

When Care Becomes Self-Abandonment

The Difference Is What Your Care Is Protecting

Caring for someone is not the same as abandoning yourself. Both can involve sacrifice, patience, and love. The difference is whether your care remains organized around reality or around an old threat.

◆ Applying the McInnis Method

REALITY	<i>Someone you care about genuinely needs something from you.</i>
THREAT	<i>Honesty, limits, or stepping back may feel selfish, dangerous, or like they could cost the relationship.</i>
PROTECTION	<i>You organize your life around preventing the other person's reactions.</i>
FUNCTION	<i>The protection preserves connection by reducing the chance of conflict or disappointment.</i>
COST	<i>Your voice, limits, judgment, and your own reactions can disappear from the equation.</i>
CAPACITY	<i>You can care, give, and remain connected without abandoning your own reality.</i>
ACTION	<i>Give what you choose to give without giving up your voice, limits, or judgment.</i>

◆ Signs Care Has Become Self-Abandonment

- You explain away your own reactions.
- You stay reasonable while your body escalates.
- You manage everyone else's emotions while ignoring your own.
- You imagine distance, then feel guilty for wanting it.

Care can be real and still become organized around self-abandonment.

◆ Reality Check

Ask yourself: Am I caring for this person, or organizing my life around preventing their reactions?

◆ Responsibility Without Self-Abandonment

- Name the cost honestly.
- Stop justifying what hurts.
- Reduce how much you manage.
- Make room for your own reactions.
- Know what your care is costing you, and decide whether you still choose to pay it.

Bottom Line

Care is measured by what it gives. Self-abandonment is measured by what it slowly takes away.

What they need may not be yours to fix. What you choose to give is still yours to decide.