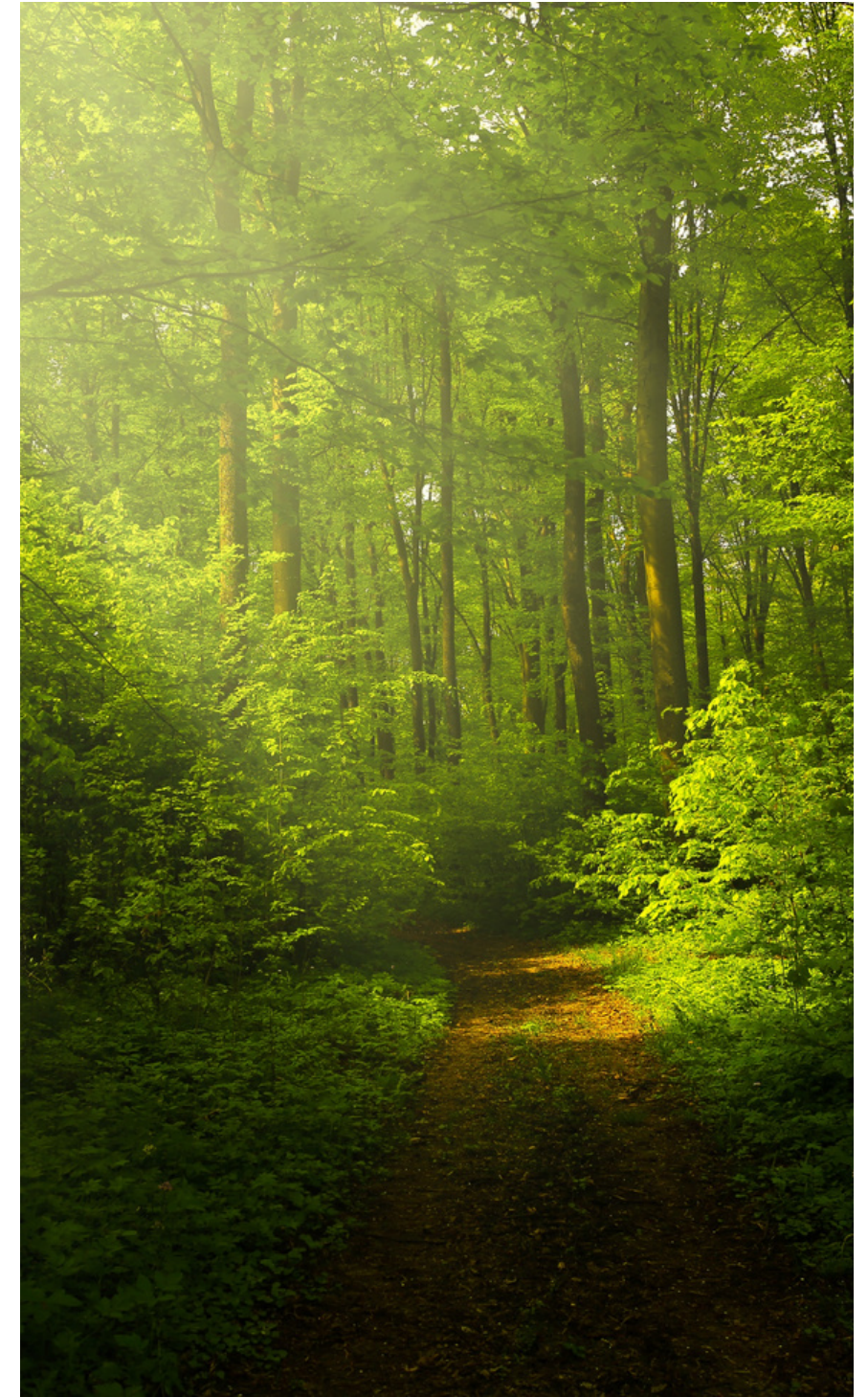

Elderly Care for an Abusive Parent: The Plan for Regulation and Peace.

WITH NATE POSTLETHWAIT



What types of past situations typically lead to these being current situations?

1. **Estrangement**
2. **Scapegoat role** being heavily played out in family dynamics
3. Large portion (majority) of **family in denial** (including aunts, uncles, cousins).
4. Parent has burned **too many bridges** and there is a lack of options for care.
5. You are an **only child**, or are the only child in communication with parent.





Part 1: When an abusive parent needs care.

How to setup and/or participate in conversations with family members:

- Acknowledge your relationship within the family dynamics.
- Set expectations for yourself and your relationship dynamics.

An underwater photograph showing a sandy ocean floor with sunlight filtering through the water, creating a shimmering, dappled light effect. The water is a deep blue-green color.

Make clarity and resolution your goal.

- This is not the time to confront family members.
- Do not assume others are having the same experience you are.

If you've gone low or no contact and have to re engage, families assume they can now go on the offensive.

Prepare to avoid those invitations to shame and fight you like they did in the past.

Be prepared for what you need to establish as your boundaries as the discussion takes place.

Including:

- **Being interrupted** (Share upfront your expectations for the meetings).
- Explaining your overall desire to **find solutions for parents' care.**
- **Be cautious around reacting to triggers from others.** This often weakens your point of view by others, and you are dismissed as the weak link, while a few minutes later they will assign you full care.
- Have an **exit strategy** in place





Back to #2 again.

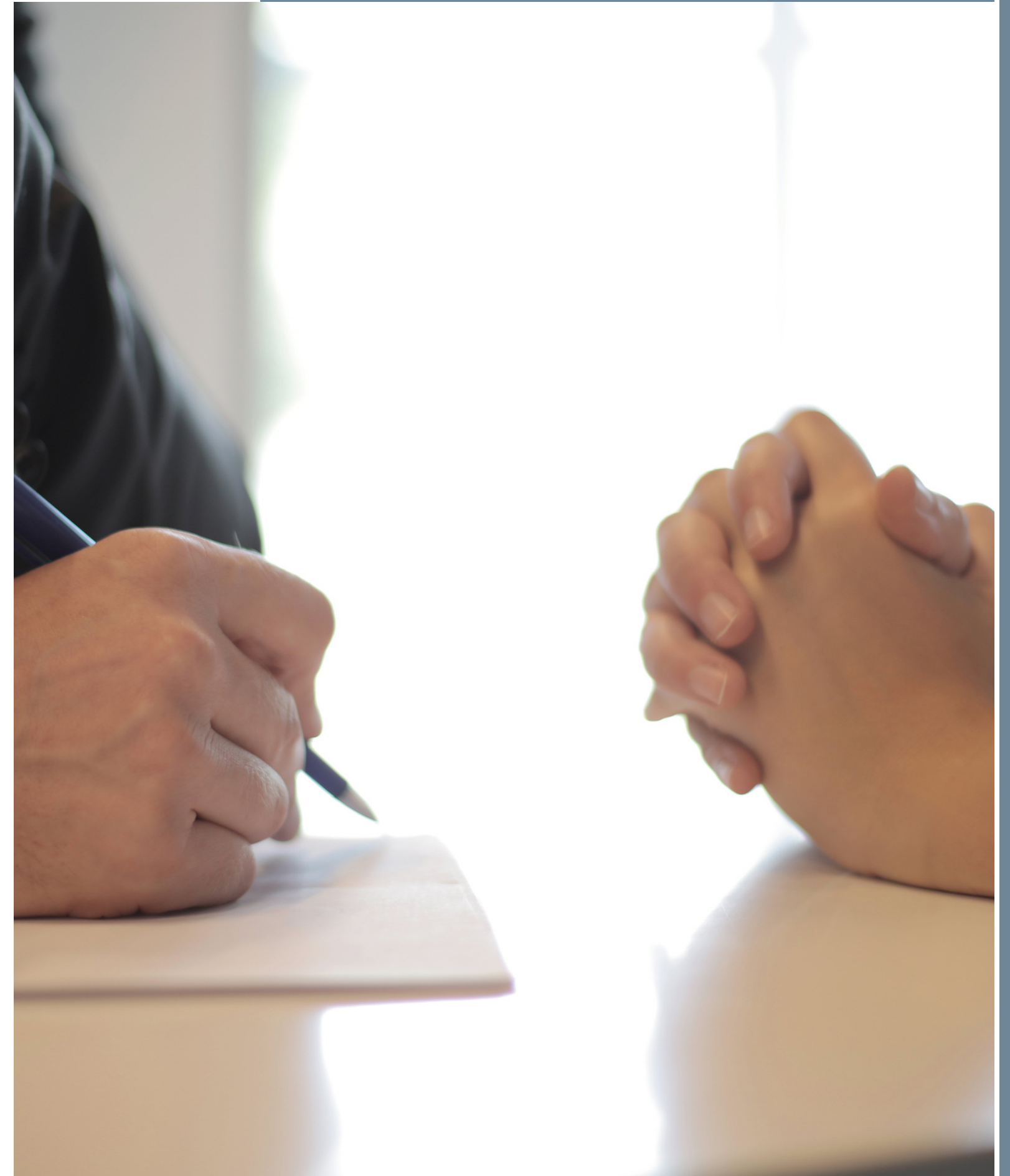
Remind everyone on calls and meetings that the purpose of these conversations is to create an active and helpful plan for all involved to make sure the parent gets care.

Part 2: Executing a plan in motion:

- **Have a point person (or point people)** who communicates directly with medical care. That point person is responsible to relay the messages to everyone else, and gather questions.
- Make sure the point person has **ONE form of communication** that reaches everyone.
- Make sure point person has the **freedom to pass off their role at any given time** to next point person in line when a break is needed. Assign a back up for the next person in line as well.

Who is the role of care given to. Options often include:

- Professional medical care
- Relatives only
- Mixture of professional and family care
- Family members who are medical professionals.



Oftentimes, if there is a relative who is in the medical profession, they are expected to offer care to the parent.

It is imperative that care be divided with anyone involved when possible.

The other people who are often nominated and expected for nonstop care:

The scapegoat: The one who has experienced mistreatment from everyone and is still trying to prove their worth.

The sensitive one: The one who struggles with how others are feeling and will want to help.

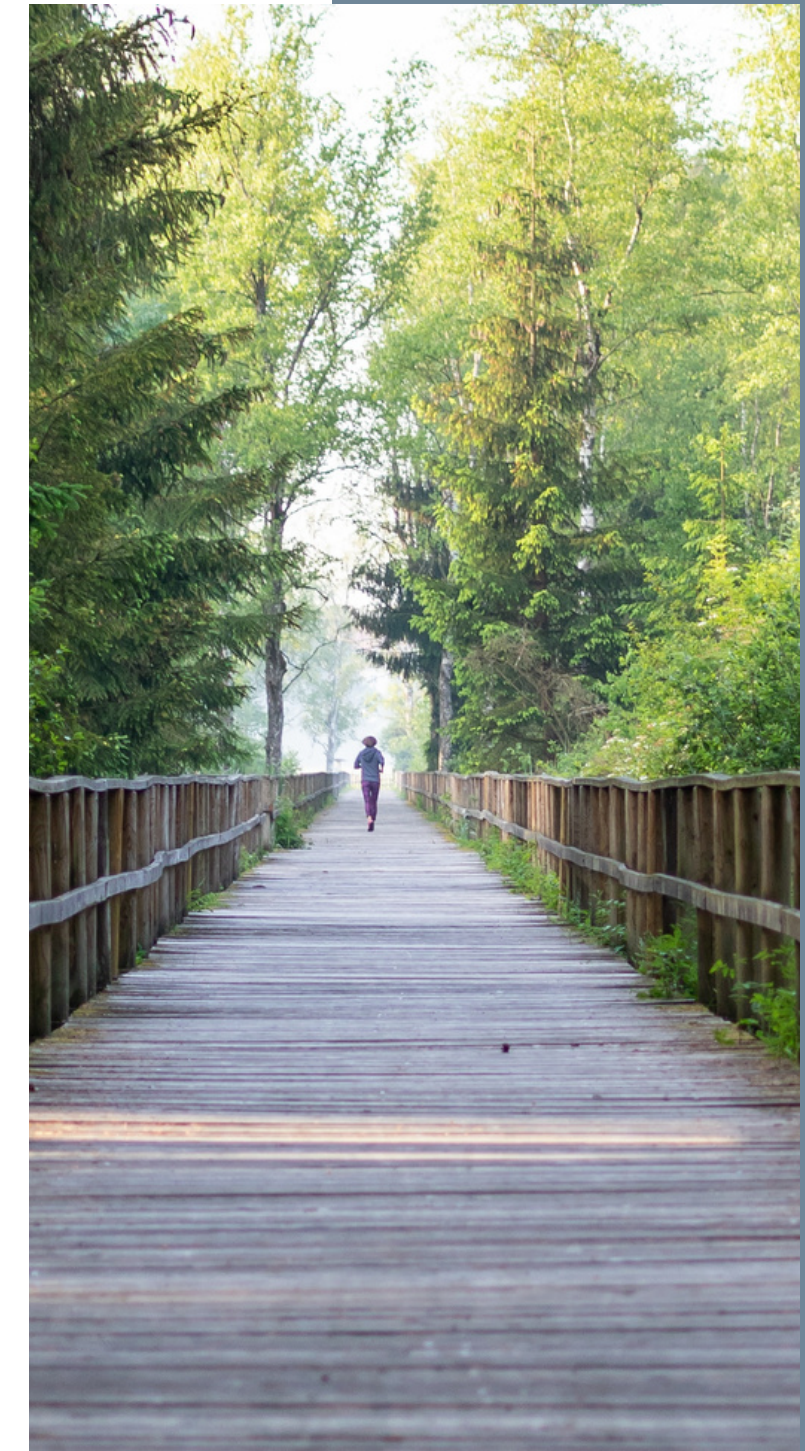
Care is often avoided by:

The bully: The relative everyone is afraid of that has been given more authority in times past by the parent.

The golden child (favorite): Who does not have the same reality as their siblings and does not care to offer equal support.

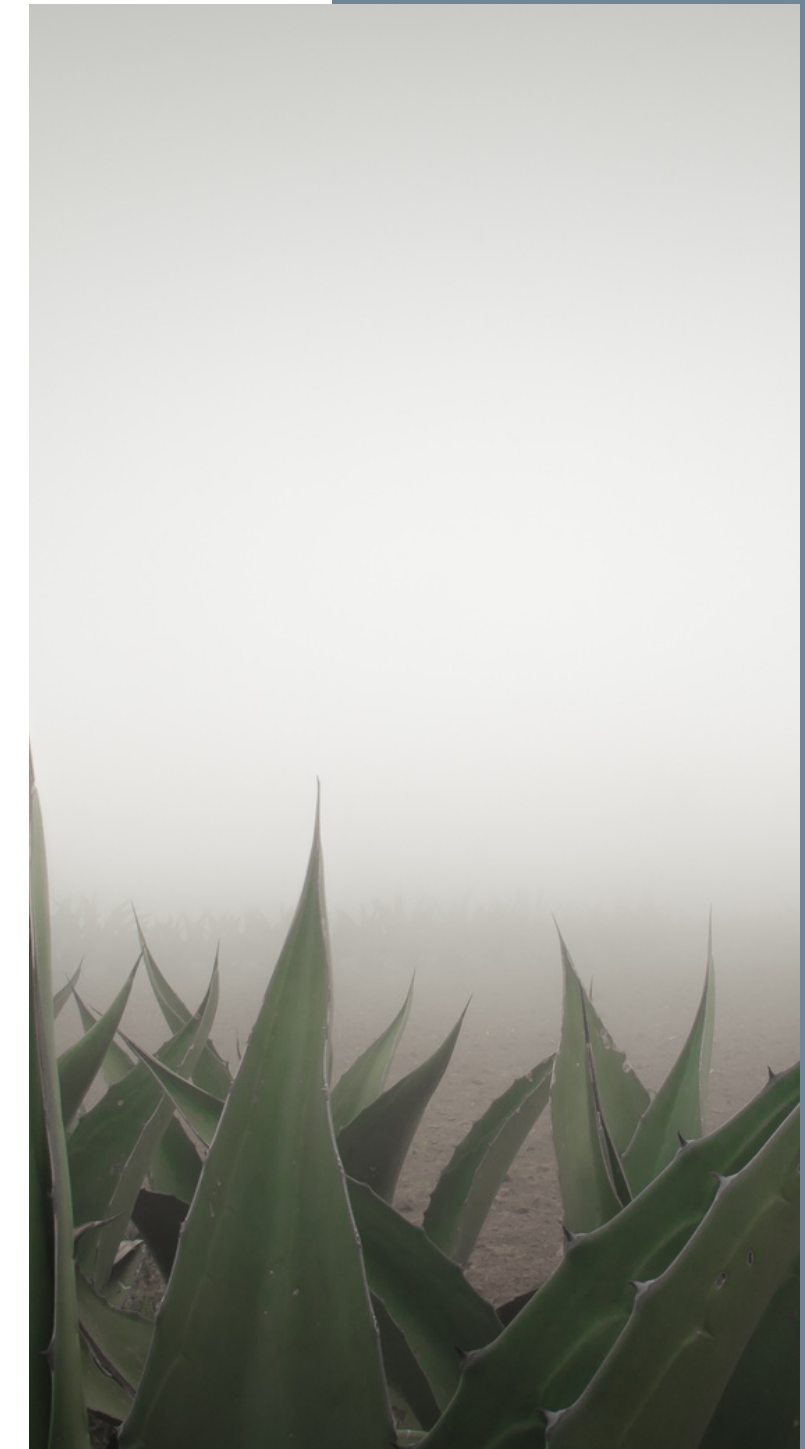
Keeping your overall health at the forefront:

Once a plan is in place, and this becomes the new normal, it can become unsettling to be in constant contact with a heavy topic (like caring for an elderly parent who does not have a great track record) and be in touch with people who have not been or are not a part of the healing journey you have been on.



The importance of keeping your boundaries in place are:

- You are in touch with people who have played a role in what you are healing. That will touch a lot of old wounds. Recognizing this is key.
- You will need to have your personal care plan in place (and often increased) because of this new dynamic with your parents' health.
- You deserve to be able to process your environment and experience from a place of clarity and groundedness.



Part 3: Your ongoing personal care plan:

1). A plan for when you feel triggered by your parent:

Deep breath. Then, another one. This process has added layers of complexity. We have heard many stories where the end of someone's life is when they confess and express remorse for how they have treated us.

Any past trauma you have experienced from your parent is going to be touched on in their presence. The pain is in your mind and body. Therefore, their presence is going to wake you up. That's how the mind and body works.

Part 3: Your ongoing personal care plan:

Attempting to work hard enough to get the long awaited apology often leaves the caregiver bankrupt on the other side. A few notes:

This is where you hold two truths:

1. I am hurt and long for an apology.
2. My parent is not working with the same memories and tools I am.

This does not excuse any current or past toxic behavior. This helps adapt to reality where you have proper expectations and boundaries in place to properly care for you and them.

Inner child triggers:

Through inner child work, we recognize a past part of us that still lives with their memories but without our coping skills.

Any past version of you that has carried pain from your parents is going to be on the surface of your skin, bracing for impact. Here are a few tools for caring for them:



Here are a few tools in caring for them:

1. **Acknowledging the triggers as what is true for that innocent child.**

Don't try and make their reality go away. Instead, name what they are remembering and feeling.

2. **Remind them you are a different age, and have different coping skills, and you are able to protect them.**

3. **Help them exhale.** That means being able to tell them they can stay in a safe space while you deal with the parent. This is also a great opportunity to visualize them being taken care of in incredible ways, safely resting somewhere, watching a favorite movie, and being nurtured. You can pick who is there with them or visualize it being just them as long as they are safe and cared for.

What does finding relief look like after these triggers?

There has to be a transition in place from exiting any time spent with caring for the parent, and entering back into your world.

The goal: To feel regulated, safe, empowered and clear. This takes work.



A few helpful steps:

1). When you are leaving their space and moving into yours, create an exit plan from the emotional distress. The primary goal is for you to return to your present truth.

That is often buffered when in the presence of people we have past trauma with. If you are still in their home, please go for a walk, take a long shower, and watch a show that helps you have some space where you can return to your interrupted thoughts.



A few helpful steps:

2). Check-in with yourself before the next conversation with family, visit with/care for parent.

Again, this is returning to conscious thought, so you are able to identify coping patterns based on your truth rather than in the middle of a triggering environment.



A few helpful steps:

3) Identify the patterns and behaviors that help you cope. If a walk, a talk, a long shower, loud music, or soft music helps you move from triggered, tired, or overwhelmed to back into your mind/body as home, make sure to identify those.



When deciding on whether or not to engage when you have been estranged:

This is a complex matter. If you have been in this situation, you know how many questions are going on. While I can't tell any person whether or not they should/shouldn't engage with their parent because of an illness, I can share how to think through that process. It is important that you feel empowered to answer this on your own.

1). Do you have expectations in check:

- An understanding of their mental/emotional health.
- A realistic view of how it would look to engage and not engage.
- A clear audit of their environment and others involved.

2). Is there pressure to have a specific outcome from choosing whether or not to re-engage?

- Are there things you have heard that are influencing you to force that to happen?
- Is there something you hope to confront from your past?
- Is there any fantasy you have that you are hoping will play out?

3) Is there anyone who is pressuring me to make a decision that feels like it is more about them than me?

- Is anyone pushing their view without hearing yours?
- Are you experiencing pressure that feels extreme?

**Are there people who are holding space with you and able to help you make the decision without any agenda?*

4). Guilt or shame have no role here. Complexity? Yes. Guilt or shame? No.

- **Guilt:** “Shouldn’t I want to do more and my part?”
- **Shame:** “What will people think of me if I do not want to help my parent?”
- **Complexity:** Children aren’t supposed to be estranged. They are also not supposed to be traumatized by their parents. All of this exists in this scenario. All of this deserves respect.