Happier Days

A Mindful Approach to Stress Reduction
Welcome and Introductions
Today we will . . .

1. Gain awareness of how provider stress is related to expulsion
2. Understand stress and recognize signs of stress
3. Identify techniques to reduce stress level
4. Create a stress management plan
Let’s Get Settled
Before we get started . . .

• Thinking about the topic of a mindful approach to stress reduction, is there something specific you are hoping to get out of this training?

• Please write down your questions.
Job Stress - A Key Factor Related to Higher Rates of Suspension and Expulsion

Research shows: Early childhood suspension/expulsion are more related to adult/program characteristics than a child’s behaviors. More suspensions/expulsions occur with large group sizes, higher child-teacher ratios, and lack of supports for teachers as to managing challenging behaviors, and staff characteristics such as depression or sense of job stress.

When Childcare Professionals Are Stressed Out...

- They find it more difficult to offer praise, nurturance and the structure that young children need.
- Children who are under their care tend to have more challenging behavior.
- They are more likely to use harsh discipline.

Source: *Taking care of ourselves - Stress Reduction Workshop.*
www.ecmhc.org
Warm-up Activity ~ One of My “Stress Busters”

In pairs-

• Think about a time when you were stressed and you found a way to manage your reaction and feelings.

• Turn to your neighbor and finish this sentence: “One of the best things I can do for myself when I am feeling stressed out is.....”

• Be prepared to share with the large group

Source: *Taking care of ourselves - Stress Reduction Workshop*. [www.ecmhc.org](http://www.ecmhc.org)
What is Stress?

• Is a physical, mental or emotional response to events that causes bodily or mental tension
• Comes from a situation or a thought that makes you feel frustrated, nervous, anxious or angry
• Can be a good thing
• Can also be harmful - This is the kind of stress that would be helpful to limit and learn to manage in a healthy way!

## Common Symptoms of Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory problems</td>
<td>Feeling down</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inability to concentrate</td>
<td>Feeling overwhelmed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continuous worry</td>
<td>Irritability (short temper)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racing thoughts</td>
<td>Inability to relax</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Behavioral</th>
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<tr>
<td>Excessive Perspiration</td>
<td>Increase/decrease appetite</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chest pains/elevated heart rate</td>
<td>Difficulty irregular sleeping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequent cold/illness</td>
<td>Excessive use of alcohol/cigarette/drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nausea, dizziness or headaches</td>
<td>Nervous habits</td>
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Source: *Taking care of ourselves - Stress Reduction Workshop.* [www.ecmhc.org](http://www.ecmhc.org)
What Is Job Stress?

• The harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or the need of the worker.

• Can lead to poor health including psychological and physiological symptoms (depression, anxiety, poor sleep patterns, etc.) and even injury.

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) (1999)
Teachers’ Voices on Stress in Childcare
### Common Source of Stress for Childcare Professionals

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<tr>
<td>Tension with parents/co-workers</td>
<td>Too much work to do/not enough time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling unable to make use of your skills and abilities</td>
<td>Too many children per caregiver</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental issues (noises, lack of space, disorganized...)</td>
<td>Children need things immediately</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal concerns (family, financial, health...)</td>
<td>Few opportunities for professional development/advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of clear communication with co-workers/directors</td>
<td>Feeling like you have little control over how you perform your job</td>
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[www.ecmhc.org/relaxation.html](http://www.ecmhc.org/relaxation.html)
**Early Warning Signs of Job Stress:**
*You Might Be stressed Out if You Experience…*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Struggle to cope at work</th>
<th>Feel undervalued</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not speak up or seek help to improve your situation</td>
<td>Feel disconnected from your colleagues/people in your life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take work home/think about work during non-work time</td>
<td>Take days off when not sick/go to work and being unproductive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have a low morale/feel down</td>
<td>Poor performance at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuck in irrational and overly negative thinking patterns</td>
<td>Avoid family or friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel/have no control over your job</td>
<td>Use alcohol or drugs to cope</td>
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</table>

Knowing Sources and Signs of Job Stress is an Important Step for Stress Management!

Think and Reflect
Then Find a Partner to Share With

• What is my job stress?
• What causes me to feel stressed out?
• How do I know when I’ve reached a point of stress?
Let’s Plan to Manage Stress

**What is stress management?**
- Process of managing stressful situations
- Deliberate and planned approach
- Goal: reduce, tolerate, or minimize stress
- Individualized

**Create a stress management toolbox**
- A real or imaginary “box” collecting stress management strategies that are successful for you

Source: *Taking Care of Ourselves Booklet for Providers.* [www.ecmhc.org](http://www.ecmhc.org)
Everyday Strategies to Reduce Stress

- Eat, sleep, exercise, write/journal
- Talk with friends, peers, a “go-to” person
- Reward yourself for a job well done
- **Create time each day to decompress**

Source: Helpguideorg International (n.a.). *Stress Relief Guide*. 
Everyday Strategies to Reduce Stress in the Classroom

• How do you reduce your own stress in the classroom?

• How do you reduce your student’s stress in the classroom?
Deep Breathing “Belly Breathing with Elmo!”
Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation for Stress Relief
Mindfulness Approach to Manage Stress

• Paying attention and being aware moment by moment to where we are and what we’re doing, mindfulness can help us choose how we will behave.

• To do this we need to be aware of, regulate and use our own feelings, thoughts, sensations.

Try STOPping

STOP is an easy way to practice being mindful in the face of stress. When you notice something has triggered you and you are about to react, follow the steps below:

(1) Slow down; (2) Take a breath; (3) Observe; and (4) Proceed

This process helps shifting in perspective and creating a new relationship with experiences.

Practice Self-Compassion
Always Explore!
My Individualized Action Plan

Identify strategies and practice techniques to reduce your level of stress at home and at work

Activity: Create your individualized action plan for managing stress (e.g., for today, next week, in one month)
Reviewing our objectives . . .
This is what we accomplished today:

1. Learned how provider stress is related to expulsion
2. Gained knowledge on stress and its signs
3. Practiced techniques to reduce stress level
4. Created a stress management plan
“Plant a Seed”

- Which of the mindful stress reduction techniques would you like to try tomorrow?
- Next week?
- Would you see yourself practicing all of the techniques by one month from now?
- Would you feel comfortable teaching any of these techniques to your colleagues and/or the children in your classroom?
Additional trainings you might want to check out:

- Understanding the Meaning Behind Challenging Behaviors
- The Importance of Teacher-Child Relationships
- Understanding the Impact of Childhood Trauma
- Building Resiliency in Preschoolers
Resources for Early Childhood Programs

- ADES Expulsion Prevention Support Line:
  1-602-542-2526

- Smart Support Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program
  1-866-330-5520

- Birth to Five Helpline
  1-877-705-5437

- Trainings. See the Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry:
  www.azregistry.org
Expulsion Prevention Support Line

Arizona Department of Economic Security Child Care Administration (ADES/CCA)

Expulsion Prevention Support Line
1-602-542-2526
Thank you
References

• Belly Breathing with Elmo!  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_mZbzDOplyA

• Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation. (n.a.)  
  Taking Care of Ourselves: Booklet for Providers.  
  www.ecmhc.org/relaxation.html

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• Helpguideorg International (n.a.).  
  Stress Relief Guide.  
  https://www.helpguide.org/harvard/stress-relief-guide.htm

• How to Practice Self-Compassion.  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qes9HoxfkE0
• *Mindfulness Sanctuary.*  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcWHoc1kMag

https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/99-101/default.html

• Progressive Muscle Relaxation for Stress Relief.  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAXi8cHFMIY

References cont.

  http://preventexpulsion.org/overview/

- Stress in Childcare.
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFdotMhBk6c

  https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/mindfulness-stress-reduction