

# Strategies to Cope with Stress



During a time of rapid change and uncertainty, increased burdens have been placed on you as you work with children and their families. Increased burden can be stressful. Excess stress, as experienced by many of us during this pandemic, can be overwhelming and can lead to emotional and physical symptoms including a reduced resistance to illness. To help all early childhood educators cope with this increased stress in their personal and professional lives, we have created this tip sheet with strategies for helping you manage your stress during these challenging times.

## 1. Establish your priorities

- Determine and focus on what is most important
- Concentrate on practical measures for maintaining the health and safety of you, your family, the children in your care, and their families.

## 2. Identify your support system and surround yourself with people with positive attitudes

- Social distancing does not have to mean social isolation; therefore, schedule regular times to check in with friends and family members
- Use phone calls, texts, emails or other technologies to connect with people
- Talk about your concerns and fears with others to help keep the issues in perspective

## 3. Stay informed, but take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19 including social media. Be sure that your news sources are accurate and reputable.

- Seek information for the purpose of developing practical steps for protecting children & families you serve and to protect yourself and your family – Being prepared can reduce feelings of panic

## 4. Take time for yourself – Engage in self-care practices

- Do something positive or fun for yourself each day
- Schedule quiet time
  - Even as little as 5 minutes can be effective when you follow these steps:
    1. Reduce outside interruptions
    2. Find a comfortable position
    3. Visualize calm, peaceful situations
    4. Deep breathing – breathe in through your nose and release through your mouth
- Exercise (know your limitations and consult with a doctor prior to beginning any new exercise routine)
- Eat healthy foods – limit or avoid sugar, caffeine, alcohol, and salt
- Sleep – the most natural stress reducer and essential to maintaining health and well-being



- Maintain a routine, but add some variety each day

#### 5. Create a Journal

- Write down the sources of your stress – identifying specific problems helps you to manage and develop strategies
- List ways to overcome the sources of your stress
- Choose practical solutions
- Continuously evaluate what works and what needs to be modified

#### 6. Listen to children and provide accurate, developmentally appropriate information to help ease their fears. Establish protocols for handwashing and maintain regular routines as much as possible.

We recognize that each of you are being impacted by COVID-19 in various ways and it is our hope that these strategies will be beneficial as you continue to provide an invaluable service to the community. Please remember that you are not alone – we are all going through this together and are here to support each other.

***“Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength” – Corrie Ten Boom, Author***



