



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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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 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

Pursue Personal and Professional Growth

Taking Care of Yourself the Blue Zones Way

As a family child care provider, you work hard taking care of others, and sometimes there just doesn't seem to be enough time to take care of yourself. This job can lead to high levels of stress, especially if you are working with challenging children or families and keeping up with new knowledge and requirements in the field. Research has shown that continuous high levels of unresolved stress can lead to serious illness over time. Once this happens, you may no longer enjoy your work with children, and it could affect how you care for the children and your family life as well. It's very important, as an early child care professional, to attend to your own personal health and well-being. One way is to have policies in place that provide you with paid:

- In-service days (to attend training or review records without the children there)
- sick leave,
- personal days, and
- vacation time.

Once you build personal time into your schedule, you'll know what you need to do to maintain your health for the long term and find true happiness in your life, your family, and your work. There are many approaches you can take to protect your health. One that you may want to consider is to participate in a Blue Zones Project®. This initiative has been introduced in many Hawaii communities as a way to reduce stress and support better well-being.

In this newsletter, we'll introduce the basic longevity and happiness concepts promoted by The Blue Zones® Project; which you can incorporate on your own, and into your daily living to:

- alleviate stress,
- pursue well-being, and
- find greater happiness in your profession.



Blue Zones of Longevity

Blue Zones is a well-being initiative that began as a National Geographic research study by Dan Buettner. Buettner sought the places around the world where people were living significantly longer (to age 100 or more) to determine the contributing factors to their longevity. He found five “Blue Zones” locations: Okinawa, Japan; Nicoya Province, Costa Rica; Ikaria, Greece; Loma Linda, California; and Sardinia, Italy. Among these communities, Buettner found nine common lifestyle characteristics which he termed, The Power 9®. They fall into four distinct categories:

Move Naturally

1. Make daily physical activity an unavoidable part of your environment

Right Outlook

2. Know your purpose
3. Downshift: Work less, slow down, take vacations

Eat Wisely

4. Eat until 80% full
5. More veggies, less meat & processed food
6. Drink a glass of red wine each day

Belong

7. Create a healthy social network
8. Connect/reconnect with religion
9. Prioritize family

In Buettner’s books, *The Blue Zones* and *The Blue Zones Solution*, the Power 9 concepts are explored in-depth. Included in this newsletter is *The Blue Zones Power 9®* flyer.



Blue Zones of Happiness

Buettner also found a connection between longevity and happiness. He states, “When you speak to the top 20 percent of the happiest people in the world, you will find that about 80 percent of the behaviors that make you live longer are the same behaviors that make you happy and vice versa.” Having a sense of purpose, physical exercise, and social interaction are some factors that contribute to both happiness and longevity. Buettner says, “Let me put it this way—if happiness were a cake recipe, the main ingredients would be:

- enough money (not wealth),
- food,
- shelter,
- healthcare,
- education,
- meaningful work,
- health, and
- marrying the right person.”

Applying the Blue Zones Philosophy

Buettner's recommendations for a longer, healthier, happier life could easily be adapted for the family child care provider. Our suggestions are as follows:

1. **Keep your social networks alive.** In addition to your family and personal friends, connect with other family child care providers for peer support. Make these times positive; happy and healthy friends in your network will increase your happiness.
2. **Examine your rates.** Ensure that your basic needs are met. After that, reflect on the idea that having more money doesn't bring more happiness. Approach your job based on passion not on money. Ask yourself if you love what you are doing or is it just a job.
3. **Make sure you get at least an hour of physical activity each day.** Find ways to incorporate physical activity into your day, such as doing yoga or dancing with the children in your care. In addition, find a way that you enjoy to be physically active in the evenings or weekends. Walking, biking, or swimming can make a huge difference in terms of health and happiness over time.



4. **Take inventory of your strengths and skills.** Find out what you are good at, what you like to do, and what lines up with your values. Incorporate them into your child care curriculum. For example, if you enjoy nature, incorporate natural materials that the children can manipulate, or plan activities that focus on natural elements (e.g., life cycle, animals, insects).
5. **Create quiet spaces in your child care as well as for yourself.** For the children, this area allows for quiet play. For you, it could be a calming area that allows you to discover your spiritual center to find happiness. Besides being good for longevity, some find prayer or meditation as a way to help alleviate stress from the challenges faced by doing child care.

Most of us have the capacity to make it well into our early 90's and largely without chronic disease. Hopefully, by adopting a Blue Zones lifestyle, you will not only live longer but will also live a healthier, more fulfilled life as a child care provider, family member, and friend.

Citations:

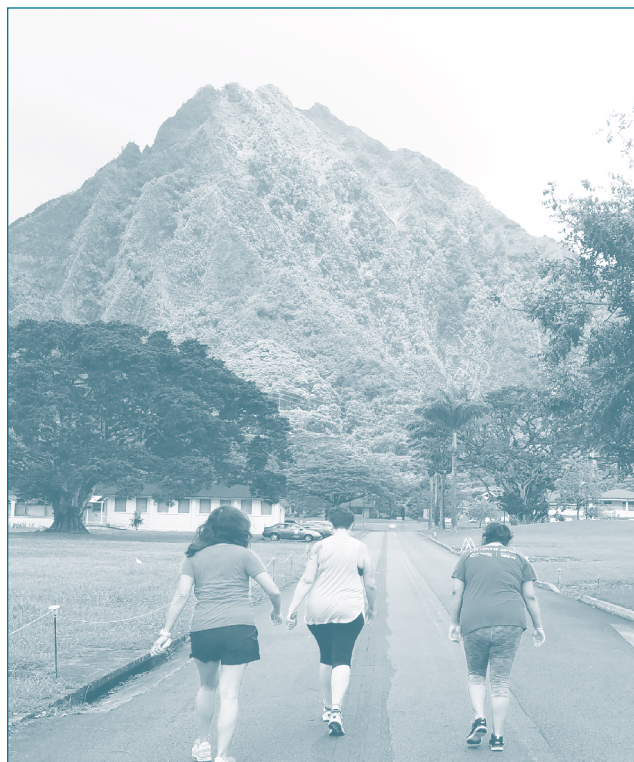
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Reflection Sheet, Award Book, and Training Certificates

- Providers who fill out the caregiver's reflection sheet and return it by the posted deadline to the Learning to Grow Program are *guaranteed* a children's book in return. A postage-paid envelop is provided.
- Providers who thoughtfully complete the reflection sheet **question #5** can be awarded a certificate indicating one hour of training completed. Training hours will align with the topic areas required to meet DHS requirements.
- Reflection sheets do not need to be returned by the due date in order to earn the certificate. However, the supply of award books is limited and after the due date, award books will be sent only as available.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.



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