



# **A Caregiver's Calm Companion**















**SickKids<sup>®</sup>**

## Welcome to A Caregivers' Calm Companion!

This guide was made just for you—with help from other caregivers and the team at SickKids. Your well-being matters. Taking care of yourself helps you care for your child.

You might feel ready for your child's surgery, or maybe you feel a little nervous or unsure. Everyone feels different and your feelings might change from day to day.

You might recognize some of these feelings in the emojis below, circle how you feel.

-  Worried — “I just want everything to go okay.”
-  Scared — “This is terrifying — they're my whole world.”
-  Hopeful — “I trust the doctors. I believe in the care they'll get.”
-  Anxious — “Waiting is the hardest part.”
-  Overwhelmed — “So many questions, so much info.”
-  Sad — “I wish I could take their place.”
-  Strong — “I have to be brave — for them.”
-  Grateful — “Thankful for the team helping us through this.”
-  Angry — “Why does my child have to go through this?”
-  Lonely — “It feels like no one else gets it.”
-  Calm — “I'm focusing on the positives.”
-  Confused — “I don't always understand the medical stuff.”
-  Loved — “Family and friends are lifting us up.”
-  Relieved — “We've made it through this step.”

Journal something you want to share with your child after surgery:

## TAKE PART IN YOUR CHILD'S CARE

You know your child best. Your insights, instincts, and advocacy are essential. We see you as a partner in care and we want to work with you every step of the way. Here's how you can take an active role in your child's care:

### **Ask Questions**

You deserve to feel informed. Ask about your child's procedure, medications, symptoms and recovery. The more you know, the more confident and prepared you'll feel. There are no "silly" questions—your voice matters.

### **Talk to Us**

Your healthcare team at SickKids is here for you. We want to hear what's on your mind—your questions, your ideas, your concerns. We'll work with you to make a plan that fits you best.

### **Share With Us What Matters to Your Family**

Your values, beliefs and identity are important. Let us know what's meaningful to you—whether it's cultural practices, spiritual support, or family traditions. We'll do our best to honour and support them.

**Interpreter services are available; please speak to your healthcare team to arrange.**

### **Patient and Family Rights & Responsibilities**

Defines the rights of patients and families when receiving care at SickKids, and their responsibilities towards staff and other patients and families.

### **Being Informed is The Best Way to Prepare**

Visit the [Coming for Surgery Website](#)





## MIND-BODY TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

Here are some ideas to help you feel calm and ready for your child's surgery. **Check off the ones you like!**

**Grounding Exercises**

Try the 5-4-3-2-1 technique

Name:

5 things you can see,  
4 things you can touch,  
3 things you can hear,  
2 things you can smell, and  
1 thing you can taste.

**Supportive Self-Talk**

Speak to yourself with the same kindness you'd offer your child.

Say things like:

- "I'm doing my best"
- "I am strong"

**Digital Downtime**

Take a break from screens. Step outside for fresh air or find a peaceful space in the hospital to close your eyes for a few minutes to rest your mind.

**Let Go of "Perfect"**

There's no perfect way to be a caregiver.

Reminder: You're doing your best—and that's more than enough.

**Watch a Video**

**Two Wings to Fly - Mindfulness and Compassion**

Watch this 4 minute video with your child or on your own.

**Connect**

A short conversation with a friend, partner, or another caregiver can help you feel less alone.

Let others know how they can support you.

You don't have to do this alone.

**Create a Calm Playlist**

Make a playlist of songs that help you feel relaxed, focused, or distracted in a good way.

Listen on your own device; don't forget your headphones!

**Journal or Doodle**

Writing or sketching your thoughts can help release tension and bring clarity.

**Gratitude Pause**

Think of one thing, big or small, that you're grateful for today. One moment of gratitude can help shift your focus and decrease anxiety, worry, or stress.



## WELLNESS TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

Staying active and caring for your own wellness before and on your child's surgery day can help release natural calming chemicals in your brain and support you in feeling more relaxed.

### Prioritize Sleep:

Sleep is your body's reset button. Try to get enough rest each night so you can feel your best during the day.



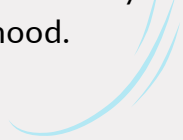
### Fuel Your Body:

Don't skip meals. Eating nourishing foods gives your body the energy it needs to heal, think clearly, and feel strong.



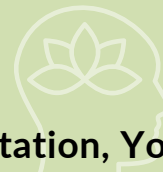
### Move Your Body:

Engage in activities that feel good for you. Movement helps release stress and boosts your mood.



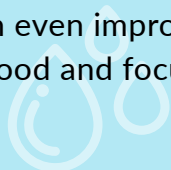
### Meditation, Yoga, or Quiet Time:

Powerful self-care tools for parents and caregivers to stay grounded, present, and emotionally available during your child's surgical journey.



### Stay Hydrated:

Drink plenty of water throughout the day. It helps your body function better and can even improve your mood and focus.





## SICKKIDS RESOURCES

Below are resources to help you learn about the services available at SickKids.  
You can also visit the Resources section on the [Preparing for Surgery](#) page:

### Read the [Coming for Surgery Workbook](#)

Essential information to help you prepare for surgery at SickKids.

### Visit the [Coming for Surgery Learning Hub](#)

General information on how to prepare for surgery.

### Contact the [Spiritual and Religious Care Team](#)

Provides counsel, prayer, and support to help you find peace.

### Contact the [Mindfulness Project](#)

Offers mindfulness sessions to help build resilience and reduce stress.

### Contact [Resource Navigation Service](#)

Available to assist families in finding resources e.g. financial, legal, etc.

### Look Up [Family Spaces and Family Programs](#)

A variety of spaces, each designed to create an atmosphere that is welcoming, healing, safe, and fun!

### Ask to speak with a **Child Life Specialist**

Supports social and emotional impact of illness through therapeutic play preparation and education to reduce fear, anxiety, and pain.

**Ask your healthcare team for a referral.**

### Ask to speak with a **Indigenous Health Navigator**

Provides traditional healing practices, including smudging, for Indigenous families.

**Ask your healthcare team for a referral.**

### Ask to speak with a **Social Worker**

Provides emotional and psychological support for you and your family.

**Ask your healthcare team for a referral.**