

Strategies For Managing Stress

Stress can appear through body sensations, thoughts, behaviors, and emotions.

Family child care providers may experience stress through compassion fatigue, secondary traumatization, vicarious traumatization, moral distress, or burnout. This may cause a cycle of stress in which a person avoids or tries to control thoughts and feelings related to stress. This offers relief in the short-term, however, managing stress in the long-term requires breaking the cycle by:

- recognizing the feelings and thoughts you can and cannot control
- minimizing avoidance as a strategy for managing stress
- developing a willingness to accept emotions and advocate for your needs

Short-Term Coping:

Determine your distress tolerance: What can you manage? What short term strategies can help you cope until you can tolerate and accept your emotions?

Short term coping strategies can be:

- Imaginative
- Physical
- Mindful/Spiritual
- Social



Long-Term Strategies to Break the Stress Cycle:

Notice feelings without judgment. Emotions can guide, alert, inform, describe, and communicate. Consider your emotions without labeling them as good or bad redirects your focus to the information they provide.

Look at thoughts objectively. Using a thought backpack or journaling can help to reflect about thoughts objectively, problem solve, and remain focused on personal values. A **thought backpack** is visualizing each of your thoughts as a brick you carry around and then acknowledging each thought as you put it down to lighten your load. **Journaling** allows you to write stories about yourself and your role as a family child care provider in order to reflect on your strengths and goals.

Use thoughts and emotions productively. One strategy for doing this is **telling on yourself** by talking with someone who will listen and support you. Another strategy is creating a **concept map** for a role you are struggling with, writing down words you associate with that role, and considering the response you feel to those words. These strategies can help you to understand your true thoughts and feelings and how you might use them in productive ways.

Information in this handout provided by Megan Lerner, LCSW and Anthony Vesco, Ph.D.

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