Managing Stress Guide

Caring for school-age children can be a stressful job. There will be times when you feel like children are testing the limits or challenging you. It could feel overwhelming. In these times, it’s important to remember to take care of yourself. This guide will help you identify signs of stress and steps you can take to manage stress.


What You Might Be Seeing
Some signs that you are stressed include:

- Feeling angry or irritable a lot of the time
- Feeling hopeless
- Having trouble making decisions
- Crying easily
- Worrying all the time
- Arguing with friends or your partner
- Overeating or not eating enough
- Being unable to sleep or wanting to sleep all the time.

A build-up of stress also can contribute to health problems, including allergies, a sore neck or back, headaches, upset stomach, and high blood pressure.

What You Can Do
It is important to learn how to manage your stress—for your own sake and for the children in your care. The following suggestions may help:

- Identify what’s making you stress. Everyone’s stressors are different. Yours might be related to money, work, your surroundings (traffic, crime), your partner, children’s behavior, or health issues.
- Accept what you cannot change. Ask yourself, “Can I do anything about it?” If the answer is no, try to focus on something else. If there is something you can do, break it into smaller steps so it doesn’t feel overwhelming.
- Have faith. Look back at previous times when you have overcome challenges. Think, “This too shall pass.”
- Relax! Try deep breathing, meditation, yoga, or listening to music. Take 30 minutes to play a board game or laugh with the kids in your program.
- Take care of your health. Getting enough sleep can make a big difference in your stress level. So can eating healthy foods and getting some exercise. Coming to work rested and relaxed can help you have the patience you need throughout the day.
• Take time for yourself. Go home and take a bath, read a book, or pick up a hobby.
• Develop a support network. Don’t be afraid to ask for help. Your Training and Curriculum Specialist and manager will listen to you and help you get the help you need at work.

What You Can Do in the Workplace
When you are feeling stressed at work, there are things you can do to calm yourself and ease the situation. The following suggestions may help:
• Call for help. Call your Training and Curriculum Specialist, a lead staff member, or the manager. Let them know that you need help with a situation right away.
• Team up. You have other staff members working around you everyday. When you start to feel overwhelmed, ask if another staff member will switch responsibilities with you for a short time. For example, if you have had a frustrating experience in the woodworking area, ask your co-worker to take over for a few minutes while you step into the work she was doing in the art area.
• Plan ahead. Anticipate where and when problems are likely to occur in your program. Make a plan for how you can prevent the problems and adults are going to respond. Be consistent.
• Make a change. Talk to your supervisor to see if there is another area of the program you could work in while you calm down. For example, can you go outside and play soccer with a few kids? Walk around the perimeter of the play space while you supervise children? Turn on music and lead kids in dancing or exercise? Regardless, take a few moments and breathe deeply.