

THE HIDDEN HELPERS JOURNEY MAP

START

ALL ABOUT ME
I am...

ALL ABOUT MY FAMILY
My family includes...

HOME LIFE
Life at home is...

BEING A CAREGIVER
Whether new to caregiving or not, I find it to be...

EMOTION CHECK

MY FAMILY "Who we are..."

EMOTION CHECK

Each young caregiver's journey is unique, and starts at different times. Caregiving may have started before you were born, started when you were little, or more recently. No matter when your journey began, your experiences are yours, and your role as a caregiver truly matters.

EMOTION CHECK

EMOTION CHECK

SUPPORT SYSTEM
The people who are there for my family and me...

Feeling stuck?
This can be anyone from your neighborhood, school, or community.

EMOTION CHECK

COPING
When I feel stressed, overwhelmed, and need to take a break from caregiving, I...

CHANGES WITH CAREGIVING
Scan the QR code to hear from hidden helper, Kylie, on how she and her brother navigate college and caregiving.

EMOTION CHECK

EMOTION CHECK

SCHOOL & SOCIAL LIFE
Caregiving has impacted me as a student and a friend in these ways...

HELPING WITH CARE
Things I do to help my _____

Change is normal. In a caregiving family, that means change happens to school life, home life, friends, and support—because of caregiving. These changes are part of a transition—and it's okay to feel all kinds of emotions as things change around you.

To hear from hidden helper sisters, Abigail and Kate, scan the QR code.
CARING FOR OUR DAD

By now, you may have found a rhythm in your caregiving role—even if it still feels hard sometimes. This 'new normal' might include new routines, responsibilities, or changes in how your family works together. The ways you care, adapt, and show up for yourself and your family make a meaningful impact.

ONGOING CHALLENGES
A part of caregiving that is still tough for me is...

JOYFUL MOMENTS
It brings me joy to help my family with...

FINDING BALANCE
As I grow up and change, I balance caregiving by...

FUTURE DREAMS
My caregiving experience has shaped who I am by...

ADJUSTING

TRANSITION

"When things change..."

EMOTION CHECK

EMOTION CHECK

TALKING TO FRIENDS ABOUT CAREGIVING
Scan the QR code to listen to an MCEC Podcast episode, featuring hidden helper, Jake.



As you care for your family member, remember—it's okay not to have everything figured out, especially when things around you are changing. You're balancing a lot and learning along the way.

MANAGING CHANGES
I handle changes in my caregiving responsibilities by...

TAKING CARE OF ME
Scan the QR code to listen to another MCEC Podcast episode, featuring Hidden Helper, Noah.



OUTSIDE SUPPORT
Things I look for in a trusted and supportive adult or friend are...

As life changes, it can also become more normal, like a "New normal." Caregiving may not stop, or stop being hard, but becomes a part of your everyday life, while you grow, change and find your own way.

NEWFOUND SUCCESS & PRIDE
A care task I have learned and feel confident doing is...

NEW NORMAL
"Living and growing through it..."

EMOTION CHECK

EMOTION CHECK

FUTURE TREE

Think about your dreams and goals—big or small—write or draw each one inside a leaf on your "Future Tree".
Bigger leaves are for your big dreams or long-term goals. Smaller leaves can hold everyday goals or smaller steps that still matter.

FAMILY ROLES
Caregiving has shaped my family in these ways...

Welcome to your Hidden Helpers Journey Map!

This Journey map is a space just for you—a place to reflect on your experiences as someone who helps care for a wounded, ill, or injured family member. Whether you've been a caregiver for a long time or are just starting to take on a caregiving role, your story and experience matters.

As you go through each part of this map, you'll have the chance to think about what caregiving looks like in your life, how it has changed over time, how it's shaped you, and what kind of support you need. There are no right or wrong answers—just your honest thoughts and experiences.

Throughout the map, you'll also see QR codes linking to videos and podcasts of other hidden helpers sharing their caregiving stories. While we've only included a few voices, it's important to know that there are millions of kids and teens around the country and the world who help care for someone in their family.

The care you provide matters—and it helps shape who you are. The strengths you build through your caregiving journey—like patience, empathy, and responsibility—can help you connect more deeply with friends, do your best at school, and face the future with confidence.

Thank you for everything you do. You are seen, you are valued, and you are not alone.

THE HIDDEN HELPERS JOURNEY MAP

Looking for additional resources and support?

Check out the Elizabeth Dole Foundation's Family Resource Hub, powered by Wounded Warrior Project. It's a one-stop shop with tools, videos, and resources made for military and veteran families—including teens like you.

Visit familyresourcehub.elizabethdolefoundation.org to explore more, or scan the QR code below:



Need to Talk Now?

Crisis Resources for Teens: If you're ever feeling overwhelmed, sad, anxious, or just not okay—know that help is always available. You can talk to someone anytime, 24/7:

Text **HOME** to **741741** to reach a trained Crisis Counselor through the Crisis Text Line.

Call or text **988**, or chat online at 988lifeline.org to talk to someone at the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.



Elizabeth Dole Foundation
CARING FOR MILITARY FAMILIES



★ POWERED BY ★

WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT

PHILIPS



Journey Map Legend

Emotions Thread
As you move through each point of the journey, take a moment to reflect on how you're feeling. Choose an emotion sticker that best represents your feelings and place it on the red circles labeled "Emotion Check" along the path. Use as many—or as few—as you like.

Construction Zone
These represent moments when something unexpected happens and you may need to pause, go back, or adjust your path. Construction zones can occur at any stage. Use the orange construction zone stickers to mark these points on your journey map.

QR Codes
Scan the QR codes placed throughout the map to watch videos or listen to podcasts of other hidden helpers sharing their stories and experiences at different points along their caregiving journey.

- 1 Take your time**
There's no rush. Go through each part at your own pace. Take breaks when you need to. Some sections might make you think deeply or bring up emotions. That's okay. It's all part of the journey.
- 2 Reflect on your story**
Each section will guide you through questions and prompts to help you think about:
 - What caregiving looks like in your life
 - How your role has changed over time
 - How it's shaped who you are
 - What kind of support you might needRemember, there are no right or wrong answers.
- 3 Watch and listen**
As you go through the map, you'll see QR codes linking to podcasts and videos of other kids and teens who are also caregivers. These are real stories from people who get what you're going through.
- 4 Write, draw, use stickers, or just think**
Throughout the map, you'll see prompts and questions with blank boxes below. You can write down your thoughts, draw how you feel, add stickers, or just reflect quietly—whatever works best for you. This is your space.
- 5 Make it your own**
Your caregiving experience is unique, and so is your map. Use construction zone stickers to mark when significant changes occurred along your journey.
- 6 Consider your strengths**
Caregiving isn't easy, but it builds important parts of who you are—like patience, empathy, and strength.

How to use this Journey Map

THE **HIDDEN HELPERS**

JOURNEY MAP



PHILIPS

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**WOUNDED WARRIOR
PROJECT**

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