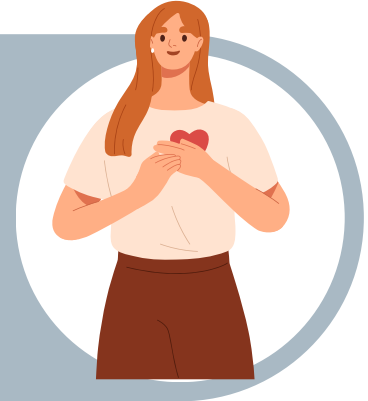


INTRODUCTION

Caring Vs Carrying

Caring is about having empathy and concern for others. It involves being supportive and understanding towards someone's situation without becoming personally burdened by their issues. Caring is altruistic and is about empowering the other person. When you care, you maintain boundaries that prevent you from becoming overly involved or affected by the other person's problems. It's a balanced approach where you are committed to helping, but you recognize that ultimately, others are in control of their own lives.



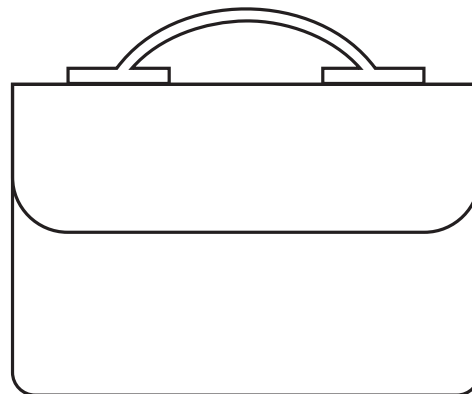
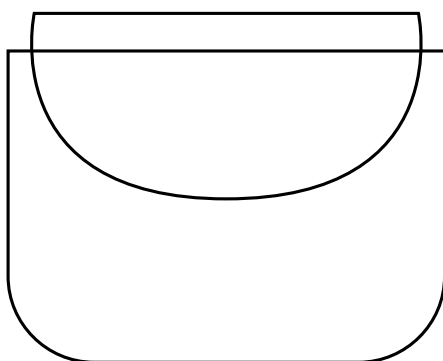
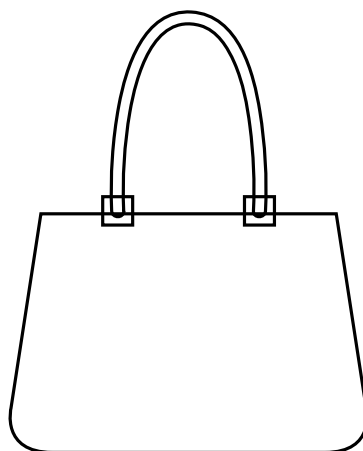
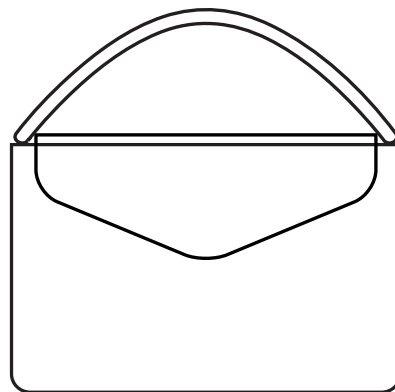
Carrying, on the other hand, refers to taking on the responsibility or emotional burden of someone else's problems. It's when you become so involved in trying to help someone that their issues begin to weigh you down personally. Carrying can lead to a sense of being over-responsible, which can be self-serving if it's about fulfilling your own need to be needed. It can lead to micromanagement, controlling behavior, and eventually to burnout, as it crosses the line from support to dependency.

Aspect	Caring	Carrying
Responsibility	Shares responsibility appropriately	Takes on too much responsibility
Motivation	Altruistic and supportive	Can be self-serving, needs to be needed
Control	Respects others' control over their issues	Feels a need to control the outcomes
Empathy	Empathetic but not overwhelmed	Over-identifies and feels burdened
Boundaries	Clear boundaries, healthy detachment	Poor boundaries, over-involvement
Leadership	Leads by example, empowering others	Leads by rules, can be micromanaging
Outcome	People feel supported and empowered	People may feel dependent and helpless
Emotional Impact	Maintains emotional balance	Risks emotional burnout

Understanding the difference between caring and carrying is crucial, it helps maintain boundaries and personal well-being. Knowing the difference ensures that one can provide effective support without compromising their own mental health. For individuals, it helps to build healthier relationships where support is a two-way street, not a one-way burden.

Am I Caring Vs Carrying

Take advantage of the area below to take a deep dive into the responsibilities, tasks, ideas, and emotions you're bearing right now or bringing into your day. As you pinpoint the loads you're shouldering, reflect on them with the help of the questions we've laid out for you.



BOUNDARIES

Care Boundaries

Care boundaries are a critical aspect of maintaining a healthy balance between caring for others and carrying their emotional weight. These boundaries help define the extent of your caring and ensure it doesn't tip over into carrying, which can be detrimental to your well-being.

A Scale of Care Boundaries:

Here's a scale that reflects a healthy balance between caring too little and caring too much:

	Unhealthy Not Caring	Healthy Not Caring	Healthy Caring	Unhealthy Caring
Behaviors	Complete detachment, feeling distant or numb, dismissing others, cutting off relationships	Practicing self-care, setting boundaries, emotionally detaching from toxic situations	Showing empathy, accepting others' feelings, empowering others, expressing discomfort appropriately	Compassion fatigue, taking on vicarious trauma, overprotecting, sacrificing too much
Thoughts	"It's not my problem.", "Why should I bother?", "They're overreacting."	"I need to look after myself.", "I can't help everyone.", "It's okay to step back."	"I understand how you feel.", "It's okay to have these feelings.", "You have the strength to handle this."	"I have to save them.", "If I don't help, no one will.", "Their happiness is my responsibility."
Actions	Ignoring requests for help, avoiding contact, refusing to acknowledge someone's struggles	Taking time for oneself, saying no when necessary, avoiding enabling unhealthy behaviors	Active listening, providing resources, encouraging self-help, sharing one's own feelings honestly	Overextending oneself, fixing others' issues, neglecting one's own needs, feeling overwhelmed by others' problems

By understanding and implementing care boundaries, you can ensure that your caring is healthy and sustainable. You can be a source of support and strength for others, without sacrificing your own mental and emotional health in the process. Establishing and maintaining these boundaries requires self-reflection and sometimes difficult conversations, but the benefits to both you and those you care about are invaluable.

CIRCLE OF CONCERN & INFLUENCE

The concepts of the "Circle of Influence" and "Circle of Concern" come from Stephen Covey's influential book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People." Understanding these two circles can be incredibly beneficial when considering the balance between caring and carrying.

Circle of Concern:

This encompasses the wide range of concerns we have in our lives, including our health, family, work, the economy, global warming, and so on. It includes things we care about but often have no real control over.

Circle of Control

Circle of Influence:

This is the area within our Circle of Concern over which we have actual control, which usually involves our own behavior and actions. It's where we can make a difference.

CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE & CONCERN

Knowing these circles is helpful in distinguishing caring from carrying because:



Focus on What You Can Control: By recognizing the limits of your influence, you can focus on what you can actually do or change. Caring effectively means operating within your Circle of Influence, taking actions that are within your power, instead of stressing over aspects in your Circle of Concern that are beyond your control.

Avoid Over-Responsibility: Understanding that some things are outside your control can help prevent you from taking on too much responsibility for others' issues—carrying. It teaches you to invest your energy and efforts where you can actually have an impact.



Expand Your Influence Thoughtfully: Sometimes, by acting within your Circle of Influence, you can indirectly affect your Circle of Concern. For example, by caring and providing support, you can empower others to take action, which may gradually expand your Circle of Influence.

Maintain Emotional Well-being: Recognizing the boundaries of these circles can maintain your emotional health. It allows you to detach from the problems you cannot solve and concentrate on the actions you can take, which is more fulfilling and less draining.



Clearer Decision-Making: With a clear understanding of these circles, you can make better decisions about where to invest your time and energy, leading to more effective caring and less unnecessary carrying.

In practice, when faced with a situation where you want to provide support, ask yourself:

- "Is this within my Circle of Influence or Circle of Concern?"
- "Am I trying to exert control over something I cannot change?"
- "How can I contribute in a meaningful way within my Circle of Influence?"

By answering these questions, you can ensure that your efforts to care for others are both helpful and healthy for you and them. It's about finding the right balance between being emotionally available for others and taking care of your own needs.

REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY

Reflective Questions

Reflective questions can be a powerful tool for self-awareness. Here are some questions you might ask yourself to distinguish whether you're caring or carrying, and to help you make any necessary shifts:

To Determine if You're Caring or Carrying:

- When I think about the person I'm helping, do I feel uplifted or weighed down?
- Am I able to maintain my own routine and self-care practices while supporting this person?
- Can I step back and allow this person to make their own choices, even if I disagree with them?
- Do I find myself constantly worrying about this person's problems when I'm not with them?
- Am I offering support because I want to or because I feel obligated?
- Do I feel resentful towards the person I'm helping?
- Are my own needs and responsibilities suffering because I'm focusing on someone else?
- Do I feel like this person's happiness and success are my responsibility?
- Can I listen to this person's issues without offering solutions or trying to fix things?
- Am I the only source of support for this person, and if so, why?

Questions to Help Shift from Carrying to Caring:

- What boundaries can I set to ensure I'm not overextending myself?
- How can I express my support while also communicating what I am not able to do?
- What are some ways I can empower this person to take control of their own situation?
- Who else can I encourage this person to reach out to for support?
- How can I be a good listener without taking on the responsibility to solve their issues?
- In what ways can I demonstrate care without compromising my own well-being?
- What self-care strategies can I employ to make sure I'm not depleting my own resources?
- Can I acknowledge my feelings of wanting to help while also acknowledging that I have limits?
- How can I remind myself that this person's choices are theirs alone and not a reflection of my support?
- What can I do to step back and give this person space while still being available in a healthy way?

Reflecting on these questions regularly can help maintain a balance between empathy and personal boundaries, enabling you to provide support in a healthy and sustainable way.