



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE Vol. III, No. 9

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

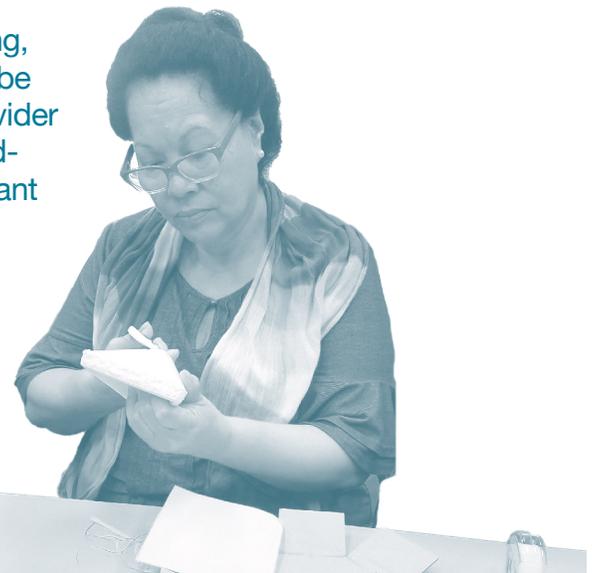
This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care Pursue Personal and Professional Growth

Managing Job Stress

All people experience some level of stress from the physical, mental, and emotional demands of the fast-paced world we live in. There are everyday stressors such as deadlines, noise, finances, and interactions with difficult people. And in addition to that, there is some stress that occurs because of your profession as a family child care provider. Despite the many rewards that caring for young children brings, there is no denying that it is hard work. Couple that with long days, isolation and the responsibility of running a business—and you have a recipe for stress.

Being responsible for young children, you may find yourself in a heightened state of alertness for hours at a time to ensure that all the children in your care remain safe. When you sense danger, your heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing increase as cortisol and adrenaline are released into your body. Your muscles will tense and your senses become sharper. While this reaction is useful in the immediate situation, repeated instances of this type of stress can be damaging to your health. Long-term stress that is not buffered by recovery strategies can cause cardiovascular damage, fatigue, higher incidence of Type 1 diabetes, weight gain or loss, gastrointestinal problems, vulnerability to disease, problems with memory and thinking, and sleep disorders. Children can be affected negatively when their provider is stressed out, fatigued, or burned-out. For these reasons, it is important for you to prioritize taking care of yourself physically, emotionally, and socially.

This newsletter will discuss some of the ways child care providers can buffer stress and become resilient in the face of the challenges of this work.



You Matter

Providing child care matters to families and communities. But do you know how much you, as a person, matter, not just what you do?

As a family child care provider, you may experience stressors such as:

- Isolation
- Lack of professional recognition
- Blurry boundaries between work and home and between professional and personal lives
- Breaches in business policies such as late payments and children's pick-ups
- Role confusion – meeting your own family's needs vs. those of clients.

Because of these stressors, it is important to actively engage in protecting your own health by:

- Getting enough sleep
- Eating healthy foods
- Exercising (even a 10-minute walk can decrease stress)
- Making time for yourself.

More importantly, it is recommended that family child care providers include paid vacation days, holidays, and sick days as part of the contract with families. This provides healing time to recover from the stresses of your job. Remember – in order to take care of others and their needs, you must take care of yourself and invest time in having your own needs met.



Stress Reduction Strategies

There are many physical, mental, and social strategies that reduce stress and build resilience. As you read the following ideas, think about what might work best for you and create your own stress management plan, setting short term and long term goals.

Physical:

- Exercise (swimming, jogging, walking, yoga, tai chi).
- Do something you enjoy; a hobby can help you relax.
- Get a massage.
- Use breathing techniques.
- Change your environment.

Mental:

- Practice meditation.
- Listen to music, relaxing sounds.
- Seek spirituality/Prayer.
- Change your self-talk.
- Look for the humor in situations; laughter is the best medicine.
- Use visualization to imagine how you want to feel and take steps to get there.
- Journal problems and solutions.

Social:

- Create positive relationships with other child care providers. It's good to share your challenges with others who understand but try to avoid getting dragged down by too much negative venting. Focus on the best parts of your job.
- Build current relationships with friends and family by scheduling time and planning enjoyable activities.
- Connect with others through community groups, support groups, exercise groups, or religious groups.

De-stressing by Changing your Environment

Can you identify the specific work issues that trigger the stress response in your body? It could be as basic as looking around your space. Over the years of doing this work, you may have accumulated more children's toys and equipment than you actually need. It can be overwhelming to be surrounded by the clutter of children's things even when your work day is over. One way to clear your head by clearing your space would be to use the *KonMari Method*, created by Marie Kondo, an organizer who became a celebrity in Japan, Europe, and the United States after publishing *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up, the Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing* and her companion book *Spark Joy*.

The *KonMari Method* involves pulling out and handling every single item and asking yourself if this item "brings joy." If the item fails this test, it is given away or thrown away. This approach allows people to part with things that were taking up precious space and surround themselves with only the things that they love, freeing up their space to be more enjoyable.

This approach can be used in dealing with child care materials and equipment:

- Choose a free day so you won't be interrupted.
- Bring all the child-related objects into one big space for sorting. That means everything from every room and closet.



This will allow you to see just how much stuff you have. Plan to have three piles when you are done:

- things to throw away,
- things to give away, and
- things to keep.

One by one, handle each object. If it is broken, or beyond cleaning or repair, throw it away. With all the rest, handle each item individually and ask yourself if it brings joy to you or any of the children. If it doesn't, it is time to give it away to someone who can appreciate it.

You may find you have multiples of many toys. Are there too many? Do the children play with these at all? Handle each one and decide which to keep and which to give away. Then organize what you have kept so that each item has a designated space.

Completing this exercise may help you to feel less burdened by your surroundings and more joyful in your work, having preserved just those items that serve a useful purpose and opening up more space for your family to relax and for children to play. Research shows that "Positive emotions - like joy, interest, pride and gratitude - don't just feel good in the moment - they also affect our long-term well-being...and we naturally become more resilient to adversity and better able to achieve things."

For more ideas on building your own resilience to stress and adversity, see *Karen's 25 Ways to Boost Resilience* (link is listed in citations on Page 4) and Karen Horneffer-Ginter's poster with visual representations of *50 Ways to Take a Break* (included in this packet).

Citations:

B.L. Fredrickson (2009) *Positivity: Groundbreaking research reveals how to embrace the hidden strength of positive emotions, overcome negativity, and thrive.* www.DailyGood.org

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Horneffer-Ginter, K. (2013) *Karen's 25 Ways To Boost Resilience in Blog/Design Your Path in Psychology Today.* <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/design-your-path/201305/25-ways-boost-resilience>

Kondo, M. (2014). *The life-changing magic of tidying up.* Ten Speed Press, Berkeley.

Kondo, M. (2016) *Spark joy.* Ten Speed Press, Berkeley

National Child Care Accreditation Council (2008). *Putting children first: Managing stress in child care services.* http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/educator-resources/pcf-articles/Managing_stress_Jun08.pdf

University of Florida (no date). *Professional development for childcare providers: managing stress in the childcare setting.* http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/fcs/FCSPubs/Childcare_Stress.pdf

WebMD (2017). *Stress Management.* <http://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-management-topic-overview?print=true>

Reflection Sheet and Award Book

- To receive the award book for this month, fill out your caregiver's reflection sheet and return it to the Learning to Grow Program in the postage paid envelope by the deadline posted.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.
- Update your address or contact information if any changes have taken place.

REMINDER: Registered QCC participants can use their participation in the program to fulfill the relicensing requirement of "increased knowledge." Ask your DHS Licensing Social Worker about the requirements today.

DID YOU KNOW?

Any time that you are submitting more than one reflection sheet at the same time, feel free to enclose them in a single envelope. It will save postage costs for our funder and facilitate efficient data entry when they arrive.



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