

## Kinship Caregiver Grounding Tool

### Theme: Honouring Your Role, Reclaiming Your Voice

*You didn't expect to be here — but you stepped in. You hold a child's story in your arms, and you're doing the impossible in ordinary clothes.*

This tool is not a checklist — it's a space to **affirm**, **reclaim**, and **navigate** the emotional terrain of kinship caregiving.

### Part 1: Naming the Realities

#### 1. What's something I'm holding right now that others may not see?

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#### 2. How do my relationships feel more complicated since becoming a caregiver?

- With the child/youth
- With my extended family
- With caseworkers or professionals
- With my own partner or children
- With myself

Optional notes: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 3. What am I grieving that I haven't had permission to talk about?

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#### 4. What is one thing I'm proud of — even if no one said "thank you"?

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### Part 2: Boundaries, Belonging, and Survival

#### 5. In my kinship role, I often feel...

- Loyal
- Trapped
- Protective
- Isolated
- Empowered
- Torn
- Loving
- Tired
- All of the above

#### 6. What do I *need permission* to do or feel right now?

- Say no
- Ask for help
- Rest
- Speak up to a professional

- Feel angry or conflicted
- Stop apologizing
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 7. When I get overwhelmed, I can try to...

- Call someone who won't judge me
- Take a 10-minute break (even if it's hiding in the bathroom)
- Say out loud: *"This is hard, and I'm still here."*
- Write down what I *can* control today
- Reach out to CST — even if I'm not sure what to say

## Kinship-Specific Tips for Resilience and Connection

### 1. You're allowed to have boundaries — even in family.

Caring for kin doesn't mean sacrificing your emotional health.

Example script: *"I'm here for the child, not to fix every adult in the situation."*

### 2. Trauma doesn't disappear because it's family.

Kinship placements can carry deep emotional histories. Be kind to yourself for needing help, for feeling conflicted, or for not having it all figured out.

### 3. You don't need to justify your exhaustion.

Caring for family can be invisibilized. That doesn't make it easier — it makes it lonelier. Your tiredness is not weakness. It's the weight of love without enough rest.

### 4. Be honest with children — and yourself — at their level.

*"This is hard for all of us, but we're going to get through it together."*

You don't have to protect everyone from reality. Just hold them through it.

### 5. Rebuild rituals, not perfection.

Instead of trying to recreate what was lost, build something new.

- Sunday check-ins
- "Just us" dinner once a week
- Honouring birthdays in your own way
- Cultural or spiritual practices, even in small acts

### 6. Reach out — especially when it feels too late.

Whether you've been caring for years or just started — you deserve support. Call CST. Join a kinship circle. You're not meant to do this alone.

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## You Are Seen. You Are Needed. You Are Not Alone.

Let November be a moment where you remind yourself:

 *I am not just surviving this role. I am changing a child's story.*