

Strengthen Your Work with Self-Care & Mindfulness



Initiating and achieving a sustainable mindset and lifestyle of self-care, empathy, and self-compassion is an important commitment for the child and family workforce. It is not only the responsibility of an individual employee but also of the supervisors and administrators that support an organization. Self-care is an important set of intentions necessary to mitigate possible stress and challenges experienced in the child and family workforce. It is a sophisticated set of skills intended to help manage emotions and ultimately provide better services.

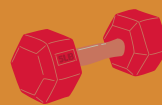
A valuable first step in supporting self-care is to recognize the stress responses in yourself and in the families you support. While experiencing stress is normal and to be expected, toxic stress - stress that is prolonged or severe - can have long-lasting negative effects on both physical and mental health (Charlie Health Editorial Team, 2023). However, **toxic stress is preventable and manageable through positive relationships and coping skills** (Charlie Health Editorial Team, 2023).

Self-care describes the effort of building an environment around you that helps you move in the direction of becoming your best self while improving your physical, mental and spiritual needs. It is engaging in long-term well-being, for example, meditating every day, as opposed to temporary well-being, for example, getting a massage. While warm bubble baths and walks outside can be helpful ways to reduce stress, true self-care comes from organizational systems that are designed to support every worker's safety and holistic well-being. This includes manageable caseloads and a comfortable salary.

Additionally, on an individual level, commitment to self-care is a daily practice and mindset that embodies mindfulness and requires self-compassion.

- **Mindfulness** is the practice of becoming acutely aware of your senses and feelings in a certain moment while withholding judgment and interpretation. Mindfulness techniques include methods intended to relax the mind and body, reducing stress. Clinical trials show that mindfulness has positive affects on stress, anxiety, pain, depression, insomnia, and high blood pressure. Mindfulness exercises are diverse and can be practiced throughout the day, helping child and family workers to stay focused and calm in potentially stressful environments. ([Mayo Clinic Staff, 2022](#))

selfcare checklist



EXERCISE

light exercise 3x/week
improves happiness by 10-20%

MEDITATE

50% reduction in overall
psychiatric symptoms
70% decrease in anxiety



READ

boosts creativity and activates
sensory areas of the brain

GREENSPACE

having green space in your
surroundings is recommended
for healthy cortisol levels



LAUGH

laughter strengthens the
immune system, boosts energy
and diminishes pain

TIME OFF

which leads to better quality
sleep, decreased stress and
improved mood



EAT WELL

Certain foods provide benefits
for mental health, learning,
memory, and more.

SLEEP

Sleep restores cognitive
functions



- **Self-compassion** is compassion turned inward, applying the three main elements of compassion - mindfulness, common humanity, and kindness - to yourself. Self-compassion means being kind to yourself when facing challenges and being honest with yourself about the difficulties you are facing. Rather than focusing on judgment and criticism, self-compassion leads us to understand that we are not perfect and are not meant to be perfect. (Neff, n.d.)

Family strengthening workers often embrace and embody compassion for others, especially in this field of work. However, practitioners must have self-compassion and embody a trauma-informed approach with themselves before they can be fully compassionate and trauma-informed with others. This inside out approach provides child and family workers an opportunity to model and teach self-care to the families they support through their own practice.

Take Action



Consider starting your work day by focusing on the present moment with a mindful minute exercise to set intentions as you begin each day.



Create a personal vision for your work and personal life to help you stay focused on what's important in your life. While we may not always live up to the personal visions we set for ourselves, it is something we can strive for which can help us when challenges seem overwhelming.



Research has shown that taking the time to be grateful every day has enormous physical and mental health benefits. It helps build our immune systems, keeps us in touch with the positive aspects of life, and connects us with others. Try practicing gratitude by sending a thank-you note, keeping a gratitude journal, or taking time for reflection.

Resources

[Building a 21st Century Child and Family Well-Being System Based on Protective Factors and Strengthening Families](#)

[Expanding the Perspectives and Research Foundation for the Strengthening Families & Youth Thrive Frameworks](#)

References

Charlie Health Editorial Team. (2023). Toxic stress: Signs, causes, & treatments. Charlie Health. <https://www.charliehealth.com/post/toxic-stress#:~:text=of%20toxic%20stress-,What%20is%20toxic%20stress?,in%20brain%20structure%20and%20function>.
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Neff, K. (n.d.). What is self-compassion? <https://self-compassion.org/what-is-self-compassion/#what-is-self-compassion>



San Diego State University
Social Policy Institute
School of Social Work

