



## Self-Care and Stress Management

### Head Start Heals - Frequently Asked Questions

#### Q. How can I help my families deal with stress and anxiety during this pandemic?

Validate feelings of worry, stress, and anxiety. These feelings are normal and to be expected during these unprecedented times. All family members are likely feeling varying levels of stress or anxiety on any given day. Parents can support their children by answering their questions and worries with honest and developmentally appropriate information. It's ok to say "I don't know". Be gentle with yourself and others. We are all trying our best, this includes our children. Adjusting our expectations of what we may accomplish during a day is important. During times of stress our ability to regulate our feelings and emotions is decreased. This is especially true for children. Spending time connecting positively with children can buffer the effects of stress. Find opportunities for play, humor, dancing, movement, (safe) social connection, breathing, and sleep. Help families identify local resources that may support the reduction of stressors such as: food, financial assistance, rent or housing assistance, virtual parenting support groups, navigating technology, etc.

#### Additional Resources:

Tips to Manage Stress and Anxiety

<https://preventchildabuse.org/coronavirus-resources/#Tips-to-Manage-Stress-Anxiety>

Coping with Stress During an Infectious Disease Outbreak

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Coping-with-Stress-During-Infectious-Disease-Outbreaks/sma14-4885>

Supporting Yourself During a Pandemic

[https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Pandemic\\_Supporting-Yourself\\_tipsheet.pdf](https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Pandemic_Supporting-Yourself_tipsheet.pdf)

Home Activities and Tips

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/coronavirus/home-activities-tips>

Tips for Families Coronavirus

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3210-tips-for-families-coronavirus>

Stay Connected to Decrease Family Stress in Difficult Times

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/blog/stay-connected-decrease-family-stress-difficult-times>

## **Q. How can we support staff member's wellness & resilience when they are also part of the community that has been exposed to trauma?**

Many staff members are facing the same stress, anxiety, worries, and exposure to trauma as the families they serve. Validating staff members feelings during these uncertain times is important. Understanding what stressors staff may be facing at home can help to support work related expectations that are flexible and manageable (E.g., single mom homeschooling, caring for a sick family member, financial insecurity, mental health, etc.). Creating spaces and times to check in about staff needs while providing social connection and support is critical for supporting wellness. Encouraging staff members to practice daily self-care in some form such as: taking breaks from news related to COVID-19, making time to unwind, taking care of your body (movement, eating, sleeping), connecting with loved ones daily, etc. Sharing information about changes to center policies, procedures, timelines, etc. can help to reduce anxiety about the unknowns of the future and returning to work. This is also a place to help staff think about what they might need as centers reopen (E.g., support in finding childcare for their own children, what will transportation to work look like, checking in about pre-existing health concerns or risks, evaluating readiness to return).

### **Additional Resources:**

Mindfulness Toolkit for Early Educators

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/2896-getting-started-with-mindfulness-a-toolkit-for-early-childhood-organizations>

Managing Stress and Anxiety

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html#parents>

Supporting Yourself During a Pandemic Tip Sheet

[https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Pandemic\\_Supporting-Yourself\\_tipsheet.pdf](https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Pandemic_Supporting-Yourself_tipsheet.pdf)

When Students are Traumatized, Teachers Are Too:

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/when-students-are-traumatized-teachers-are-too>

Self-Reflection

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/developing-relationships-families/self-reflection>

Early Essentials Webisode 6: Professionalism and Self Care

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/early-essentials-webisode-6-professionalism-self-care>

## Q. How can I encourage parents to practice self-care during COVID-19 to reduce their stress?

Making time daily for self-care can support stress reduction for parents. Self-care is a variety of strategies or activities caregivers can do to ensure they are physically, emotionally, and mentally present for their children. When caregivers find time to take care of themselves it is easier to be calm and responsive for their children. Supporting caregivers in thinking about activities they enjoy or ways to take a break while parenting across the day can support self-care. Self-care strategies can include:

- limiting media exposure
- getting outside
- movement/exercise
- talking with family and friends
- sharing feelings
- eating well
- taking time to relax and reflect
- learning strategies to manage stress
- playing
- using humor
- deep breathing
- learning what your stress triggers are
- creating a good sleep routine, finding purpose in each day
- challenging negative thoughts
- seeking help from a healthcare professional for physical or mental concerns
- and recognizing that everyone has decreased patience and capacity right now

### Additional Resources:

The Importance of Self Care When Young Children Are at Home

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3262-young-children-at-home-during-the-covid-19-outbreak-the-importance-of-self-care>

Self Care for Parents

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/self-care-for-parents-4178010>

Simple Self Care Tools for Parents

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/joyful-parenting/201708/25-simple-self-care-tools-parents>

Self-Care and Time at Home

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3210-tips-for-families-coronavirus#chapter-2437>