



## Self Care Strategies

Caring for and supporting young children and their families is hard work. As you know, it can be stressful. You may work with children who have experienced trauma. You may work with children who exhibit challenging behavior, which can add additional stress to your job.

Here are some strategies you can use to reduce stress and take care of yourself:

- ▶ Notice your thoughts and feelings as they come up.
- ▶ Write in a notebook or a journal.
- ▶ Take breaks if you feel yourself becoming upset.
- ▶ Spend time in nature.
- ▶ Practice gratitude and make a list of the things you're grateful for.
- ▶ Focus on making changes to things that are in your control versus worrying about things that are out of your control.
- ▶ Exercise regularly. Your brain releases chemicals that help you relax and feel good.
- ▶ Eat nutritious meals and snacks. What you eat affects how you feel.
- ▶ Get enough sleep. Stick to a regular sleep routine. Regular rest and relaxation slows down your heart rate, reduces blood pressure, and decreases muscle tension.
- ▶ Get enough sleep. Sufficient sleep helps balance your mood and improve your mental well-being.
- ▶ Spend time with friends. Communicating and connecting with other people supports your emotional health.

Practice Mindfulness:

- ▶ Mindfulness can be described as observing without judgment, working on acceptance versus judging oneself and others. It can mean living with curiosity or being open to others around us, or a mirror of what's happening in the present moment.
  - Mindful breathing: focus on your breath and take long, deep breaths into your belly.
  - Mindful eating: pay attention to the smells of the food, the look of the food, the texture of the food and how the food tastes.
  - Mindful walking: focus on how your feet touch the ground. Notice the sights, sounds, and smells around you.

Taking steps to care for yourself will not only improve how you feel but will ultimately positively impact all the children and families you support for years to come. What are your favorite self-care strategies? You might want to make yourself a plan or put some goals on a calendar.