

## Time for You: Self-Care Strategies

Judi Stevenson-Garcia: Hi everyone, welcome to a very special "Teacher Time" webisode, "Teacher Time, Time for You." I'm Judi Stevenson-Garcia: from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning, and I'm so excited to have this opportunity today to talk about you, because we know it's so important for you to be well so you can do your job each day. We know that the work that you do is challenging. It takes time, love, patience, and physical and emotional strength to provide consistent, high-quality learning opportunities and meaningful interactions with children each day. Today we want to spend some time talking about how to make sure you are taking care of yourself regularly so that you're fully present each day and ready to keep doing the very important job you do.

But before we dive into that, I'm going to give you some information about this webinar. We will be using some of the Adobe Connect features to help us interact. At times, we're gonna ask you to type in a chat box. It's located to the left of the PowerPoint slides, right below my video. If at any time you have questions related to the presentation or other topics, please type your question in there, and I'll be asking you some questions too, so please chat away in there. Jan Greenberg is also part of our team here at NCECDTL, and she will be facilitating the chatroom, answering questions and giving you links to resources that we mention, so please feel free to chat with Jan in the chat box. Also, if you look at the top of your screen, there's a little person raising his hand. If you click on that, you can raise your hand as well. There's going to be times when I want to do a quick check-in, and I'll ask you to raise your hand, so you just click on that symbol, and I'll see you raising your hand.

So, let's try it right now. Raise your hand if you have felt stress in the past week. So, if you've felt stress, go ahead and raise your hand. Yes, and I can raise my hand too. I have felt stress this week. Oh, it's a lot of you. Yes, I see that. Well, I'm so glad you're here, because we're here to talk about you and how to manage stress when you experience it at work. The other thing that I want you to know is that the supporting documents for this webinar can be found in the supporting documents box in the bottom right of your screen. That's going to be the viewer's guide, which you can download either to print out, or just type directly into the document any thoughts or ideas you have. It's a great resource for you to keep notes on what you're doing or what you're thinking, thoughts that you have about the content tonight.

And just so you know, most of this session is going to include video. If you are listening to this webisode on the phone, you will not be able to hear the audio of those videos over the phone. If you're at a computer, it's easier to listen through your computer speakers, but if you can't hear or view the videos, you'll be able to watch them on MyPeers when the webinar is posted there. If for any reason you get disconnected from the webinar, use the same link that you used previously to rejoin the webinar, and you'll get right back in. And finally, at the end of the webinar, we'll post a link to an evaluation form. We'd appreciate it if you would complete the evaluation, as we use this information for improving our future webisodes, and when you complete the evaluation, you can download a certificate of completion for your participation in

the webinar. And if you're viewing the webinar with colleagues on one computer, and only one person is registered for the webinar, please just forward the evaluation link to your colleagues who also viewed the webinar so that they can complete the evaluation and receive a certificate of completion.

And, just as a reminder, when we use the term "teacher", we're referring to any adults who work in group care settings, so teachers and family child care providers. We recognize that there's a wide variety in the types of learning environments for young children. You may work in a classroom with a specific age group, or you may be a family child care provider, supporting infants, and toddlers, and older children all at the same time, but we hope that you really find the information, and the strategies, and resources that we share here to be really useful to you in your specific setting. So, we want the next hour to be as interactive as possible, so please go ahead and ask questions, and add your thoughts and comments in the chat box as we go along, and we'll do our best to address them as we can.

Okay, so for our topic for today, "Time for You," we know that research has shown that we have – that teachers are responsive in order for them to be responsive each day to the needs of the children that they work with, that they need to take care of themselves, they need to be well. So, today we're gonna spend a little time helping you understand what it means to be well, and because we know that when you take better care of yourself, your interactions with children and with others you work with will benefit, but it's not always so simple. So, we're hoping to give you some strategies to support yourselves in being well and to help you think about the ways your program might be able to support you in being well.

Some of you have already mentioned in the chat box things that you like to do when feeling stressed, like reading, or going for a walk, or taking a deep breath, but let me ask another question, and you can raise your hand too, this will be a yes or no question. So, think about your day today. Have you had a few quality minutes to yourself today? Raise your hand if you've managed to find a few quality minutes to yourself or for yourself today. I see several of you. Well, good. Maybe this – maybe "Teacher Time" is your time to yourself today. That would be great if this was your time. I have an app on my phone, like a breathing app, and it allows me to just take a few minutes when I can. Sometimes I'm in my car parked, waiting to go pick up my kids, or sometimes it's right after they go to bed. I'll just take a few minutes and use that breathing app to kind of help center myself. I see lots of raised hands, that's great.

Well, I also want to help, just to kind of get a sense of who's in the room, tell us in the chat box if, when you think in terms of minutes or hours, just tell us in the chat box how much time on average do you have each day to do something to care for yourself? Do you have five minutes, or do you get to do something longer, like maybe doing a workout that's like 45 minutes or an hour, or maybe you, on average, don't get enough time. So just tell us in the chat box how much time do you get – I see an hour – each day to yourself to do something to take care of yourself? I see lots of you – oh an hour – that's great. Maybe an hour and 30 minutes. This is great. Oh, you guys are awesome. You're already doing really good things to take care of

yourself. Yeah, I'm close to Savannah, I'm closer to zero to 30 minutes, depending on the day too. Sometimes it doesn't always happen. That's great.

So, on today's webisode, we're gonna be revisiting some of the resiliency and wellness segments from last season's "Teacher Time" episode, so if you watched last season's "Teacher Time," you'll remember we had Neal Horen and his colleague, Amy Hunter. They're from the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness. They were regular guests on our "Teacher Time" series, and they provided some really helpful strategies for self-care and for developing community in our programs and techniques for finding balance. So today, Neal is going to be with us live. He's gonna be chatting with us, answering your questions, and he'll also be responding to you in the chat box. So, let's welcome Neal. Welcome back to "Teacher Time". We're glad to have you here with us tonight. We have a very welcoming group here. So, if you guys have questions for Neal as we go through, please put them in the chat box. But Neal, maybe you can help us, just kick us off and get started by thinking a little bit about what it actually means to be well, 'cause a lot of times people think health, you know, physical health, but you've said that there's more than one way to be well.

Neal Horen: Right, so I don't want to dismiss how important it is to be physically well. I think I'd be safe in saying that at least some of the folks on our episode tonight have suffered through the flu, as we did in our home, so physical wellness certainly is an important piece here, but you also have to sort of think about all these other aspects of wellness. I know we spoke about this, and I continue to work a lot with child care providers, and classroom staff, and other folks who are working with children around this concept of wellness, that it's not only physical wellness, but it's your emotional wellness. How are you doing handling your emotions? How do you do when you do feel sad or anxious or things like that? Certainly these days, I think a lot of us are coping with lots of emotions, and that emotional wellness has a lot to do with how you're able to address the everyday things that we all deal with. Traffic, static and echo on a webisode... I'm just making that part up. So, that's part of it. There's also financial or occupational wellness. We're all in a field that we most likely entered not necessarily for financial wellness, but I think we have to think about wellness in terms of, are we satisfied with our work?

And it's so interesting as I watch all the folks who've been so welcoming and sort of typing in. I think about people who are, at least on the East Coast – it's almost my bedtime, Judi – but for many folks, they're staying after work, it's late in the day, even for folks out on the West Coast. So, the idea that your occupational wellness is a component of how you're doing, it has a lot to do with who we are. It's not the only thing, but it's certainly if you spend 40, 50 hours doing something, it does comprise a bit of how you feel about yourself and your wellness. We also talk about spiritual wellness and as well as social wellness, and those are critical pieces for many people. And last time we talked, and I'm sure we'll probably again tonight, about that issue of balance, that you're likely not able to have sort of complete, 100% satisfaction with your wellness in every single aspect, but it's also what's important to you.

So for most of us, I would argue that physical wellness is important, but for some of us, spiritual wellness is equally important, if not more, and so we spend a good amount of time trying to

address that. Part of what I really encourage folks to do is to think about this in a very careful, thoughtful way. What is important to you? How are you balancing work, home life, social life, your emotional wellness, all those kinds of things? So, hopefully we'll get to talk about that a little bit more tonight.

Judi: Yeah, that's gonna be our major theme. So thanks, that's really helpful. I think it's really important to remember not only that there are lots of different types of wellness, but also we need to find a balance, and sometimes if one area of wellness is off a little bit that we can support that by being well in other ways. So, we have a short video clip of you telling us a little bit about how we can support these types of wellness in the workplace. For those of you who are listening and watching, as you watch, tell us in the chat box which kind of wellness is most important to you. [Video begins]

Neal: On a group basis, there are certainly places across the country that have developed wellness teams, and that sort of, when it's done in a really thoughtful manner... There's a great program in Missouri that has done some really good thinking about this, and what they do is they start to think about, "Is it about physical wellness, or are we doing things like exercise, and are we allowing some time for somebody to actually go take a 10 minute walk?" It's about small things. There's a program where they've allowed staff to paint the walls of their office the color that they want to, which for some of us may not be important, but in some ways allows you to individualize, which is actually a piece of wellness. On the other hand, there are some people that don't like those sorts of things. There's a water challenge – I don't even know what it is 'cause I don't pay attention – but there's a water challenge, how much water are you drinking. It's not my thing. I sort of do my own thing. So, on an individual basis, I think there are a number of things that people can do.

There's a great push – and Robert Whitaker and his colleagues are actually really pushing this around wellness – around mindfulness, mindful breathing. Being mindful is a whole way of being that allows you to slow down and allows you to focus on yourself. There are things obviously that you can't do at work, so when I hear somebody say, "I really like to ride a horse," most of our workplaces don't have hitching posts anymore, and we have more difficulty, so we have to think about things that we can do in the workplace. For example, just some deep breathing. Not just taking a deep breath, but really focusing on that breath. Progressive muscle relaxation – we have some on the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, [ecmhc.org](http://ecmhc.org) website, this is actually – there's guided, in English and Spanish, audio for relaxation, and I think that those kinds of things – think about what the individual can do within the scope of what happens during the day. You don't get four-hour breaks to go and get out to the gym, but if you can 10-minute breaks, or even five-minute breaks, that just focus on yourself... to do a little meditation, to do a little breathing. Those are the kinds of things that might be helpful.

Judi: Thank you, that is really helpful, and I think, going back to what you said about teachers who are stressed, it impacts their students. I think it's important for us to make sure that we remember that taking care of ourselves is going to have an impact on our students. Being mindful in the classroom will have a direct impact on our students and will serve the

community on a daily basis. Thank you, Neal, that was really helpful. Thanks for being here.  
[Video ends]

Judi: I see a lot of you are saying that we need a balance. They listen already, Neal, to what you had to say about it. They can't just pick one. They realize that it's important to be well in all of these different areas. This person walks to work, and she prays while she's walking, and then she has – this is Janet – she has 45 minutes to herself before the staff and teachers arrive. I think that's a great way to start your day, with some peace before the craziness begins.

Neal: Right.

Judi: So, you mentioned at the end of that video something about mindfulness, and that's a word that I've been hearing a lot lately, but can you just tell us a little about what mindfulness is and why it could be really valuable for us in the work that we do?

Neal: Yeah, you know, it's interesting, Judi. I was at the grocery store yesterday, and I looked at the magazines, and I'm really upset about Jennifer and Justin, but I also saw a magazine, a mindfulness magazine. I was like, "There's a whole magazine for this. Where have I been, how have I missed this?" And the truth is, is that mindfulness is sort of a practice. It's a way of being. It's not a religious practice. It's not a manualized practice, but it really is about sort of being in the moment, being present, being nonjudgmental, and when I think about folks who are working with children, and I have a two-year old who at any moment will walk into this room despite being asked not to... being mindful that I have to keep my calm, which I don't always do, but certainly if I'm working in child care, I'm working in Head Start Early, Head Start home visiting, being mindful of what it is that I'm trying to do, being present in the moment, really being there. Not thinking about the next thing, not thinking about what happened on my cell phone, what's buzzing, what does that mean, but being present.

We know that the adults who are working with children, who can slow themselves down, are really helping in terms of the children's ability to regulate themselves, and it helps with executive function, your ability to problem solve, to make better decisions, which in turn, of course, leads to those children learning those skills. Mindful practice is really about just sort of being aware of what you're doing. If you watch – I say this all the time, when I watch these cooking shows, that guy with the spiky hair...Guy Fieri, and he'll take a bite of something and he's like, "Oh, you can taste the smokiness of the meat with the crispiness of the," and I'm like, "I don't know, I just shove stuff in my mouth so I look like this." But when you're mindful and you're really thinking about how things taste, you slow yourself down. When you take that 45 minute walk and you're praying, you're being mindful. You're just sort of being in tune with things, and that can really help us slow down, which in turn we know has really positive physical benefits.

Judi: I think it's interesting. One of the things that teachers often do when they're working with young children, when they're eating is they talk to them about the food that they're eating. They'll say, "Oh, how does that taste, or what does this smell like?" Or, "Maybe take a bite of this, or let's pass the food around and choose what you want to eat." That's interesting that you

brought in a food analogy, because that is something that teachers do. They help children to kind of slow down and be mindful, and as a teaching practice, it's supporting language, it's supporting social skills, but it's also helping children to be mindful, and teachers may not even be aware that they're supporting that by engaging in that practice, which is really cool.

Neal: Yeah. We were just in a classroom, Judi, doing some filming, and we happened to go, this is in the fall, here in DC, went out on a walk, and I know that lots of folks on our call tonight do this, but the idea that when you're taking that walk, and you're noticing the color of the leaves and the sound that it makes when you crunch through the leaves versus the wind, all these kinds of things, that's helping not only them be aware and being mindful. It's about science, it's about learning. All those things sort of combined are what really make children ready for school, and that's really the big push. We want children ready for school. Being ready for school is are you mindful of other people, are you mindful of yourself? Do you understand those interactions and things like that?

Judi: Yeah, that's great. So it's stuff that teachers maybe do already and aren't necessarily aware of it. So, we're gonna watch another video, and this video will be you talking a little bit more about mindfulness in a little bit more detail, and so for those of you who have that chat box, go ahead and tell us, as we watch the video, how you think mindfulness could benefit you in your work. [Video begins]

Judi: What would mindfulness look like throughout the course of a day?

Neal: I would imagine that it starts before you ever get to work. I would put forth the idea that all the adults have their own sort of glitter going, their own families, their own lives, whatever stressors they're dealing with, so that by the time they get to work, it might be time to take a few minutes to center yourself, whether it's meditation, yoga, some breathing, some way of sort of slowing yourself down. I can hear myself actually talking a little bit more slowly in my self-psychology voice. But for the adults, it's before anybody arrives into your classroom, are you ready? And are you sort of slowed down enough that when this starts, and we know that the way that the day starts is bam! It starts. It's quick. Children are coming, parents have questions, people are dropping things off, children are starting to move about the classroom. How do you sort of approach that so that you're in a space where if something goes awry, you can sort of handle it in a smooth way, it doesn't throw you off for the rest of the day? Then, having some time during the day, and this is the harder part, and this is where if the program itself is paying attention to this, we're making a space where teachers have two minutes to go just, [Takes a breath] breathe. Take a breath. That teachers have a chance to not just grab some food and not have a chance to enjoy a meal. I'm not suggesting that they get a three-hour lunch break, but I am saying maybe being aware that the more effective teachers tend to be the ones who are able to slow themselves down, regulate, use their executive functioning. We know that mindfulness has a lot of positive benefits for adults.

Judi: I like your idea, your analogy of the snow globe and thinking about maybe settling the snow globe right before you try to start your day. Whatever your stuff is, settling that so that you're able to approach your classroom from a centered place. You mentioned giving teachers breaks, and I think this is something again that programs probably do anyway intuitively, popping your head in, are you okay, do you need to take a minute, but maybe being more intentional about providing those breaks for teachers on a regular basis would be helpful. If you can think a little bit more broadly about maybe programs and even staff working with each other, how they can support each other. I think many times there are two or more adults in the classroom working together. Are there ways that staff can support each other, either within their classrooms or with other staff in the building, to make sure that this is something that is a regular practice?

Neal: I think it's a really good question, because it sort of gets at the idea that this is not just a job. This is a place where we're supporting children and their families, and we're supporting one another. If everyone is mindful of that, but if everyone's paying attention to that in a way that says, "I'm gonna go out of my way to be supportive." So, if I'm working in a classroom, you and I are in the classroom together, I'm paying attention to, boy, I know that behavior of that child really pushes your button. I'm gonna sort of step in, either for you or for that child. I'm just gonna say, "Hey, let's redirect a little bit." I'm going to sort of practice the breathing so that it helps you slow down. We're gonna create a culture, the director of the program's gonna create a culture so that we are supportive of one another. We see ourselves as a community, and that...we have... I was just out visiting a program where they have a yoga instructor actually come in at the end of the day, once a week. Another program was talking about not only encouraging a gym membership, but providing a gym membership, and then you have to use it a certain number of times, so it's really almost pushing people to be mindful about their own health. I think we talked about this last time, if I remember right, that when adults are under stress, they tend to use harsher discipline, they're more punitive. When they're able to slow themselves down, they are experiencing less stress, they tend to be able to demonstrate those skills that we know all of our teachers have. They are caring, they're reflective, they're supportive, and when a culture like that exists within a program, we're much more likely to see staff being able to do those kinds of things. [Video ends]

Judi: Neal, I don't know if you have any thoughts on the comments that people have included here in the chat box.

Neal: Tara had mentioned that when she's not ready, it really stresses her out, and I think that readiness really is about how do we enter in our – in our day? We are...there's a great [Inaudible] video of a child coming into the program, and the teacher gets down and starts asking, I think it's about, he tried peanut butter this weekend. I can't remember the exact thing, but it's the idea of this is the experience of a child is gonna have is, what is the adult like? When the adult is frazzled and when the adult is not sort of centered and mindful, it sets a tone, and I can tell you, and I'm sure this has been the case for you, Judi, as well as for many of our folks here, that you know when a teacher's not on their A-game for whatever reason, and children sense that, as well. So, part of what we're doing is we're modeling the impact on that

relationship between the adult and the child. It really is dependent upon, has that adult had a chance to sort of get themselves set? I had this great experience today. I try and make a little healthy shake in the morning, and I take it in the car with me, and as I'm driving to work today, I don't know what happened, it just flew all over me. So now I have some sort of banana chia seeds stuck all over my pants, and I'm thinking, "Alright, I've gotta get into work, I've gotta clean this up in the car, and I've got to actually get to a meeting," and I'm thinking I just need like two minutes to sit. My snow globe, this concept that if you shake a snow globe you can't really see through it, but if you let things settle a little bit, you're in a better space. And if you're in a better space, you're much more likely to respond to provocative behavior from your perspective in a different way. If we're on edge, and I see this in some of the comments. So, I think that part of that is that mindfulness. That's what's gonna help you be ready to have that positive impact and that positive relationship.

Judi: Right, I love that snow globe image. That's really helpful. I feel like that's what happens at night when my boys go to bed. I feel like all of the snow just starts to settle. That's my time, right? But I think it's important for us to be very real, and you've mentioned this as well. This job can be just exhausting and overwhelming, and some days, it's really hard to even catch your breath long enough to calm yourself down, or center yourself, or to plan, or feel like you're ready. So, I want to think a little bit about what is stressful for us in our work.

Lauren, if you can pull up the whiteboard for us, I want to see if we can do something with our respondents. This is a whiteboard, and if you click on the T, there's a little T on the left-hand side, and then click on the box, you can type in a word. What I want to hear from you is, what is one thing in your work each day that's the most stressful for you? So, click on that T, and then you can click in the white box, and just type in one word. What's the most stressful thing for you in your work each day? We'll see as you guys start typing in what's stressful for you. Children and challenging behaviors, challenging behaviors is a big one, right? Those kids who come in and are behaving in ways that are really challenging for you to manage on a daily basis. The parents...yeah, I feel that. Impending deadlines, yeah. I see that paperwork, oh my goodness. Yes, the never ending paperwork, right? Managing multiple demands simultaneously...for sure. Kathy, I feel that. Some of you are feeling the paperwork. Noise and chaos, yeah. I'm an introvert, so when I have a day where there's lots of noise and lots of chaos, sometimes it gets really overwhelming for me. Oh, there's your text on the whiteboard, I see. Behaviors, behaviors, miscommunication. Families. Yeah, there's a lot going on. So, you know I think this is...lots of noise, oh my goodness, the noise, yeah. Not enough time, social emotional meltdowns, somebody said all of the above. [Laughs] That's a nice way of putting it, yep, all of that.

Wow, you guys, you deal with so much every day, and I really don't want to sit here and say, "Oh, just take time to be mindful." I think what we're really here to do is to both acknowledge what's stressful to you in your workday. I see not having enough time with the children because of the paperwork... so you feel like even in your own work, you may not be able to have the balance between supporting children and doing the other parts of your job that take you away from the children, which I think can be really challenging. Leaving problems from home when

things are really bad, yeah, I have that trouble, too. I have a plumbing issue going on right now, and I've had a hard time letting that go so I can focus on my work, so I hear you with that. Technology not working, yes. And Neal, maybe you can help us think a little bit about how we can manage our own big feelings around these stressors when we're in the middle of taking care of children, and responding to their feelings, and trying to help them manage. How do we center ourselves and manage our own feelings so that we can be more available to children when we need to be?

Neal: The first thought I have is, why did we get into this work? Thinking through, like, what am I really trying to do here? And there's an interesting thing on the MyPeers. I don't remember when, but they were talking about children pushing buttons. I was thinking, "Do we really think that young children are maniacal beings trying to push your buttons, or are they really trying to do the best that they can?" I sort of subscribe to this children do well if they can, if they have the skills and the strategies, as do adults. I saw on some of the chat about having difficulty dealing with other adults, all those kinds of things, but I think the centering of yourself, for me it's about trying to focus on what is the child trying to communicate, and what can I do to support the child, not how do I get through this? I saw that a number of times in the chat. If we just think of everything – and you talked about this with mealtime or other sorts of activities – if we think about them as things to get through, that's not what they're intended to do. Each of those are ways in which we forge relationships, build skills, enhance academic readiness, all those kinds of things, but you have to at least be open to the idea that you're there for a child, and that is really easy for me to say because I'm not in a classroom. I'm not in a child care. I'm not a home visitor. And what I know is that if that person takes that extra minute, I'm not saying an hour, I'm saying an extra minute, and breathes, and slows themselves down just enough to say, "What's getting me so worked up?" They have a much better shot of responding in a more positive, proactive way versus a snap response.

I've gotten really good at this. I have, at the current time, 70 draft emails, 'cause I find that when somebody sends me the email, I just start typing and then I'm like [Inaudible], and then I just leave it there, and then I come back to it a little bit later and then I edit it. In some ways, I've learned to do that for myself in meetings with children, with my coworkers. I think that's that mindfulness sort of coming into play, which is your first thought is probably something that is not gonna get you somewhere if you're upset, but if you've really slowed yourself down, your first thought may be a really helpful first step. I don't know if that gets to what you're asking, Judi.

Judi: No, that's great. I think that's really important, because all of the stressors that everyone mentions, really, it is very important to be aware of how those stressors are playing into the relationship that you have with children. So, a child comes in and says, "Hey! I had a birthday party this weekend," and you're busy trying to meet a deadline with paperwork and trying to take your attendance, it makes it very hard for you to be present. I think that's really helpful to think about, and also I see a lot of people in the chat box mentioning we really need to be empathetic toward the stressors that children are under, and recognize that life is hard. We think oh, it must be nice to be a three-year old. I say that about my son, or a four-year old. Can't

watch your show tonight, but it's hard being four. When I watch him try to put his shoes and his jacket on in the morning, it takes forever, and it's a challenge. Things that I would take for granted, he's got the distractions going on and forgets to put a shoe on while he runs and does something else. It's hard to be a child and figure these things out, so I have to remember that tomorrow when we're getting ready to go out the door. So, we're gonna take a few minutes here and your friend, Amy Hunter, from Health and Wellness, she also stopped by "Teacher Time" last year, and so we're gonna watch a video where she's sharing a little bit more strategies for managing feelings of stress or anxiety while we're in the moment with children. She's talking with Emily Adams, who is the host from last year's infant/toddler "Teacher Time," and she's gonna share how we can be responsive to young children even as we may be feeling stress or anxiety in our own lives. [Video begins]

Emily Adams: I was just thinking about how emotionally exhausting it is to consistently be really respecting, reflecting, and relating with children as they go through all of these big emotions and transitions, and gosh, we need ways to really take care of ourselves as we do this so that we can be present for children.

Amy Hunter: You're 100% right. It's exhausting. This work is absolutely exhausting, and so one of the best things we can do is taking care of ourselves. And before, we talked about reflecting on the child's behavior, sort of what's the meaning of the child's behavior, what's going on for the child, but now we're gonna talk about taking care of ourselves and reflecting on ourself. And so, when we reflect on ourselves, let's take that toddler example again and say, "Oh my gosh – this is – I'm getting upset," and you notice that. You notice maybe your shoulders are up into your neck, or next to your head because you're so tense, or maybe – I know I hold a lot of tension in my jaw. Your heart might be beating quicker, so all of these physical things going on when you start to get frustrated, and then your thoughts. When you're in that moment of dealing with a toddler tantrum, you might be thinking, "Oh my gosh, I wish I was a better teacher, I wish I was a better parent... or maybe someone's thinking I'm not a good teacher or I'm not a good parent," and so now all these thoughts are going through your mind. And so, reflecting on what's happening for you, noticing that I'm having these thoughts, I'm having these physical sensations going on, so that's the first step, noticing and reflecting on what's happening.

Emily: So, this is making me really anxious. What can we do when we notice that we're having this – sort of these cues from our body? What can we do?

Amy: We're paying attention to them, right. Once you're paying attention and you notice and recognize that that's what's happening, that you're having these thoughts and these sensations, is calm yourself, and there are lots of different ways to calm yourself, and the best thing to do is try to experiment with some different ways, and find what works for you. For some people, it's taking three deep breaths. For some people, it's just thinking about a word that's calming, like calm or peace. For some people, it's a visualization. I know someone gave the example when I was in a training once of a wheat field, and for them, that was really calm, seeing the wheat flow back and forth. For some people, it's a beach scene, but there's all these different

strategies you can use to try to center yourself, get calm, really distract your mind from that tense moment that you're in, and then the final piece is deciding what you're gonna do.

Emily: Okay, so I just have to share with you a strategy that has really worked for me, which is when you start feeling that way, sometimes it's like you have tunnel vision, and you can only see the thing that's really difficult.

Amy: You really get stuck in it, right?

Emily: Oh my gosh, it's so hard, and then you start thinking those thoughts like, "Oh, I'm not being a very good teacher right now," and if you can step back and think, "Okay, I'm going to look for and name 10 things in this room." It'll pull you out of that and it gives you something really concrete to do, and for me, that's been a really valuable strategy in this moment. It kind of takes the pressure off of the intensity of what's going on that you're supposed to be resolving. You can pull back and kind of feel like you have a sense of control over your own reactions.

Amy: You really get stuck in that moment, so finding a strategy – and that's a great strategy by the way – but finding your own strategy that works for you so that you can center and become calm, and then go to your thinking brain, not your reactive brain. Sometimes when you're in that physical moment or your thoughts are getting carried away, you just react instead of making an intentional choice about what would my best self do in this situation? What is the best teacher response to this child's tantrum in the moment? And what you said earlier is so great. Sometimes it's just being there, right? Being there for the child. So, my homework for the audience today is to go back and use reflection, thinking about your thoughts, your feelings, your physical body, developing a strategy to calm down that works for you, practicing that, practicing some different strategies, and then ask yourself, what would my best self do here?

Emily: I love that, thank you. Those are some really good strategies, and I like thinking about sort of taking yourself away and thinking, "OK, what do I really want to be in this situation?" 'Cause that helps you get back to that place where you can be that excellent teacher again.  
[Video ends]

Judi: I think that was really helpful to hear Amy talking about strategies, but I see in the chat box, Neal, lots of people mentioning transition. Can you tell us a little bit about maybe why transitions might be hard for kids, and also maybe why they're challenging for staff? This is not new. I hear transitions are a challenge all the time for lots of kids.

Neal: Transitions are hard because there's a cognitive shift that you have to make, which involves using lots of different parts of your brain to really move from one thing to another. So now, if we start to think about a developing brain, and the idea that I'm enjoying something, if I'm an egocentric, developmentally appropriate, egocentric toddler and you say okay, stop doing the thing that's lots of fun and now do what I tell you to do, why wouldn't I get upset? And so those transitions can be really hard because you're making cognitive and physical shifts and putting all of those things together can be very challenging. Part of why we talk so much

about transitions, quite frankly, I'll use a word that may become upsetting now, is we need to be mindful. We need to be mindful that a transition can be challenging for some children, and I want all of us to maybe hearken back to that first time in middle school when you had to go from class to class to class. I asked my children the other day, "How come you guys don't use your lockers?" They're like, "We don't have time to go to our lockers." That chaos that you feel as a middle schooler, let's lay that back on the feet of two and three-year olds and think about how hard it is. Part of what we can do is be cognizant that those shifts are not easy to make, and as we help children sort of ease into it and reduce that anxiety. I think Kathy – Kathy I see is mentioning that they can be very anxiety-provoking. If we help children by helping ourselves and having a good, thoughtful way of making those transitions, we have a better shot at helping them sort of start to use the skills and build that muscle, that cognitive muscle that they need to do that.

Judi: Yeah, and I know lots of people in here like to sing. I've seen singing a really successful approach to transitioning, and kind of alleviates some of the stress and anxiety. It also gives some predictability for kids. "Oh, well I know this song. This is what we do when we sing this song," and it helps them to think about that transition. We've spent 45 minutes now talking about stressors. Can you help us think a little bit about some strategies for us to implement on our own? You've helped us think about strategies we can use for ourselves, but we did promise to talk a little bit about how we can support our colleagues and maybe things that we can do in our own programs that would help alleviate some of the stressors we feel with colleagues, and to build a community. What are some resources or things that we could think about in terms of supporting the adults that we have to interact with on a daily basis?

Neal: Well you know, it's interesting, Judi. As I watched the chat when we first came on, there was a lot of, "Oh hi, Miss Judi, hi." People are connected. Bruce Perry, who does a lot of work in the field of trauma really talks about that we are a very social being. We somehow have forgotten that, partially because many of us are now socializing by keeping our heads down, looking at phones. We are really a connected being. Relationships drive what we do, and they drive in positive and negative ways, and so when I see and hear it in the chat, as I've seen lots of things about positive sorts of relationships, but I'm also seeing lots about what about that tough coworker, what about this? So, I'd encourage folks again, using some of their mindful strategies, what is it that makes that person difficult? I know after many years, I'm very clear on what types of people I have more difficulty with. It doesn't mean that I'm just gonna avoid them. I have to work with the people that I work with, and there are some that I have more difficulty with, and part of what I do is I'm mindful that when I'm interacting with a particular person, I have to be aware of when they're doing the particular behavior that is upsetting to me and not be so reactive. I think that the kinds of strategies, the deep breathing – Amy talked really nicely about this – just taking a breath or using that word or doing some of those simple strategies to slow yourself down.

We spend an awful lot of time, we talk about challenging behaviors, helping children slow down. We need to be doing the same thing. I love when I see an adult yelling at somebody to talk quietly. It doesn't make any sense. We have to model. In our relationships with other

adults, all of us if we're being truthful would have to say, sometimes we interact with people that we don't enjoy interacting with very much, but we need to. This is a workplace, it's a community. How do you build that community? By owning it and saying this is our community. One of the things when you think about where you live, you live at work also. What is that like for you? It's why I'm fascinated by Google. I think that that must be a really cool community, 'cause I saw a movie, and it looked like it was really cool, but I think it's the same thing for all of us as adults. What are we contributing to our community, and what are we willing to tolerate, and how do we better understand where another person's coming from? You see this on Facebook all the time, like, don't get upset with somebody 'cause you have no idea what their day has been like. If somebody had come up to me today and sort of snapped at me, and I snapped back, they would never know that part of the reason why I was so stressed about the unbelievable amount of liquid that was sitting on my pants and shirt when I got to work, right? They wouldn't know that, but that might be my thing. So, you never know where somebody's been walking. I've really become much more aware of that when I think about people, that you have no idea if somebody in their family's very ill, or they're worried about a financial issue. When I think about wellness, it's not just about my wellness, but I start thinking about everybody else's wellness, and are they doing okay emotionally, socially, spiritually, intellectually, all those kinds of things, and if I don't know the answer, then I probably need to slow down and try and be a bit more understanding and supportive.

Judi: Yeah, that's so true. I think as teachers we want to make sure that we're empathizing with our children and being sensitive to what's stressing them out, and we don't offer that same grace to the people that we work with sometimes, right? Our coworkers might be dealing with something that's stressful or causing them to have a bad day, or maybe they're having issues with the children that they're working with, and that's not going well, so I think that's really important to remember, that we live in our workspaces, and the people that we work with are part of our community. I think this would be true for the parents too, because I know some people mentioned that one of the things that challenges them or stresses them out is either drop-off or pick-up, or times when they need to do a home visit, and they are engaging with parents that are sometimes challenging, and I think the same would apply there as well, right? Let's be empathetic towards the families and think about where they might be coming from so that we can develop those relationships. So, thanks for that.

We're gonna spend just a few more minutes watching another video. We have one of Amy, she's giving some really good advice about where we can find additional support within our programs, and thinking about how we can build up the support that we have so that we can take better care of ourselves. The video... tell us a little bit in the chat box about the support that you have available at your work, both for yourself and for your children, or maybe something that you would like to have in your work. So, let's watch this video with Amy Hunter. [Video begins]

Amy: Every Early Head Start program has a mental health consultant, and so that, a mental health consultant, can be one of many sources of support that teachers can go to and talk to about how they're doing and how they're feeling. Hopefully, also, teachers have a supportive

supervisor with an open-door policy that caregivers, teachers can go talk to that supervisor again about how they're feeling, how they're doing, if they have questions. Another piece of support that I think we sometimes forget about is the critical peer support, right? It's our theme of the day. So, as a teacher, do you have a trusted colleague, whether it's your co-teacher or whether it's another teacher down the hall, or if you're a family child care provider, do you have a network of other family child care providers? Peers who are doing the same work you are, who understand the experience that you're having, who you can trust to talk to about all of the challenges that you might be having.

You know, sometimes those teachers – I will say often times – the teachers spend more time with each other than they do with other family members or friends, certainly, and so those relationships can be incredibly sustaining, and helpful, and just the boost you need to be the best teacher you can be, or they can be challenging and really impact the care that's provided for the infants and toddlers, and so I think it's worth it to work on those relationships, to be a wonderful model of relationships for infants and toddlers.

Interviewer: That's such great advice, that's wonderful. Thank you, Amy, for reminding us of the peer relationships are not only important for our children, but for all of us as well. Thank you.

Amy: Thank you. [Video ends]

Judi: We're gonna watch one more video. This is our last Neal video, but he's gonna talk to us a little bit about the same thing, about the support that you might have where you are in your workplace and ways that you can support each other. So, let's watch that video, and then we're gonna come back and close up together. [Video begins]

Neal: Whether we're talking about early care and education settings or any other sort of business, part of it is how do we relate to one another, and what opportunities do we have to relate to one another? Specifically here, obviously one thing we want to do is build trusting relationships. One way to do that is to not gossip, not to have little cliques of talking about one another behind each other's back, but to have lots of reflective time where we can talk as a group to – to the points that are maybe bothering somebody. We don't just sort of keep those hidden away, we actually talk about them, and try and actually make changes that might be supportive. In the classroom, often times there's two adults. We want to make sure that their relationship is as highly functioning as possible, which means that they have to know one another, know what pushes each other's buttons, be supportive.

If I'm a teacher in a classroom, and there's a particular child who, really, for some reason, I'm really struggling with, and if we're being honest, that can happen. Maybe you, you're in the classroom with me, you know that, and so you're more keenly aware at the times where I'm having some difficulty to sort of step in and say, "Hey, I have an idea. Let me do this," and sort of give me a break, or work with that child, and vice versa. Those kinds of strategies where teachers are paying attention, they're mindful – we talked about mindfulness – when they're mindful of the kinds of things that make a classroom a more harmonious community, and make a program a more harmonious program, so from the director, to the teachers, to the

relationships with parents, when we've been in really high functioning, really good programs, what we see is everybody is in it with each other and not just, I just want to focus on my stuff, or my child, or my classroom. It's we're all in this together.

Judi: Sometimes, and I experience this as a teacher myself, it can feel very isolating sometimes when you're with children all day, and sometimes you really don't get the chance to engage with adults. I mean, I've felt this as mother too, sometimes. I just want to talk to another adult. I wonder if there are ways – you talked a little bit about maybe giving teachers time to reflect with each other – but are there ways that programs can – are there things that programs can do to build community or support and kind of keep teachers from feeling isolated or giving them the opportunity to get some of that daily stress off their backs and relate to other people who are in the same environment?

Neal: I think it's a great question, because I think we don't want to force people to spend inordinate amounts of time outside of work together, but we do want to give them some opportunities, and so I was just talking with folks in a program where they do yoga. Was it yoga or Zumba? It's one exercise thing that I'm not very good at, it was one of those. But they do that after the day is over. They offer it. You're not required to go, but it's a way in which then folks are connecting on a very different level. We're not talking about lesson plans, we're not talking about challenging behavior. We're just sort of talking about Zumba or yoga, and it's a time to do some of those mindfulness activities, but it's also a time to connect. Affording opportunities on your professional development days that are not just somebody stands up and talks at you for eight hours so we can say we did professional development, but let's share a meal together that's just adults, let's actually talk to one another about adult things. The 10 minutes before things really start rolling, before all the children and the families are arriving, maybe those 10 minutes there's a nice pot of coffee where people are able, and there's a nice space where people can sit and just say, "Hey, did you watch that show last night? 'Teacher Time' is on tomorrow, we've gotta get together, it's appointment television."

Judi: That's great. Well, thank you. I think this is really helpful, and I love the idea of supporting community, both inside with your classroom and with your children, but also outside with the other adults that you work with. This has been great, thank you so much.

Neal: Glad to do it. [Video ends]

Judi: Well, I wanted to leave you guys with just a couple of resources. We recognize completely how important you are in what you do every day, especially in the lives of children and families. The resources that we have for you, in addition to what's on the ECLKC, we have a MyPeers group. If you're not in MyPeers already, it's a completely free online community. We're talking about building community. We have a "Teacher Time" group in there, but there's also a teacher wellness group that I would really recommend that you join. It's a great opportunity to go in there and just find some resources, do some reading, and participate in a community that's really supportive of being well, and I think Jan is gonna put the links to MyPeers in the chat box, so if you don't already have it – or maybe she already did it – Oh, there she is, yep, MyPeers. You can click on that. It's free to join. It's a Head Start online community. Also, if you haven't

signed up for Text4Teachers, you can do that too, and there's gonna be some mindfulness messages that come out. It's a free texting service that a couple times a month, you'll get a text that will link you to some really helpful resources, and we have some mindfulness ones and some wellness texts that are gonna be coming out soon. And remember, the viewer's guide is there for you to download, and take that with you to help you think about maybe putting some of your plans into action, and then obviously remember to complete the evaluation. We really would love your feedback and to hear from you about this episode. So, thank you Neal for being here with us. It was great to have you tonight, and I really hope that you guys go and have a great week and a great rest of your year, and please keep in touch with us on MyPeers. We'd love to chat with you and find out more about what you're doing. So, thanks everyone, have a great rest of your evening.