



Transcript for the video:

The Importance of Self-Care for Early Care and Education Professionals

This video has captions. You can turn them on by clicking the CC icon at the bottom of the video.

Julia DeLapp, Center for Early Childhood Education at Eastern Connecticut State University: Self-care is really about doing what you need to do to take care of yourself physically and emotionally. So it's not something that is frivolous; it's actually essential for us to protect our well-being.

The Importance of Self-Care for Early Care and Education Professionals

Jennifer Wilder, Primary Prevention Services Coordinator: Taking care of self is critical. This is hard work, really hard work, and so acknowledge it and give yourself the opportunity to take a breath before you get to doing.

Tanika Simpson, Social Worker and Infant Mental Health Specialist: We do this work because we care. It's very normal to be affected. It's very normal, too, to just, you know, maybe your sleep gets disturbed. Maybe you start doing self-care, but of a different kind of self-care, like you're having that extra milkshake or that extra glass of wine. People don't pay attention that what they're trying to do is regulate themselves.

Julia DeLapp: If we want to be healthy enough to do our jobs, then it's important for us to develop a routine of healthy habits that we engage in regularly, both at home and at work.

Tanika Simpson: What I've started asking professionals to think about is: write out a plan of care for yourself and commit—whatever that means—in your personal life. If that means meditating ten minutes a day, if that means yoga, if that means running.

Karen Martinez, Care Coordinator: I think just finding something that feels good to you and trying to do that a few times a week—I would say every day, if you could. And it could be something as simple as reading, if that's what you like to do, then make sure you carve that half hour or an hour a day to give to yourself. If it's working out, and that's what you do. If it's taking a walk, if it's playing with your pets, with your kids, with whatever it is that you really truly enjoy, and then trying to be present.

Mary Ann Coleda, Family Support Provider: I found that those coloring page are a great way for people like me, with a very active brain, thinking about everything we got to do, that's a

nice way, put on some nice music and just take 10 minutes and do some coloring. That is a nice way to just sort of step back and kind of quiet your brain a little bit.

Kathy Novak, In-Home Therapist: The body scan is a tremendous thing—scanning every part of your body from your toes to your head and relaxing everything. And then when you're done, you realize that when you do it, the more you do it, the more you can focus and be in the present moment. Because our minds are just scattered to here, there, everywhere.

Jennifer Wilder: The thought of taking that mindful minute and clearing your mind before you start work could be helpful to just clear your mind and sit quietly and just be for a moment before you have to do the doing that's necessary for you to support these families.

Julia DeLapp: You really have to think about what am I doing on a daily basis while I'm at work to take care of myself? What kinds of supports am I seeking out to ensure to be effective in my job? Who am I finding that I can talk to to process the stress that I face, so that I can continue to do what I need to do to be there for children and for families?

Tanika Simpson: I think it's critical to really try to find safe space where you can process your experience and talk about it, and talk about the feelings, because there's a lot of feelings involved in this work.

Ruth Ettenberg Freeman, Therapist and Parent Educator: Talk about that honestly and frankly about, "When this child does this behavior, this is what happens to me." And describe the symptoms; describe what it feels like to get escalated, and get aware of that.

Julia DeLapp: It's that parallel process that we talk about. If we want to provide the best social-emotional support for children, then we need to be getting that kind of support from someone as well. It's equally important for the supervisor to have someone to talk with.

Jennifer Wilder: We've heard of sites, actually, before a meeting begins, they stop. And they take a pause, and they take a mindful minute before they even start their meeting, which is really great in terms of just allowing for people to take inventory of where they are before they start the work that they have to do for the day. It's really important.

Tanika Simpson: I also think it's important to take time off, to be aware of, "How much vacation time do I have? Do I have personal time? Is there a mental health day possible?" And I think organizations need to be able to recognize in their staff when they're pushed to their limits.

Galit Sharma, Clinical Supervisor: If you need a day off, a mental health day, just take it. You know, it's okay. It's not—it's okay. If you need it, you need it.

Mary Ann Coleda: If we don't take care of ourselves, we're not going to be able—we're going to burn out and not be able to take care of each other, so.

Julia DeLapp: It's really critical that we advocate for ourselves and for our needs. If we don't prioritize our own physical health, our own mental health, then we can't bring our best selves to work. And that's what we owe our families and the children that we work with. We need to make sure that we are providing the best support we can, and we can only do that when we're healthy.