

KID CONNECTS WEEKLY NEWSLETTER: SELF-CARE FOR CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

Issue 1: April 27, 2020

FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT:

Contact our warm line at, (303) 245-4418, to talk directly to an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant.



Hello! Thank you for taking time to look at our newsletter! We hope you will find it helpful. Kid Connects is a program with Mental Health Partners that provides early childhood mental health consultation to childcare centers in Boulder and Broomfield counties. We are here to offer support during the COVID-19 pandemic. To help keep you updated on practical strategies, tools, and tips we will offer a weekly e-newsletter. Every other week, the newsletter will be focus on information and resources for parents. The other weeks, information will be directed to childcare providers. This week, our newsletter addresses self-care for care providers. If you have a question, have a request for a newsletter topic, or wish to unsubscribe, please reach out to our warm line (303)245-4418 or email the Kid Connects' supervisor, Beth Garrett-Myers, at bgarrett@mhpcolorado.org

The Importance of Self-Care and Coregulation

The most important factor in a young child's life is the quality of their attachment to loving and responsive caregivers. "Children aren't naturally resilient, they're resilient in the face of a resilient adult."¹ As humans we are social creatures and therefore easily take on the emotional state of those around us. In other words, emotions are contagious. Children are no different. In fact, the part of our brain responsible for emotional experiences (the right brain) is dominant in children, especially those under 3. Additionally, unlike adults, children are still growing parts of their brains and therefore do not often have access to higher level thinking including planning and reasoning, functions housed in the prefrontal cortex. Instead, children live in the part of the brain responsible for basic functions and stress responses.² Therefore, children need adults who can not only stay grounded themselves but who can help children regulate their emotions. This is called co-regulation. Caring for ourselves is key in our ability to coregulate effectively.



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¹ Bailey, B. (2020). "COVID-19 Stress: How Uncertainty Affects Our Brains." *Conscious Discipline*. <https://consciousdiscipline.com/e-learning/webinars/covid-19-stress-how-uncertainty-affects-our-brains/>

² Siegel, D. J. & Bryson, T.A. (2012). *The whole-brain child*. New York: Bantam Books Trade Paperbacks

Why is self-care important?

Kid Connects recognizes the enormous stress and pressure care providers face as they navigate the response to COVID-19 and care for children who are reacting to the pandemic in a variety of way. We hope that this newsletter provides you with some inspiration and skills to help you feel better.



Self-care includes examining the different aspects of our overall health such as physical, psychological, and emotional wellbeing. Assessing our habits highlights how we are already taking care of ourselves and where there can be improvement. Some things to consider might include eating regularly, sleep habits, exercise, taking time for yourself, noticing stress levels, spending time with loved ones, time spent away from email, phone, computer, work, and time for self-reflection.³

Self-care is the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, especially, during periods of stress.⁴

Interested in assessing your current self-care practices? For an in-depth assessment, check out this link:

<http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/content/dam/socialwork/home/self-care-kit/self-care-assessment.pdf>

Some things to consider when assessing your current self-care:

- “How I take care of myself impacts my interactions with others. What does this look like with my partner, children, work colleagues?”
- “How do I know when I am feeling burnt out? What feelings, actions, etc. signal to me that I am getting burnt out?”
- “What do my interactions with others look like when I am practicing good self-care vs. when I am not making time for self-care?”

SELF CARE TIPS

- It is helpful to schedule our self-care strategies into our day to ensure we are allowing time for it. Start small, add one self-care strategy at a time.
- Be intentional about your news exposure.
- Connect with others: We can practice social distancing while still staying in contact with each other through the phone and internet!
- Create mindfulness moments: Bringing attention to the moment without judgement can help us feel grounded. This can be as simple as taking a few deep breaths as you are walking to the mailbox or the bathroom!

³ Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Staff of TSI/CAAP (1996). Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization. Norton.

⁴ Self-care. 2020. In lexico.com. Retrieved April 23, 2020 from <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/self-care>

- Find moments of joy, humor, and positivity.
- Change your scenery: With many of us restricted to our environments we need to be creative. Try going on a daily walk, put a daily picture up of something you find soothing to look at.
- Remember to move: Movement helps with mood and immunity.
- Use helpful affirmations

SELF-CARE FOR STRESSFUL MOMENTS: USE TIPP!

This is an uncertain and stressful time. Much of our world has been turned upside down in response to COVID-19. Common reaction may include feeling overwhelmed, anxious, stressed and afraid. At times we may find ourselves entering an emotional crisis, in which our emotions become so strong we cannot think clearly. A technique that was developed by Marsha Linehan, PhD is called TIPP. **TIPP** is an acronym that stands for the following four steps: **temperature, intense exercise, paced breathing, progressive muscle relaxation.**



T: Temperature: Changes in temperatures can regulate your heart rate. Cooler temperatures can decrease your heart rate. When we are emotionally overwhelmed, our heart rate generally increases. Splash cold water on your face, take a cold shower, if the weather outside is chilly you can go for a walk. You can even hold ice cubes in your hand. Warmer temperatures increase your heart rate, which can be lowered if you are depressed or sad. Take a hot bath, drink warm tea, or wash your hands with warm water.

I: Intense Exercise: Overwhelming emotions generate energy! It is important to let that energy out. Exercise is a great tool to expend our emotional energy. We do not have to go overboard, a quick jog around the block or doing jumping jacks in the room is enough. Try any exercise that will increase your heart rate for 10-15 minutes.

P: Paced Breathing: When we are overwhelmed, we breathe more rapidly. Paced breathing is a way to slow our breath which can provide relaxation. Breathe in through your nose for a count of 4, hold for a count of 4 and breathe out for 6 counts. Try this for 1-2 minutes to feel the full benefits.

P: Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Intentionally relaxing the body can help with intense emotions by letting go of excess energy. Find a comfortable seat. Start with the top of your body. Become aware of the muscles in your upper back. Deliberately tighten for 5 seconds, take a deep breath and release. Repeat then tighten and release with your arms, then with your stomach, then with your bottom and legs.⁵



⁵ Linehan, M., M., (2014). DBT Training Manual. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.