



Worksheet #5: When You Feel Overwhelmed

Recognizing Overwhelm

Caring for a child with a serious or terminal illness can feel emotionally and physically overwhelming. There may be moments when everything feels like too much.

Recognizing these moments is the first step toward supporting yourself.

1. What Overwhelm Feels Like

Right now, I notice:

- ☐ Racing thoughts
- ☐ Tightness in my chest or body
- ☐ Feeling frozen or stuck
- ☐ Irritability or frustration
- ☐ Emotional exhaustion
- ☐ Difficulty focusing
- ☐ Wanting to withdraw
- ☐ Other: _____

What feels most overwhelming at this moment?

2. Pause & Ground

When overwhelm rises, try a brief reset:

- Place one hand on your chest or lap

- Take a slow breath in for 4 seconds
- Exhale slowly for 6 seconds
- Repeat 5–10 times

Gently say to yourself:

“I can take this one moment at a time.”

3. Break It Down

When everything feels like too much, focus on one small step.

Instead of everything, what is one thing I need to focus on right now?

What can wait?

4. Lower the Bar

During overwhelming times, expectations need to shift.

Today, it is okay if I:

- ☐ Do less
 - ☐ Ask for help
 - ☐ Take a break
 - ☐ Not have all the answers
 - ☐ Change my plans
 - ☐ Focus only on what is essential
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5. Support Check

You don't have to hold everything alone.

Someone I can reach out to right now:

What I might say:

6. A Compassionate Reminder

Read this slowly:

- I am in a very difficult situation
- It makes sense that I feel overwhelmed
- I am doing the best I can
- I do not have to handle everything at once

One thing I want to remind myself right now:

7. After the Moment Passes

After taking a pause, I notice:

Closing Thought

Overwhelm does not mean you are not coping—it means you are carrying a lot. Even small pauses and small steps can help you move through difficult moments.

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Supporting families navigating cancer and terminal illness

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