

# AI-03664 Selective Caring vs Not Caring

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Key Components of the Theme:

- The Breaking Point: The realization that unlimited empathy is unsustainable.
- Selective Stewardship: Shifting from "caring about everything" to "caring about the essential."
- Identity Reclaimed: Moving from an "emotional sponge" to a self-directed individual by shedding the weight of external expectations.

Explain, list the pillars, list 22 examples

What it means? Deep dive and provide the psychological pillars.

Describe how a person typically thinks, behaves, and makes decisions.

Provide 22 concrete examples demonstrating these traits in real-life situations.

Then create a 22-point guidelines from the discussion.

Use all numerical bullet list in all your responses.

## 1. What It Means (Deep Dive)

1. The theme describes a psychological evolution from over-identification with others' emotions to disciplined, intentional caring.
2. It begins with empathic overload, where a person treats every emotional signal as a call to action.
3. Over time, this creates chronic stress, blurred identity, and decision fatigue.

4. The breaking point is not apathy—it is the moment the nervous system refuses to continue unsustainable patterns.
5. This often manifests as burnout, resentment, withdrawal, or emotional numbness.
6. The individual realizes that unfiltered empathy is not virtue—it is mismanagement of attention and energy.
7. The shift toward selective stewardship reframes care as a finite resource.
8. Caring becomes intentional, value-aligned, and prioritized, not reactive.
9. The person learns that not everything deserves emotional investment.
10. This leads to identity reclamation, where self-worth is no longer outsourced to others' opinions or needs.
11. Emotional boundaries become filters, not walls.
12. The individual stops confusing kindness with self-abandonment.
13. Decisions shift from "How will this affect others?" to "Does this align with my values and capacity?"
14. There is increased tolerance for discomfort, disapproval, and misunderstanding.
15. The person becomes less reactive, more deliberate.
16. Emotional energy is allocated, not leaked.
17. Relationships become fewer but deeper and more reciprocal.
18. The internal narrative shifts from "I must be everything to everyone" to "I choose where I show up fully."
19. This creates psychological resilience and autonomy.
20. The end state is not cold detachment, but calibrated compassion with self-respect.

## 2. Psychological Pillars

1. Emotional Boundaries – Clear separation between self and others' emotional states.
2. Cognitive Filtering – Evaluating what deserves attention vs. what can be ignored.
3. Self-Concept Clarity – Knowing who you are independent of others' expectations.
4. Agency Restoration – Recognizing that attention and care are choices.
5. Value Hierarchy – Prioritizing based on principles rather than pressure.
6. Emotional Regulation – Managing reactions instead of absorbing everything.
7. Detachment Without Indifference – Caring without over-identifying.
8. Selective Empathy – Applying empathy where it is constructive.
9. Resilience to Social Feedback – Reduced dependence on approval.
10. Energy Management – Treating emotional energy as a limited resource.
11. Assertiveness – Ability to say no without guilt.
12. Internal Validation – Self-worth generated internally, not externally.
13. Attention Control – Directing focus intentionally.
14. Reciprocity Awareness – Investing in balanced relationships.
15. Tolerance for Discomfort – Accepting that boundaries upset others.
16. Identity Differentiation – Not merging identity with roles or expectations.
17. Delayed Reactivity – Pausing before emotional engagement.
18. Purpose Alignment – Linking care to long-term meaning.
19. Psychological Flexibility – Adjusting responses based on context.
20. Boundary Enforcement – Consistently maintaining limits.
21. Emotional Minimalism – Reducing unnecessary emotional clutter.
22. Self-Preservation Ethic – Protecting mental and emotional stability.

### 3. How This Person Thinks, Behaves, and Decides

1. They think in terms of priority, not obligation.
2. They ask, "Is this mine to carry?" before engaging emotionally.
3. They recognize emotional manipulation quickly.
4. They do not equate urgency with importance.
5. They accept being misunderstood as a cost of boundaries.
6. They evaluate requests based on capacity and alignment, not guilt.
7. They avoid over-explaining decisions.
8. They prefer clarity over harmony.
9. They disengage from drama early.
10. They invest deeply but selectively in relationships.
11. They are calm under emotional pressure.
12. They separate empathy from responsibility.
13. They make decisions slower but with more conviction.
14. They avoid environments that drain them repeatedly.
15. They track patterns, not isolated events.
16. They are less reactive to criticism.
17. They define success internally.
18. They protect time and mental space aggressively.
19. They choose long-term peace over short-term approval.
20. They accept trade-offs consciously.
21. They don't rescue people who won't help themselves.
22. They see emotional discipline as a strength, not a loss.

## 4. 22 Real-Life Examples

1. Declining a late-night call from a friend who only reaches out during crises.
2. Not responding immediately to emotionally charged messages.
3. Choosing not to engage in workplace gossip.
4. Saying no to a family obligation that causes stress without meaning.
5. Leaving a conversation when it becomes manipulative.
6. Not internalizing a colleague's bad mood.
7. Ending a one-sided friendship.
8. Ignoring social media criticism from strangers.
9. Setting time limits on helping others.
10. Refusing to mediate conflicts that are not yours.
11. Taking a day off instead of pushing through burnout.
12. Not explaining personal choices to people who won't understand.
13. Letting someone be disappointed without fixing it.
14. Choosing silence instead of reacting defensively.
15. Avoiding overcommitment despite social pressure.
16. Prioritizing personal goals over others' expectations.
17. Walking away from emotionally draining environments.
18. Saying "I can't help with that" without guilt.
19. Investing only in relationships with mutual effort.
20. Ignoring attempts at guilt-tripping.
21. Not trying to "save" someone repeating harmful patterns.
22. Choosing peace over being right in trivial conflicts.

## 5. 22 Practical Guidelines

1. Audit where your emotional energy goes weekly.
2. Identify top 3 priorities for your care and attention.
3. Practice saying no without justification.
4. Pause before responding to emotional stimuli.
5. Separate empathy from obligation.
6. Stop over-explaining decisions.
7. Limit exposure to draining people and environments.
8. Define personal values clearly.
9. Use time boundaries for helping others.
10. Accept that not everyone will understand you.
11. Build tolerance for discomfort from setting limits.
12. Focus on reciprocal relationships.
13. Avoid reacting to every problem presented to you.
14. Create mental space before making decisions.
15. Recognize manipulation patterns early.
16. Protect your mornings and evenings from external demands.
17. Let others handle their own consequences.
18. Reframe guilt as a sign of growth, not wrongdoing.
19. Invest deeply, but only where it matters.
20. Regularly disconnect from noise (social media, drama).
21. Reinforce boundaries consistently, not occasionally.
22. Choose alignment over approval in every major decision.

This passage describes the transition from **hyper-empathy** and external validation to **radical selective focus**. It highlights that "not caring" isn't a lack of emotion, but a hard-won defense mechanism born from emotional exhaustion.

## Cleaned & Rewritten Version

True emotional resilience isn't born from cold detachment; it is forged in the fire of caring too much. Many who appear "unbothered" today once reached a breaking point where their empathy nearly destroyed them. They emerged not by closing off, but by drastically shortening the list of what earns their energy.

In my twenties, I functioned as an emotional sponge. I absorbed every friend's crisis, internalized every slight, and let every failure serve as an indictment of my character. When you prioritize others' expectations over your own intuition, you stop living your life and start performing a version of it designed by committee. Mastery over your peace only begins when you realize that most opinions aren't worth the cost of your sanity.

## Core Theme: The Evolution of Selective Care

The central theme is **The Transformation of Boundaries through Burnout**. It suggests that "not caring" is an advanced stage of personal growth rather than a character flaw. The narrative arc moves from **External Validation** (living for others) to **Internal Autonomy** (choosing what matters).

### Key Components of the Theme:

- **The Breaking Point:** The realization that unlimited empathy is unsustainable.
- **Selective Stewardship:** Shifting from "caring about everything" to "caring about the essential."
- **Identity Reclaimed:** Moving from an "emotional sponge" to a self-directed individual by shedding the weight of external expectations.

## 22 Examples of "The Shorter List" (Refined Focus)

To illustrate this shift, here are 22 specific areas where "mastering not caring" manifests as a shorter, more intentional list:

1. **Unsolicited Opinions:** Ignoring critiques from people whose lives you wouldn't want to emulate.
2. **Performative Productivity:** Dropping the need to *look* busy to feel worthy.
3. **Social Obligation:** Declining events that drain rather than fulfill.

4. **Past Versions of Self:** Letting go of who you "used to be" or "should have been."
5. **Toxic Relationships:** Severing ties with those who only take.
6. **Comparison:** Deleting the internal scoreboard against peers.
7. **The "Right" Timeline:** Abandoning societal milestones (marriage, career peaks) by a certain age.
8. **Digital Noise:** Curating feeds to eliminate outrage-bait.
9. **External Approval:** Making decisions without waiting for a "thumbs up."
10. **Winning Arguments:** Prioritizing peace over being "right" in trivial debates.
11. **Gossip:** Losing interest in the private affairs of others.
12. **Perfectionism:** Accepting "good enough" to protect mental bandwidth.
13. **Brand Status:** Investing in utility over labels or prestige.
14. **Regret:** Categorizing mistakes as data points rather than character traits.
15. **The Future (Anxiety):** Focusing on the next 24 hours instead of the next 10 years.
16. **Legacy Worries:** Living for the present rather than how you'll be remembered.
17. **Hyper-Availability:** Not responding to every text or email instantly.
18. **Small Talk:** Skipping the surface to find meaningful connection or silence.
19. **Fitting In:** Embracing the "outsider" status if it means staying authentic.
20. **Self-Criticism:** Replacing the inner judge with a neutral observer.
21. **Crowd Mentality:** Standing still when everyone else is rushing toward a trend.
22. **Outcome Independence:** Caring about the effort, but detaching from the result.

Gemini

This transformation is often called **Selective Stewardship**. It is the psychological evolution from "empathy without boundaries"—which leads to burnout—to a state of intentional, protected compassion.

## What it Means: The Deep Dive

At its core, this shift is an admission of human finitude. When you act as an "emotional sponge," you operate under the subconscious myth that your internal resources are infinite. The **Breaking Point** occurs when the psyche can no longer bridge the gap between the world's endless demands and your limited emotional energy. By reclaiming your identity, you stop being a passenger in other people's dramas and start being the architect of your own peace.

## The Psychological Pillars

1. **The Law of Finite Affect:** Acknowledging that emotional energy is a "hard currency." You only have so many units to spend per day; spending them on a stranger's social media rant means you have less for your own family or goals.
2. **Cognitive Decoupling:** The ability to witness another person's distress without adopting it as your own. This moves you from *emotional contagion* (feeling what they feel) to *compassionate detachment* (understanding what they feel while remaining centered).
3. **Internal Locus of Control:** Shifting your sense of "duty" from external validation to internal values. You stop making decisions based on "Who will be disappointed?" and start asking "Does this align with my purpose?"
4. **Ruthless Prioritization:** The transition from reactive living to proactive stewardship. You categorize life into "The Essential" (health, core relationships, mission) and "The Noise" (performative outrage, toxic acquaintances, societal scripts).

## Patterns of Thought, Behavior, and Decision-Making

A person practicing Selective Stewardship thinks in terms of **investment** rather than **obligation**. They behave with a "warm-hearted coolness"—they are kind but not easily manipulated. Their decisions are characterized by a slow "yes" and a fast "no." They no longer feel the need to explain their boundaries, as they realize that those who benefit from your lack of boundaries are the ones who will fight them the most.

## 22 Concrete Examples of Selective Stewardship

1. Choosing not to click on a trending news story that is designed to provoke outrage but has no impact on your life.
2. Silencing a group chat that is constantly venting about problems they have no intention of fixing.
3. Saying "I can't take that on right now" to a coworker without offering a list of excuses.
4. Letting a friend be angry with you because you prioritized your sleep over their 2 AM "crisis."
5. Unfollowing "aspirational" accounts that actually make you feel inadequate or behind in life.
6. Realizing that a family member's recurring financial drama is a result of their choices, not your responsibility to solve.
7. Choosing to be "the villain" in someone else's story to remain the hero in your own.
8. Investing deeply in one or two close friendships rather than maintaining 50 shallow ones.
9. Deleting social media apps during high-stress work weeks to preserve "cognitive bandwidth."
10. Refusing to engage in a political debate with someone who isn't interested in a good-faith conversation.
11. Stepping back from a volunteer role that has become a source of resentment rather than joy.
12. Buying a gift because you want to, not because you feel socially "obligated" by a specific date.
13. Setting a "hard stop" time for work, even if the inbox isn't empty.
14. Letting a phone call go to voicemail because you are currently enjoying a meal or a book.
15. Deciding not to "fix" a partner's bad mood, but simply offering to sit nearby if they need you.

16. Admitting "I don't know enough about that to have an opinion" instead of feeling forced to take a side.
17. Leaving a party early because your social battery is depleted, regardless of the "host's feelings."
18. Spending more time on a personal hobby than on "networking" for the sake of appearances.
19. Refusing to apologize for things that are not your fault (e.g., "I'm sorry you're upset," rather than "I'm sorry I did my job").
20. Allocating a specific "worry hour" rather than letting anxiety bleed into the entire day.
21. Choosing high-quality, durable goods over "fast fashion" to reduce the mental clutter of constant consumption.
22. Walking away from a conversation the moment it turns into gossip or character assassination.

## **22 Guidelines for Selective Stewardship**

1. Recognize that your peace of mind is your most valuable asset.
2. Distinguish between "needs" and "wants" in your emotional budget.
3. Establish a "waiting period" before committing to new external requests.
4. Practice "Active Indifference" toward things you cannot influence.
5. Limit your exposure to algorithmic outrage and digital noise.
6. Understand that "No" is a complete sentence that requires no footnotes.
7. Audit your social circle; ensure your energy is reciprocated, not just harvested.
8. Focus on "Deep Work" and "Deep Rest"; avoid the gray area of being half-busy.
9. Reclaim your physical space; your environment dictates your mental state.
10. Stop "propping up" people who refuse to stand on their own.
11. Value your time more than you value being liked by acquaintances.

12. Be radically honest with yourself about why you are helping someone.
13. Prioritize your physical health (sleep, movement) as the foundation of emotional resilience.
14. View boundaries not as walls to keep people out, but as gates to let the right ones in.
15. Relinquish the need to be "informed" about every global tragedy.
16. Accept that you cannot save everyone, and attempting to do so will only sink you.
17. Master the art of the "graceful exit" from toxic or draining situations.
18. Keep your core values written down; use them as a filter for all major decisions.
19. Remember that an "emergency" on someone else's part does not constitute a "crisis" on yours.
20. Forgive yourself for the years you spent being an emotional sponge.
21. Cultivate a "private life" that is not shared or validated by the internet.
22. Review your "Selective Stewardship" list monthly to ensure you aren't drifting back into over-extension.

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Below is a **structured, deep-dive explanation** of the theme you outlined.

All sections use **numerical bullet lists only**, as requested.

## 1. Explanation of the Core Theme – *What It Means*

1. This theme describes the psychological transition from **unbounded empathy** to **intentional responsibility**.
2. It begins at **The Breaking Point**, where a person realizes that caring about everything leads to burnout, resentment, and loss of self.

3. The individual recognizes that empathy without limits becomes **self-erasure**, not virtue.
4. **Selective Stewardship** emerges as the corrective philosophy—choosing what deserves care rather than reacting to everything.
5. The person learns that care is a **finite resource**, not an infinite moral obligation.
6. **Identity Reclaimed** marks the shift from externally defined worth to internally chosen values.
7. The individual stops absorbing emotions, expectations, and crises that are not theirs to solve.
8. Compassion becomes **conscious and bounded**, not automatic and draining.
9. Emotional responsibility is redefined: one is responsible **for oneself first**, not for everyone's feelings.
10. This transformation results in clarity, sovereignty, and sustainable empathy instead of chronic exhaustion.

## 2. Psychological Pillars of the Theme

### 1. Emotional Boundaries

- a. The capacity to distinguish between one's own emotions and others' emotions.

### 2. Finite Resource Awareness

- a. Acceptance that attention, energy, empathy, and time are limited.

### 3. Intentional Value Allocation

- a. Choosing commitments based on values rather than guilt.

### 4. Self-Authorship

- a. Defining identity internally instead of through others' needs or expectations.

### 5. Differentiated Compassion

- a. Caring without absorbing or rescuing.

## **6. Agency Restoration**

- a. Reclaiming the right to choose when and how to engage.

## **7. Detachment Without Coldness**

- a. Remaining humane without becoming enmeshed.

## **8. Resilience Through Selectivity**

- a. Protecting long-term well-being by limiting unnecessary emotional exposure.

# **3. How a Person with This Mindset Thinks**

1. They ask, "Is this mine to carry?"
2. They separate urgency from importance.
3. They see guilt as a data point, not a command.
4. They prioritize sustainability over appearing kind.
5. They evaluate impact instead of intention alone.
6. They accept that saying no can be compassionate.
7. They interpret emotional overload as a boundary signal.
8. They assume responsibility only where they have agency.
9. They resist emotional manipulation framed as moral duty.
10. They view rest as maintenance, not selfishness.
11. They recognize that empathy without limits is self-harm.
12. They value clarity over approval.
13. They understand that not everything deserves access to them.
14. They think in terms of stewardship, not sacrifice.
15. They see identity as self-defined, not assigned.
16. They consider long-term consequences before emotional reactions.

17. They allow others to experience consequences.
18. They avoid rescuing as a default response.
19. They distinguish compassion from compliance.
20. They assess alignment with core values.
21. They replace people-pleasing with self-respect.
22. They define kindness as intentional, not reactive.

## **4. How This Person Behaves and Makes Decisions**

1. They pause before committing emotionally or materially.
2. They set clear limits without over-explaining.
3. They decline requests that conflict with priorities.
4. They stop absorbing others' emotional chaos.
5. They choose presence over constant availability.
6. They disengage from chronic crisis dynamics.
7. They protect recovery time after emotional labor.
8. They communicate expectations early.
9. They avoid rescuing capable adults.
10. They respond rather than react.
11. They invest deeply in fewer relationships.
12. They tolerate short-term discomfort for long-term stability.
13. They let others own their choices.
14. They disengage from guilt-based obligations.
15. They stop proving their worth through sacrifice.
16. They choose contribution over depletion.

17. They maintain emotional neutrality in conflicts.
18. They step back from unsolvable problems.
19. They allocate effort based on impact.
20. They end conversations that violate boundaries.
21. They make decisions aligned with core values.
22. They protect their identity from external control.

## **5. Twenty-Two Real-Life Examples Demonstrating the Traits**

1. Saying no to a friend's recurring crises after realizing they refuse to change.
2. Leaving a job role that relies on emotional exploitation "for the team."
3. Declining family guilt around obligations that compromise mental health.
4. Not responding immediately to emotional messages demanding attention.
5. Offering advice once, then stepping back.
6. Choosing one volunteer cause instead of five.
7. Refusing to mediate conflicts that are not yours.
8. Ending conversations that spiral into emotional dumping.
9. Letting a coworker face consequences rather than fixing mistakes.
10. Taking weekends fully offline despite others' expectations.
11. Prioritizing sleep over late-night emotional support calls.
12. Saying, "I can't help with this," without apology.
13. Not explaining boundaries repeatedly.
14. Leaving relationships built on emotional dependence.
15. Redirecting energy toward personal growth projects.
16. Declining leadership roles that guarantee burnout.

17. Remaining calm while others escalate emotionally.
18. Choosing therapy over rescuing others.
19. Investing deeply in two friendships instead of many shallow ones.
20. Letting someone feel disappointed without trying to fix it.
21. Changing careers away from chronic emotional labor.
22. Redefining success based on internal peace rather than external gratitude.

## **6. Twenty-Two Guidelines for Practicing Selective Stewardship**

1. Audit where your emotional energy goes weekly.
2. Treat empathy as a resource, not an obligation.
3. Ask whether involvement creates growth or dependency.
4. Set boundaries before resentment appears.
5. Do not confuse urgency with importance.
6. Refuse roles that require constant self-abandonment.
7. Practice saying no without justification.
8. Limit exposure to emotional chaos.
9. Choose depth over breadth in relationships.
10. Stop managing others' emotions.
11. Allow others to experience natural consequences.
12. Protect rest as non-negotiable.
13. Clarify your non-negotiable values.
14. Release guilt that originates from others' expectations.
15. Differentiate kindness from self-sacrifice.
16. Invest energy where you have agency.

17. Decline emotional labor without consent.
18. Observe manipulation disguised as vulnerability.
19. Reclaim identity from helper or rescuer roles.
20. Build systems that prevent repeated burnout.
21. Measure commitments by sustainability.
22. Remember that caring selectively allows you to care longer.

If you'd like, I can next:

1. Map this framework to leadership.
2. Translate it into a personal manifesto.
3. Apply it to relationships, family dynamics, or work culture.
4. Turn it into a diagnostic self-assessment.
5. Connect it to Jungian, stoic, or modern psychological models.

Just tell me the next direction.

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Deep Dive into the Theme of Selective Empathy

### 1. What It Means

The theme revolves around the transition from unlimited empathy to selective stewardship. It highlights the psychological breaking point where a person realizes that being endlessly available to others drains their identity, energy, and autonomy. The journey is about reclaiming selfhood by choosing what truly matters and shedding external expectations.

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1. Psychological Pillars
  2. Boundaries – Recognizing limits of emotional capacity.
  3. Discernment – Differentiating between essential and non-essential concerns.
  4. Self-Identity – Reclaiming individuality beyond being an “emotional sponge.”
  5. Agency – Making deliberate choices instead of reactive ones.

6. Resilience – Building strength by conserving emotional energy.
  7. Prioritization – Allocating care to what aligns with values.
  8. Authenticity – Acting in line with personal truth, not external demands.
  9. Detachment – Letting go of guilt for not carrying everyone’s burdens.
  10. Empowered Empathy – Caring deeply but selectively.
  11. Self-Compassion – Extending empathy inward as much as outward.
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1. How a Person Typically Thinks, Behaves, and Decides
  2. Thinks critically about where to invest emotional energy.
  3. Behaves with calm detachment in non-essential conflicts.
  4. Makes decisions based on values, not guilt.
  5. Thinks in terms of sustainability rather than obligation.
  6. Behaves with assertiveness when boundaries are crossed.
  7. Makes decisions by asking “Does this align with my core?”
  8. Thinks about long-term impact of emotional involvement.
  9. Behaves with self-respect, even if misunderstood.
  10. Makes decisions that protect mental health.
  11. Thinks about reciprocity, not one-sided giving.
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1. 22 Real-Life Examples
2. Saying no to a friend’s request when exhausted.
3. Choosing to support a cause that aligns with personal values instead of every cause.
4. Declining to mediate family drama that doesn’t involve them directly.
5. Limiting time spent on social media debates.
6. Walking away from toxic relationships.
7. Delegating tasks at work instead of absorbing everyone’s stress.

8. Listening empathetically but not taking responsibility for fixing others' problems.
  9. Choosing to donate to one charity instead of feeling guilty about all.
  10. Setting boundaries with colleagues who overshare emotionally.
  11. Prioritizing rest over attending every social event.
  12. Refusing to be guilt-tripped into commitments.
  13. Supporting a close friend deeply while letting go of distant acquaintances' issues.
  14. Practicing mindfulness to avoid emotional overload.
  15. Saying "I understand, but I can't take this on."
  16. Choosing to mentor one person instead of spreading thin across many.
  17. Protecting weekends for personal recovery.
  18. Avoiding news cycles that cause emotional burnout.
  19. Investing time in hobbies instead of constant caretaking.
  20. Choosing to care for family health over workplace gossip.
  21. Walking away from arguments that don't matter.
  22. Refusing to internalize others' anger.
  23. Practicing gratitude for selective relationships that bring joy.
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1. 22-Point Guidelines
2. Recognize your breaking point.
3. Accept that unlimited empathy is unsustainable.
4. Define your emotional priorities.
5. Set clear boundaries.
6. Practice saying no without guilt.
7. Choose causes that align with values.
8. Limit exposure to draining environments.

9. Focus on reciprocity in relationships.
10. Protect personal time.
11. Avoid emotional over-identification.
12. Reclaim identity beyond being a caretaker.
13. Practice mindfulness to regulate empathy.
14. Invest in self-care as much as in others.
15. Detach from external expectations.
16. Support selectively and deeply.
17. Conserve energy for essentials.
18. Avoid guilt-driven decisions.
19. Recognize manipulation disguised as need.
20. Value authenticity over approval.
21. Prioritize long-term sustainability.
22. Celebrate resilience in boundaries.
23. Reaffirm self-compassion daily.

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This framework shows how selective stewardship of empathy transforms a person from being drained by external demands into someone who lives with clarity, resilience, and authenticity. Would you like me to expand this into a visual model (like a pyramid or flow chart) to show how the pillars, examples, and guidelines interconnect?