

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

Example of how the video might be used in a college course

If addressing this concept during one class session:

In class:

1. Ask students to take one minute to reflect on something they might find stressful about teaching. Invite students to share their ideas with the class as you write them on the board.
2. Ask students to spend 2 minutes writing about how they know when they are feeling stressed. What kinds of thoughts do they have? What does their body feel like? (Let students know they will not need to share this writing with anyone else.)
3. Have students work in small groups to generate a list of different strategies people often use for managing or responding to stress. The list can include things that they do when they are stressed as well as things they have seen other people do.
4. Pass out chart paper for each group to record their list.
5. Reconvene and ask each group to share their ideas with the whole group. Post the chart paper on the wall around the room.

NAEYC Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

6: Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator

6e: Develop and sustain the habit of reflective and intentional practice in their daily work with young children and as members of the early childhood profession.



View the video together in class. Then:

6. Lead a group discussion about the definition of self-care and other key ideas from the video. Discuss the concept of maladaptive behaviors vs. healthy long-term habits.
7. As a class, create a list of some of the possible impacts when teachers lack healthy strategies for managing their stress.
8. Provide each student with sticky dots. Ask students to circulate the room and place dots next to self-care strategies that appear to be healthy long-term self-care habits for teachers. Hang a blank piece of chart paper for students to write down any new ideas they have for healthy self-care habits.
9. Ask students to privately jot down some of the strategies they currently use to deal with stress—both healthy and potentially maladaptive. (Let them know they will not need to share this document with anyone.)

Assignment:

Ask students to write out a self-care plan that they will use during their student teaching (or for the rest of the current semester). The plan should include specific strategies they already use that they will continue and/or build on, as well as one or two new ideas they will try. The plan should include information about basic healthy habits they will engage in every day/week as well as strategies they will use after a particularly stressful moment or day. Encourage students to ask themselves whether their plan is realistic given what they know about themselves, and if not, how can they tweak their plan?