

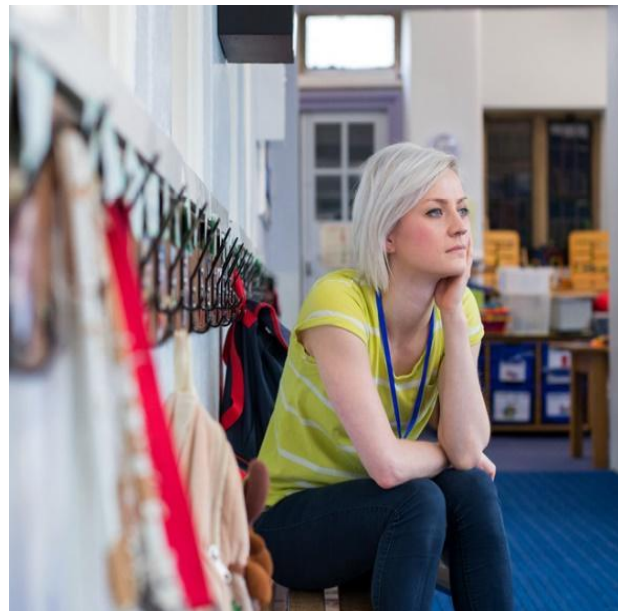
The Effects of Trauma on the Early Childhood Educator

Early childhood educators dedicate themselves to the children they teach. They work with families, specialists, support staff, colleagues, administration, and the community. They dedicate time, energy, and professional responsibilities to other people, but may not devote enough time to themselves. Their work can be physically and mentally exhausting. They can experience their own trauma or be a survivor of their own childhood traumas. Children with trauma can test their patience and push them to the limit. Early childhood educators are at high risk of developing burnout and secondary traumatic stress (STS), otherwise known as compassion fatigue. Educators can combat burnout and compassion fatigue through self-care.

Effects of Trauma on Early Childhood Educators

What are Quick Tips?: Concise guidance for Early Childhood Educators

Quick Tips provide early childhood educators, at all levels of practice, concise guidance on specific and relevant topics. Each Quick Tip is intentionally designed to inspire growth and learning, elicit reflection, and support best practices for all children and their families. Quick Tips content embraces inclusiveness across all topics and embeds inclusive practice throughout.



Self-Care Strategies

- Physical needs: eat nutritious meals; get adequate sleep; exercise; attend to your health needs.
- Social needs: nurture friendships; build time into your schedule to have time with your friends.
- Mental health needs: do mental activities such as crosswords, reading, researching a topic you are interested in; talk to a therapist.
- Emotional needs: process emotions appropriately; talk to someone close to you; journal your feelings; exercise; take baths; spend time doing hobbies.
- Spiritual needs: nurture your spirit (doesn't have to involve religion, although it can); meditate; volunteer for a cause that enriches your soul.
- Cultivate mindfulness: this helps regulate emotions and tolerate emotional challenges.
- Reframe negative thoughts: cognitive restructuring - it is a process that allows you to transform pessimism into optimism.
- Self-care action plan: set two or three self-care goals.

“Rather than view self-care as self-indulgence, try reframing it as self-respect.” (naeyc 2020)

“We need to be well to do well. If we are well, we can be the champion for children and families.” (naeyc 2020)

Early Educator Support Office



Reflective Questions

- Are you deeply empathic and take children's traumas to heart?
- Have you identified your own personal traumas? Do you recognize how your trauma can trigger burnout and compassion fatigue?
- Are you drained of energy? Feeling spent?
- Do you suspect that you suffer from burnout and/or compassion fatigue?
- What are some self-care strategies you can incorporate into your life?



Resources:

- Erdman, S., Colker, L., Winter, E. (July 2020). Preventing Compassion Fatigue: Caring for Yourself. *Young Children*, Vol. 75, No.3
- Mindfulness and Self Care. *Staying Connected Series* (April 2020). <https://earlyeducatorsupport.uncc.edu/early-childhood-educators/staying-connected-series-recorded-sessions-and-powerpoints>
- Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project. n.d. *Recognizing Compassion Fatigue* (2017). www.compassionfatigue.org/pages/symptoms.html.
- Klinik Community Health Centre.2013. *Trauma-Informed: The Trauma Toolkit. 2nd Edition*. http://trauma-informed.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Trauma-informed_Toolkit.pdf

NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development

Guiding Principles

- Each child is unique. (GP #2)
- Many factors influence a child's development. (GP #5)
- Nurturing and responsive relationships are essential for healthy growth and development. (GP #7)
- Children are active learners and they learn through play. (GP #8)



NC Professional Teaching Standards

- **Standard I, Element A:** Teachers lead in their classrooms
- **Standard I, Element C:** Teachers lead in the teaching profession
- **Standard I, Element D:** Teachers advocate for schools and children
- **Standard II, Element A:** Teachers provide an environment in which each child has a positive, nurturing relationship with caring adults
- **Standard II, Element B:** Teachers embrace diversity in the community and the world
- **Standard II, Element C:** Teachers treat children as individuals
- **Standard II, Element E:** Teachers work collaboratively with the families and significant adults in the lives of their young children
- **Standard IV, Element A:** Teachers know the ways in which learning takes place and they know the appropriate levels of intellectual, physical, communication, social, and emotional development of their young children
- **Standard IV, Element E:** Teachers help young children develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- **Standard V, Element C:** Teachers function effectively in a complex, dynamic environment