

Tip Sheets

Self-Care for Early Care and Education Professionals



The prevention and management of stress requires that individuals take responsibility for their own health and well-being. Practicing

self-care helps to build resilience and the ability to seek positive solutions to stressful situations.

Although the actions taken to prevent and reduce stress in the workplace will differ for each early care program and professional, it is important to be intentional, reflective, and take responsibility for preventing and managing stress.

Whether it's through proper nutrition, exercise, relationships, or taking pleasure in life's joys, find self-care strategies that include something:

- That energizes you.
- That helps you unwind.
- That helps you manage during difficult times.

While work-related stress can never be totally eliminated, there are ways to prevent and reduce its impact.

Stress Prevention and Reduction Strategies

Nutrition

- Proper nutrition helps the immune system function properly and withstand the impact of stress on the body.
- Strive to eat a healthy and balanced diet.
- Keep some comfort items such as tea, nuts/granola for a protein boost, and other healthy snacks on hand.
- Stay hydrated.

Exercise

Try to exercise for 30 minutes each day at any intensity that is comfortable. You can also get moving by:

- Playing a ball game, doing a movement activity, or taking a walk with the children.
- Doing a few yoga poses or stretches to get your blood moving. Include the children!
- Getting outside for some fresh air and a change of scenery.
- Having a dance party by yourself or with the children.

Get to know yourself

Learn to recognize when you are feeling stressed and try to identify what triggers those feelings.

Other strategies for self-reflection include:

- Prayer and meditation
- Positive self-talk
- Keeping a journal
- Setting realistic goals for your personal and professional life
- Asking for help from a mentor or colleague
- Breathing techniques to remain energized and lower blood pressure and cholesterol

Positive Relationships

Building and maintaining positive and supportive relationships is an important part of self-care. Children, parents, family members, and early care and education professionals cope with stress more effectively with the support of others. This support may be from friends, family, co-workers, health care professionals and community organizations.

Build and maintain positive relationships by:

- Connecting with other professionals by sharing ideas, activities, and projects.
- Making positive calls or emails to parents.
- Spending time with loved ones.
- Volunteering in your community.

Enjoy Life

Spending time doing the things you love can be calming and help relieve stress.

- Identify and plan for rewarding personal activities. Do what brings you joy, such as reading, swimming, or taking a walk.
- Keep a notebook of inspirational quotes.
- Watch a comedy.
- Do something creative such as quilting, photography, or cooking.
- Keep kind notes and positive feedback from children, families, and colleagues.
- Laugh and play.
- Do something spontaneous and silly.

Additional Resources

National Association for the Education of Young Children

<https://www.naeyc.org>

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>

For more information, visit www.inclusivechildcare.org.

Copyright © 2024 Center for Inclusive Child Care

These materials may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. Information in this tip sheet has been modified from multiple sources.

Funding provided by the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

www.inclusivechildcare.org