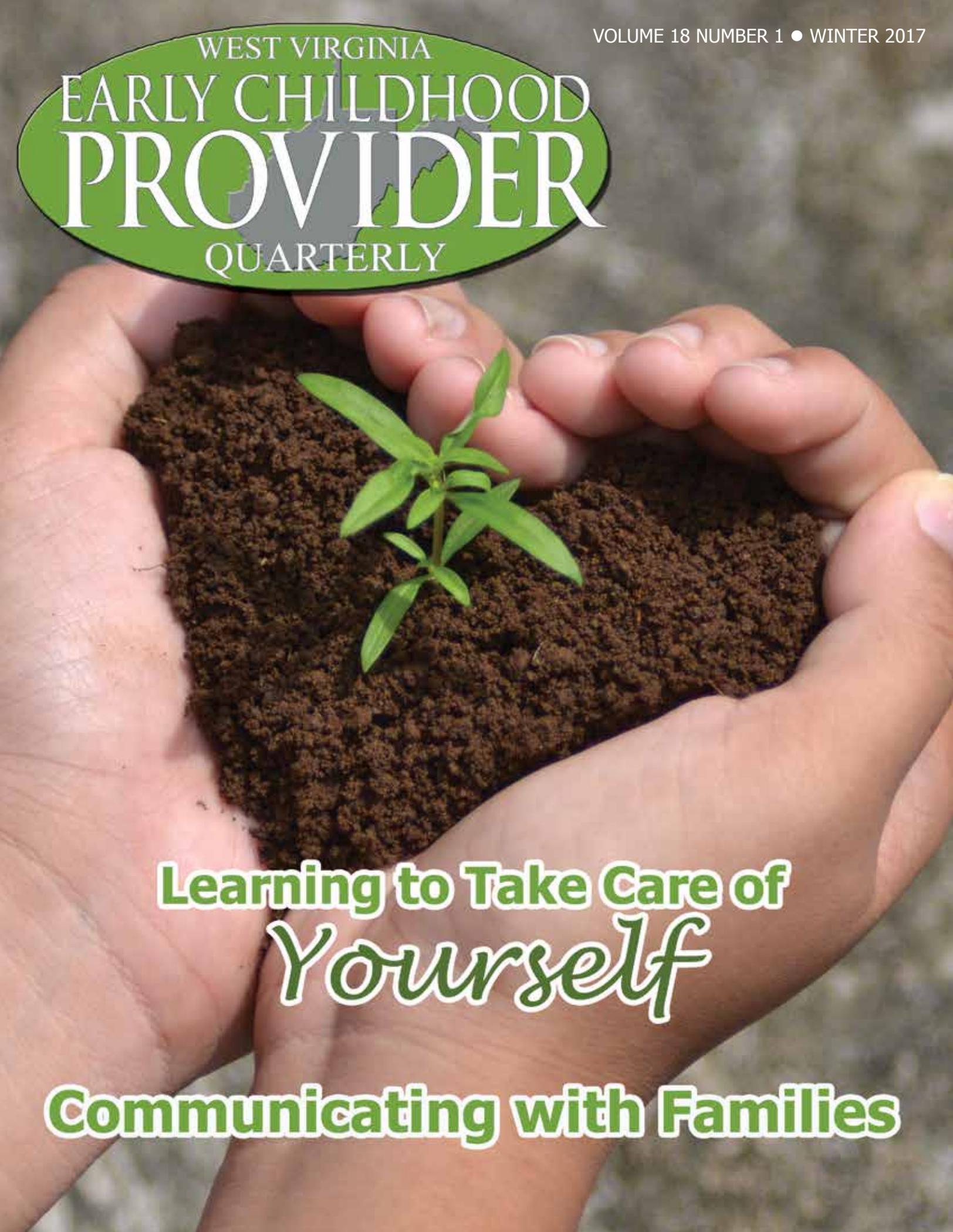


WEST VIRGINIA
EARLY CHILDHOOD
PROVIDER
QUARTERLY

A pair of hands is shown from the bottom, cupping a mound of dark brown soil. A small, vibrant green seedling with several leaves is growing out of the center of the soil. The background is a soft, out-of-focus greyish-green.

**Learning to Take Care of
*Yourself***

Communicating with Families

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WV Early Childhood Provider Quarterly is a project of West Virginia Early Childhood Training Connections and Resources, a collaborative project of the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources/Bureau for Children and Families/Division of Early Care and Education; Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health/West Virginia Birth to Three; WV Head Start State Collaboration Office; West Virginia Department of Education/Office of Special Education; West Virginia Home Visitation Program and is supported and administered by River Valley Child Development Services.

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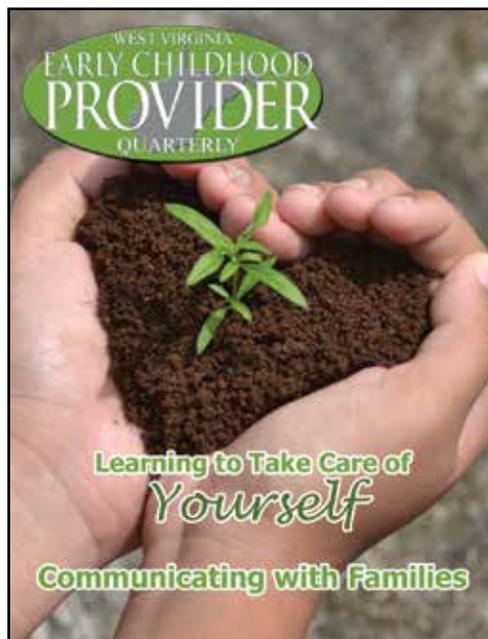
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The opinions expressed in the WV Early Childhood Provider Quarterly are not necessarily the opinions of any funding agency, advertiser or contributor. Contributions to the WV Early Childhood Provider Quarterly by West Virginia's early childhood professionals are welcomed and encouraged. Articles submitted to WV Early Childhood Provider Quarterly are reviewed by the editorial board for content, length and technique. They may be edited from their original format. Please send your contributions to the editorial offices.



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STRESS

The Basics

What is stress?

Stress is an emotional and physical reaction to a physical, psychological, or emotional demand.

We all show stress in different ways.

Some stress is good; it motivates us to turn in our paperwork on time.

Too much stress is not good and can have short-term and long-term effects on our health.

What are some symptoms of stress?

Increased heart rate and blood pressure, feeling tense, irritable, fatigued, or depressed.

Lack of interest, inability to concentrate, racing thoughts, and too much worry.

Avoidance behaviors: excessive alcohol, cigarette smoking, and drug use.

What are some causes of stress?

Expectations we place on ourselves.

Expectations of others.

Our physical environment: noise, room size, crowding.

Our internal environment: work pressure, frustration, not enough time.

What are ways to manage stress?

Practice effective communication: *State feelings in a clear way (for example, "I feel angry when you yell at me.")*.

Establish "me time": *Make time to enjoy hobbies.*

Practice specific stress reduction techniques: *Learn relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, muscle relaxation, and meditation.*

COMING SOON MORE STRATEGIES TO REDUCE STRESS...



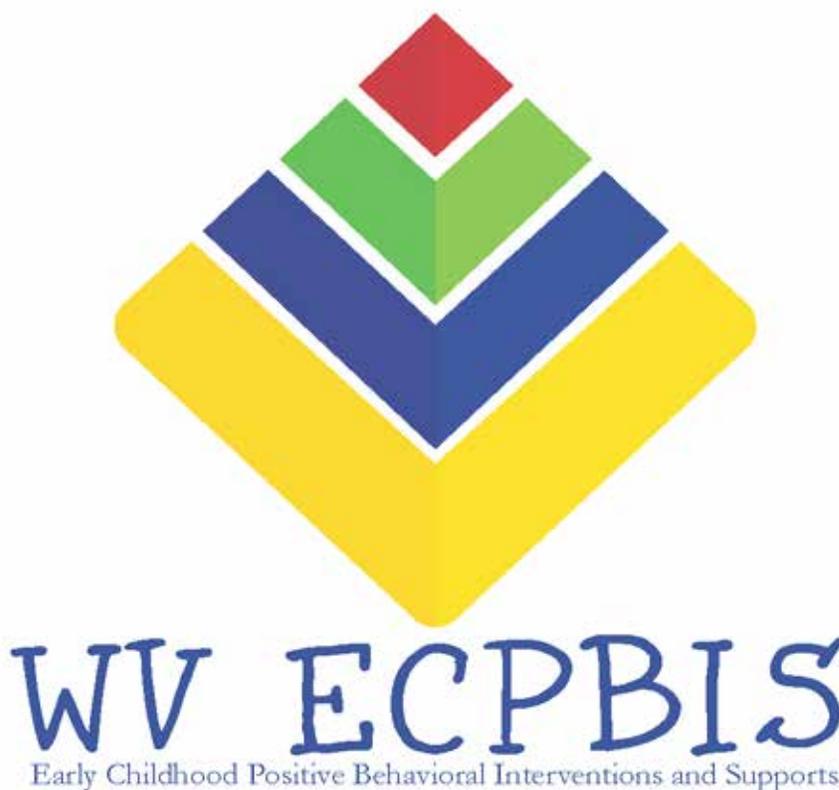
West Virginia Early Childhood Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (ECPBIS)

Submitted by Amy Carlson, Early Childhood Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Coordinator, West Virginia

Hello! Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Amy Carlson and I am the Early Childhood Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Coordinator for West Virginia. I want to take this opportunity to discuss Early Childhood Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (ECPBIS) and what we are doing here in West Virginia to support this early childhood approach to building and promoting social and emotional development within early childhood education.

ECPBIS, also known as The Pyramid Model, is a positive behavioral intervention and support framework that uses systems thinking and implementation science to promote evidence-based practices. West Virginia ECPBIS helps early educators build skills for nurturing and responsive caregiving, creates supportive learning environments, provides targeted social-emotional skill instruction and development, and supports children with persistent challenging behavior.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is based on principles of applied behavior analysis, the prevention approach, and the values of positive behavioral support. PBIS refers to a systems change process for an entire school, center, or district. ECP-



BIS was born out of the principles of PBIS. The underlying theme of ECPBIS, or The Pyramid Model, is to promote social and emotional development by teaching behavior expectations in the same manner as any curriculum or subject. ECPBIS subscribes to the belief that behavior, like other important milestones, can be taught and encouraged in systematic ways. As we say in our trainings, “If you want to see it, you have to teach it!”

The goal of ECPBIS is to promote young children’s social and emotional development and thereby decrease per-

sistent and challenging behaviors. ECPBIS is a three tiered continuum model of support that includes evidence-based teaching practices and intervention approaches that promote children’s social and emotional development and are effective in addressing challenging behavior.

Tier 1 of The Pyramid Model is universally implemented and focuses on the systems and policies that promote and sustain the use of evidence-based policy and practices. It also promotes and supports the building of positive relationships with students and families.

Finally, Tier 1 emphasizes the importance of high quality supportive environments and how those environments promote social and emotional development. Tier 2 of the model focuses on targeted social and emotional supports. This tier is universally implemented, like Tier 1, and teaches social skills that can be preventative and have remedial effects. Tier 3 of The Pyramid Model is known as Intensive Intervention. This tier only pertains to 5% or less of children. At the intensive intervention level, individualized behavior support plans are developed based upon assessments and interventions.

West Virginia ECPBIS is a collaboration between the WV Autism Training Center at Marshall University and the West Virginia Department of Education, Offices of Special Education. We have worked together to apply this framework to the needs of West Virginia's early childhood educators, parents, and students. ECPBIS training provides three days of professional learning focusing on the ECPBIS framework, its core beliefs and values, and each of the three tiers of The Pyramid Model.

If you would like more information about ECPBIS, please feel free to contact me at amy.carlson@marshall.edu. I look forward to meeting and working with you!



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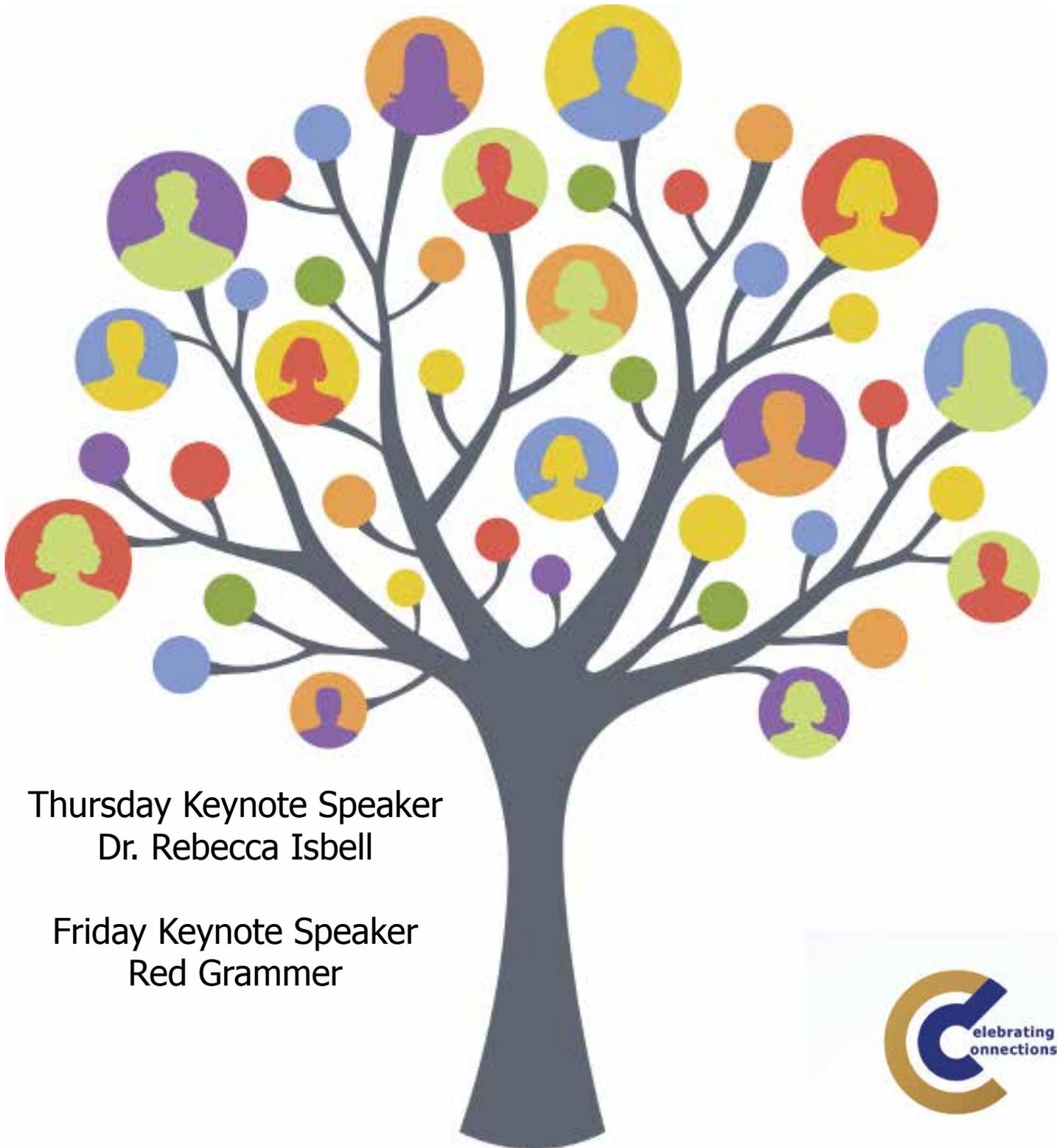
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Red Grammer



Taken Over By Stress

Submitted by Alexis McEntire, a student of Dr. Janet Dozier, Marshall University



It is easy to get wrapped up in the fast pace of life. Between work, household chores, family and friends it is easy to see how people become stressed trying to juggle all aspects of everyday lives. Early care and education professionals can help families manage this stress through good communication, empathy, and support.

It is easy to get wrapped up in the fast pace of life. Between work, household chores, family, and friends it is easy to see how people become stressed trying to juggle all aspects of everyday lives. When you add children into the mix, life becomes even more stressful. Now parents have to pay for more food, clothing, health care, shelter, and extra items to keep their child happy and healthy, while still trying to juggle their work life. Many families get wrapped up in the cycle of constantly working and educating their child so they can grow up and be a productive member of society. However, along the way, families forget about including the fun moments in life, whether it's a couple minutes, or a family vacation. Parents get taken over by stress and pass it along to their children causing health issues and other problems throughout the entire family. Early care and education professionals can help families manage this stress through good communication, empathy, and support.

Nearly half of all two-parent families with children younger than 18 have both parents working full-time outside of the home (Katrina, 2011). The majority of double-income families have more money than all others (Katrina, 2011). Working parents have a lot of stress put on them. The effort to balance work and family life is, for many, a challenge. Some parents feel other people are raising their children. While they are at work, the child is either at school, child care, or with a sitter. When the parent comes home it's time to make dinner then get the children ready for bed. A parent stated, "I don't get enough time with my kids. I would love to get more" (Katrina, 2011). The reality is the majority of today's jobs aren't made for people with caregiving responsibilities. Working parents describe their lives as feeling rushed. Rushing from work to a child's sporting event, to a doctor's appointment, to make dinner, pack lunches, the list is never ending. Once the health effects of stress are felt, everything gets much harder to manage (Fisher, 2015). Stress related problems for working parents include feeling that they will burn out, having problems with anxiety, struggling with depression, and catching up with things on work nights and weekends. For some, the struggle to balance work and family ends with a form of surrender, with one parent leaving the workforce. For many working parents, one income isn't an option. For some, the struggle to balance work and life becomes more manageable when work shifted for at least one partner.

Parenthood is challenging enough, but parenthood as a single mom or dad can be much more stressful. Often times single parents develop feelings of desperation and being overwhelmed and stressed out (Poythress, 2016). The parent has to assume additional roles and responsibilities, balancing effective parenting with ca-

reer (work/home) life, and handle time and financial constraints. If finances aren't a big issue, single parents turn their attention towards the child's needs such as school, activities, communication, and care. The parent also has to manage the demands of their employer, and expectations of family, while still allowing time for their personal lives and rest. It is also very difficult to balance the demands of working full time when your child needs you at school or at home. Many single parents struggle with loneliness and isolation in single parent households. Social connectedness and self-care can suffer tremendously (Poythress, 2016). If you do not take care of yourself properly, how are you expected to take care of your children's needs and make healthy decisions (Poythress, 2016).

As stressful as parenting can be, it can become even more stressful when a child is diagnosed with a chronic illness or disability. This causes parents to go through a wide range of emotions including denial, anger, frustration, guilt, resentment, depression, and fear. Having a child with a disability can be stressful for many reasons, but also take in to account that the family could be a single parent household, have two working parents, or one working parent, and that each family situation has its own stress.

When you add in a child with a disability, the stress can multiply. The parents face both internal and external stressors (Hansen, 2016). Some internal stressors include the parents blaming themselves for doing something wrong that caused the disability or illness (Hansen, 2016). The parents also worry about the child's future, wondering if the child will be productive and independent. The parents may also have unrealistic expectations for the child and may feel that they failed the child if the child doesn't reach their goals. Some external stressors can include sibling resentment (Hansen, 2016). Some siblings may feel neglected or angry that their parents spend more time and attention on their sibling who has a disability. Another big stressor can be medical bills. Medical bills can add up quickly between additional care services, doctor visits, and hospitalizations for the child. Parents also have the stress of finding the best placement for the child and finding the child's least restrictive environment where the child can reach his or her full potential. All of these stressors together cause a lot of extra stress on the parents and their relationship.

Families continue to feel mounting pressures from finances and work. While raising a family can be rewarding, it can be demanding even in healthy social and economic situations. Therefore, stressful times can make things more challenging. Children model their parents' behaviors, including those related to managing stress.

Parents who deal with stress in unhealthy ways risk passing those behaviors on to their children. Parents who cope with stress in healthy ways can not only promote better adjustment and happiness for themselves, but also promote the formation of critically important habits and skills in children (Palmiter, 2010). It is important to remember that children are also impacted by stress whether it is stress passed down through their parents, school, sports, or a traumatic event. Children may show signs of stress through mood swings, acting out, or sleep patterns (Dowshen, 2015). They may also become withdrawn and spend more time alone. Younger children may pick up new habits such as thumb sucking, while older children may begin to lie and defy authority. A child who is stressed may begin to overreact to small problems and become clingier (Dowshen, 2015).

Proper rest and good nutrition can boost coping skills for children. It is important that parents make time for their child every day and make themselves available (Dowshen, 2015). It can be difficult for some people to come home after work, get down on the floor, and play with their children or just talk to them about their day — especially if they've had a stressful day themselves. Expressing interest shows your children that they're important to you. When children aren't willing to discuss their stressful issues, parents can try talking about their stress. This shows the parent is willing to tackle tough topics and is available to talk with when the child is ready (Dowshen, 2015). This can also be a good way to manage stress for the parent as long as they aren't passing on their stress to the child.

Every parent will experience stress. Finding ways to manage stress is important so that the family will stay functional. To help reduce stress, it is important parents get a refreshing sleep each night, eat nutritional foods, get daily exercise, schedule time for relaxation, and take a break from the demands of work and the children (Hansen, *Parenting & Stress: Developing Your Own Coping Strategies*, 2016). Parents can also establish support systems. This can include family, friends, or people in the community on whom they can rely. Parents should be encouraged to have fun and enjoy their children. Take some time and do a fun activity or go somewhere as a family where everyone can relax and just have fun.

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Communicating with Families: A Necessity in Early Childhood

Submitted by Tracey Barker, a student of Dr. Janet Dozier, Marshall University

Every family is unique. Think of your own family. Your family has its own traditions, inside jokes, ways of communicating, as well as ebbs and flows. Now apply that to students. Each child has their own unique experience when it comes to their family. To ensure that we are able to help our students become successful, we have to build relationships and trust with the child's family as well. Understanding how to communicate with families, putting aside personal views, and understanding the culture of each family can do nothing but benefit you as a teacher.

Communication with family is vital for the success of each child. Each child is someone's whole world. If your child was to experience something new, wouldn't you want updates and information to be reassured that he or she is not only surviving, but thriving? Educators need to appreciate that a child's success has many factors, and one is their family. Building rapport and trust with family can help bridge that gap. Create a comfortable environment within your classroom so the family feels welcome and find out how parents would like to be contacted. There's lots of ways to communicate with parents. Phone calls, text messages, emails, newsletters, family nights, home visits, parent-teacher conferences, school-based community activities, and letters to the family are just a few examples of ways to communicate with a family (Graham-Clay, 2005). Discover how families want to be contacted. Use these channels to reassure the parents that things are good. You do not need to wait for something negative to happen to contact parents. Parents and families need to feel as though you are on their side. By opening up communication, we can show the family that we care for both the parent and the child. Once a rapport is built, family could possibly be more accepting of challenging behavior or development, if applicable.

An educator's perception of families impact their relationships with families (Sewell, 2012). This is one reason why personal beliefs need to be checked at the door. We are in the classroom for a simple reason...to help every child succeed to his or her ability. Every family is unique, just as every teacher has his or her own beliefs. Educators need to understand that judgment, stereotypes, and labels are not welcome in the classroom. More and more children are coming to us with more diverse backgrounds. Studies have shown that children from diverse backgrounds, unfortunately, do not attain the same advantage from early childhood

settings as those whose families are “native English speakers” (Hadley, 2014). The classroom should not have an “us versus them” stigma (Garris Christian, 2006). We cannot expect them to abandon their heritage just because it may or may not make us uncomfortable. As educators, we cannot assume children have certain people or even technology in their homes. Educators need to investigate and talk to families to give children avenues for success, not inundate them with our beliefs.



With respect to beliefs, we must try to learn about the cultures within each family. Family is the child’s first teacher, learning through them on how to view the world and their experiences. The people who are closest to us help to define who we are, influencing our knowledge, beliefs, and values (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009). Home life greatly impacts what happens in school; however, there are rules and ideas that may differ. There must be distinctions between rules for home and school. Educators need to respect each family’s wishes; however, they are there to protect all children and help them reach success. When conflicts arise over rules, educators can get assistance from families. Sharing the reasoning behind the rule can help the family reiterate and contribute in the child’s understanding. Educators also must realize that family structure and situations change (Garris Christian, 2006). Educators must be aware of the information to ensure the necessary changes in school if

appropriate. Families are unique, but no matter how different families appear, we all have shared characteristics to which we can relate.

Communicating, understanding, and listening to parents will give us insight to their child. The more information we have, the more helpful we can be to the entire family's needs. Considering how a family communicates, how they handle experiences, and their cultural style can only benefit you as an educator. Opening a line of communication can be a tool to ensure everyone's needs, especially the child's, are met. With all this said, yes it may take some extra time and work for you as an educator to communicate with your families. At times, it may even be uncomfortable. Educators are in this business to help children blossom and grow as people and hopefully that makes it all worth it.

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- 😊 Co-Payments - WVCHIP Gold and Blue groups do not have co-pays on preventative care, dental, vision, or generic prescriptions.



Family Size	WVCHIP Gold Maximum Yearly Income	WVCHIP Blue Maximum Yearly Income	Premium Plan Maximum Yearly Income
2	\$24,030	\$33,803	\$48,060
3	\$30,240	\$42,538	\$60,480
4	\$36,450	\$51,273	\$72,900
5	\$42,660	\$60,009	\$85,320

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Do you know a child who is not *moving *hearing *seeing * learning or *talking like others their age?

By 3 months,
Does your baby...

- grasp rattle or finger?
- hold up his/her head well?
- make cooing sounds?
- smile when talked to?

By 6 months,
Does your baby...

- play with own hands/feet?
- roll over?
- turn his/her head towards sound?
- holds head up/looks around without support?

By 9 months,
Does your baby...

- sit alone or with minimal support?
- pick up small objects with thumb and fingers?
- move toy from hand to hand?

By 12 months,
Does your baby...

- wave goodbye?
- play with toys in different ways?
- feed self with finger foods?
- begin to pull up and stand?
- begin to take steps?

By 18 months,
Does your baby...

- cling to caretaker in new situations?
- try to talk and repeat words?
- walk without support?

By 24 months,
Does your baby...

- point to body parts?
- walk, run, climb without help?
- get along with other children?
- use 2 or 3 word sentences?

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STRESS

From Head to Toe

Deep muscle relaxation, or progressive relaxation, is a proven way to reduce stress.

Progressive relaxation helps you help yourself to relax by tightening and releasing different muscle groups in your body. Below is an example, using your feet.

1. Sit comfortably.
2. Flex your toes toward your head.
3. Feel the tension that occurs in your feet, ankles, and lower legs.
4. Pay close attention to the feelings of tightness and tension. Hold for 10 seconds.
5. Now relax your feet, let them return to their normal position.
6. Feel the difference in your feet, ankles, and lower legs; where it was tense, there is now a feeling of relaxation.

TIP: You can do your entire body, making your way from your feet all the way up to your head.

You can do this in your classroom, at home, on the bus, in the car — anywhere!





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5 Protective Factors

1. Social Connections

Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental and spiritual support

2. Parental Resilience

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3. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional growth

4. Concrete Support in Times of Need

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Putting Protective Factors into Play for Yourself

When you spend all day working with children and their families, it can be difficult to focus on your own well-being. This is especially true at times when some of the children or families you work with need a lot of support. One of the best things about the Protective Factors Framework is that it applies to everyone – including you and your family! Putting protective factors into play in your own life can help you keep going in the face of the daily challenges of your job.

Personal Resilience

What do you do to take care of yourself? Try to plan ahead of time so that when you are having a bad day you can:

- Do something that helps you to relax, feel calm and take your mind off of the stress you are experiencing.
- Take a break if you need it. This can be as simple as asking your partner to make dinner or a friend to take care of your kids for an evening, or taking a personal day from work if you can.
- Remind yourself of why you do this work. Reflect on what drew you to work with children, and remember the important role you play in their lives and the lives of their families.
- Take time to remember the impact you have made in the lives of others – through your work, in your extended family, in your neighborhood or in your community.
- Get help from a supervisor or a coworker if you need it.
- Find a way on an ongoing basis to release the emotional stress related to your work. Identify actions that help you to decompress. That might mean spending time in nature, exercising, reading a novel or having a long talk with a good friend.
- Take care of yourself by eating well, getting rest and creating separation from work in the rest of your life. Identify actions that help you to decompress.

Social Connections

Are there people in your life who can support you during rough times and help you recharge outside of work? Make sure that you benefit from positive relationships with others:

- Cultivate a supportive environment at work so that you and your coworkers have time to get to know each other and can turn to each other for support when needed.
- Spend time with family, spiritual groups, clubs, hobbies, sports, recreation or any other activity that refreshes you. Look into joining groups or organizations as a way to meet new people. Book clubs, school organizations, religious communities or clubs focused on a hobby you enjoy can be great places to start.
- When you're having a tough day due to a particularly challenging situation, don't hesitate to reach out to colleagues. They've all had those days!
- Use staff meetings as an opportunity to do a staffing of a challenging child or family situation to obtain different perspective.
- Reach out to friends and loved ones for help and support. And when they're having a bad day, make sure that you do your best to help them in return.



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

If you are a parent yourself, the challenges faced by some of the children and families you work with can hit especially close to home. It can be difficult to keep a healthy perspective on your children's development and your own parenting when you come home. Even if you are not a parent, or don't have children living at home, increasing your own knowledge and understanding of parenting may help you better handle frustrating situations at work.

- Just as parents can catch their children being good, we can all support each other as parents by "catching" good parenting in action, including our own. Recognize and pat yourself on the back when you have kept your cool during a stressful situation, or made a difficult decision regarding your child or family.
- Remember that parenting is part learned and part natural – and that goes for you as well even though you are an early childhood professional. Take time to find out more about child development and effective parenting. Try out the information in your own home and make it part of the knowledge base you bring to families.
- Take time to think about beliefs you hold about parenting and parent-child relationships and how they may affect your interactions with parents in your work. Are there things in your own experience that may be coloring your response to families?

Concrete Support in Times of Need

Everyone needs support at different times in their lives. You may sometimes be in a position to help families in your program find the services or resources they need. But what do you do when you need support yourself? Some ways to shore up your concrete supports include:

- Talk to friends, neighbors and family members to be sure you have people lined up who can pick up your child from school when you aren't able to or give you a ride to work if your car breaks down. You can do the same for them, and know you can count on each other when you're in a pinch.
- Put money into savings when things are going well. An emergency fund that can cover 2-3 months of living expenses is ideal, in case you should face illness, unemployment or unexpected expenses.
- Stay aware of community resources available to help with issues that can come up for any family, such as substance abuse, mental health issues, domestic violence and material needs. Those can be valuable connections in a time of crisis not just for the families you work with but for yourself, a friend or a member of your extended family.
- If you've had a very difficult work situation, don't hesitate to ask your supervisor or agency administrator for counseling assistance for yourself and your co-workers who have been affected.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children

You got into this work because you care about children. Take time every day to connect with the children you work with and reflect on their progress over the time you've known them. Remember the importance of your work and the effect you have on them and their lives.

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*Associate or bachelor's degree college credit hours must be taken from a participating WV college or university. Supported AA/AAS/BA/BS/RBA degrees include: Child Development; Child Development & Family Studies; Early Childhood; Early Childhood Development; Early Childhood Education; Early Childhood Special Education. This program is being presented with financial assistance as a grant from the WV Department of Health and Human Resources.

WV Child Care Health Educators

The WV Child Care Health Educators provide training and technical assistance in the areas of health, safety, and nutrition. All training is registered with WV STARS. The WV Child Care Health Educators can do trainings at individual programs to best meet each program's needs. To schedule training or technical assistance please contact Renee or Jennifer using the contact information below.



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Beans...More Than Cute Songs

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Oral Health

And more

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Covers: MountainHeart North, Choices, and
CCRC Child Care Resource and Referral
Agencies

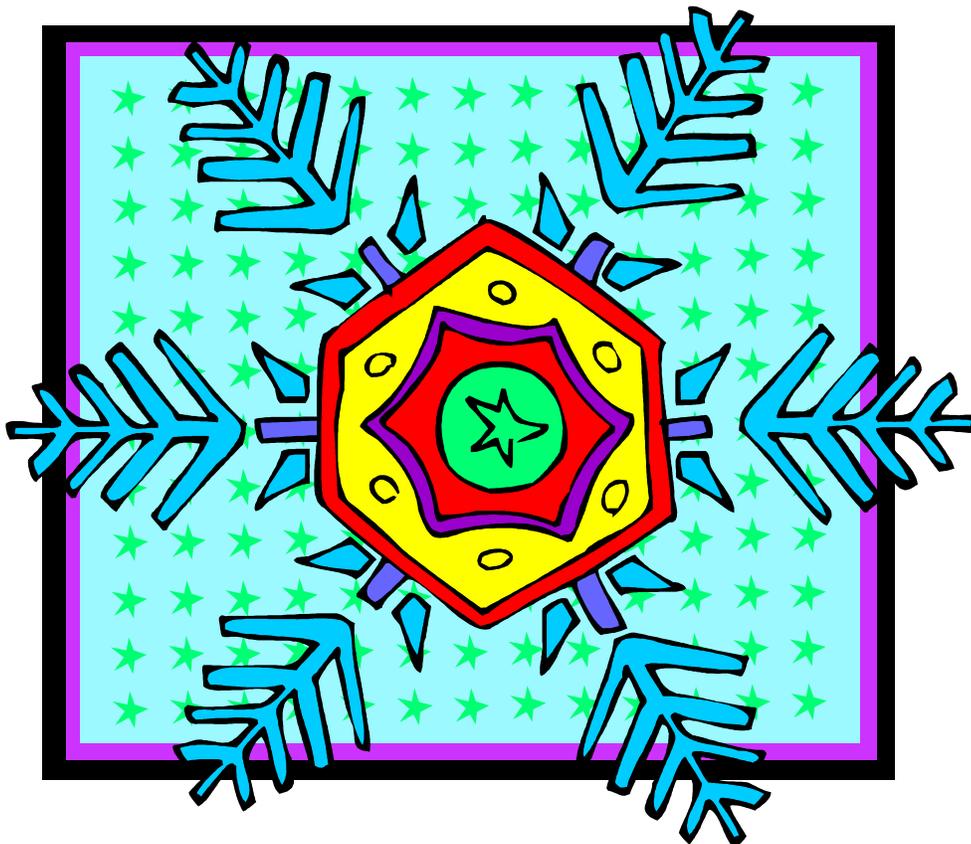
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Email: jconkle@rvcds.org

Covers: Link, Connect, and MountainHeart
South Child Care Resource and Referral
Agencies

Indoor Physical Activities

Submitted by Renee Y. Stonebraker, RS



Winter is upon us, and that means cold temperatures. Some days may be too cold to take the children outside, so the moderate to vigorous activity time has to be done inside. Here are some activity ideas to get the children moving!

- Throw a soft ball into a bucket and vary the distance
- Musical chairs
- Crazy golf – set up a golf course using household items
- Have a dance party
- Follow the leader games
- Make an obstacle course
- Practice kicking and throwing using a soft ball
- Play 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes,' 'Hokey-Pokey,' and 'If Your Happy and You Know It'
- Act out a story
- Bowling using a soft ball and empty water bottles
- Jumping over a piece of rope or yarn
- Hopscotch

Parent Blocks

NEWSLETTER



"Providing resources to parents throughout West Virginia"

Volume 14, Issue 1, Winter 2017

Self Care for Parents

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Many parents today are overwhelmed with the stresses of family life. In fact, a lot of parents feel like they're just treading water trying to keep up with the daily tasks associated with caring for children. Being a parent is not easy—it can feel as though we're constantly focused on our children: feeding, clothing, teaching, disciplining and more all day long. But are you taking time to focus on yourself, too?

If you're like most moms and dads, you need to be told that you're WORTH focusing on, and that it's okay to take time to take care of yourself. Practicing self care is actually a very important step to becoming a better parent, and there are things you can do today to get started.

What is self care?

Think about what you do to care for your child every day. You feed her meals, bathe her, change her diapers and play with her. If you have an older child, you might enroll him in sports, help him with homework and read to him every night. These basic steps of care are the same when it comes to taking care of yourself.

As a parent, we often dismiss even the most basic of tasks for ourselves. We've all lamented about having not showered all day because we're caring for a newborn, or skipping meals because we're too busy running our children around to preschool and music lessons. Self care includes the simplest, physical things – like making sure we get enough sleep and eating healthy meals. But it also includes more emotional, social, psychological, creative/artistic and even spiritual time for ourselves.

Physical self care can include:

- Eating regularly in healthy ways
- Getting enough exercise
- Receiving regular, preventive medical care

WV Parent Blocks Newsletter is a project of West Virginia Early Childhood Training Connections and Resources, a collaborative project of West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources/Bureau for Children and Families/Division of Early Care and Education; WV Head Start State Collaboration Office; Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health/West Virginia Birth to Three; West Virginia Department of Education/Office of Special Education; and West Virginia Home Visitation Program and is supported and administered by River Valley Child Development Services.

Permission to photocopy

- Sleeping enough
- Getting time away from the phone, email, TV, etc.
- Spending time outdoors in fresh air and natural light

Ask yourself, are you doing these most basic things to care for your body? If not, it's time to rethink your daily routine. Maybe getting up 30 minutes early would give you a chance to take a walk or make breakfast before your children wake up, and going to bed an hour earlier would allow for more adequate sleep.

Emotional/Social/Psychological self care can include:

- Spending time with friends and family
- Staying in touch with other people in your life
- Expressing emotions, allowing yourself to cry and finding things that make you happy
- Reading
- Working on your marriage or other relationships
- Getting a massage or going to a spa
- Reducing stress
- Saying no to extra responsibilities

Artistic/Creative/Spiritual self care can include:

- Giving yourself quiet time for self-reflection
- Writing in a journal
- Spending time out in nature
- Enjoying a hobby or trying something new

These last few types of self care actions are especially easy to neglect. They can feel indulgent if you already feel like

you're struggling to get everything done on your to-do list. But let's consider this next point, then: What happens when parents neglect themselves?

As parents, we often feel pressured to give so much to our children that we forget to take care of ourselves, or we even feel guilty for taking care of ourselves. This is simply unreasonable!

When ANYONE neglects to take care of him or herself, they put stress on their mind and body. This stress can lead to physical effects like a weaker immune system and high blood pressure, but it can also lead to mental effects such as depression and anger management issues.

As parents, this has two major impacts:

1. We model unhealthy behavior, teaching our kids that it's okay to neglect self care. This can teach them that things like healthy eating habits, relationships with partners—whatever it might be that we're neglecting in our own lives—are not important. For any parenting challenge, it's said that leading by example is one of the best ways to teach our children. SO consider for a moment how you want YOUR children to take care of themselves as adults. Are you SHOWING them how an adult should respect and care for themselves?

2. The second problem we face if we don't practice self care is that parenting can become an even greater challenge than it already is! It takes ENERGY to be a good parent. When we're overstressed and not taking care of ourselves, we can be irritable, exhausted or sad. But positive, proactive parenting takes patience, energy and optimism. All traits very hard to come by if we're not taking care of our physical and mental health. So on top of not taking care of ourselves, we cannot care for our children as we might otherwise be able to. This can lead to reactive parenting, with lots of yelling, missing opportunities to

reward positive behavior and more.

So where can I start with self care?

It's not easy to change the way you prioritize yourself in your hectic life as a parent. Remember that practicing self care is not about neglecting your children's needs. And it's also not as simple as planning a weekend away at a spa. Instead, it's about showing yourself the respect and care you deserve on a consistent basis.

A good way to start is to choose one area of self care and focus on making a change. Perhaps you love to read but don't do it anymore because you feel like there's not enough time in the day. Make it a priority to enjoy 15-30 minutes with a good book every evening, even if it means skipping time on the computer or washing the last few dishes.

Sometimes practicing self care—especially in the beginning—means asking other adults for help. So don't be afraid to ask your spouse to give you a break one night a week while you take a yoga class, or ask a neighbor or friend to take a walk with you each evening. Getting another adult to support you in self care can be a big help in making it a permanent part of your life.

How will taking care of MYSELF help my KIDS?

By taking one small step toward better self care, you'll soon realize how beneficial that special focus can be and what an impact even one little change can have on your physical and mental state. Once you've established one new self care routine, choose another one to work on.

The truth is, it's a constant battle as parents to care for our children AND ourselves. But just as there are certain things we provide—without question—when caring for our children, there should also be things we never question providing for ourselves as well.

3 REASONS

GOOD INFANT MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS



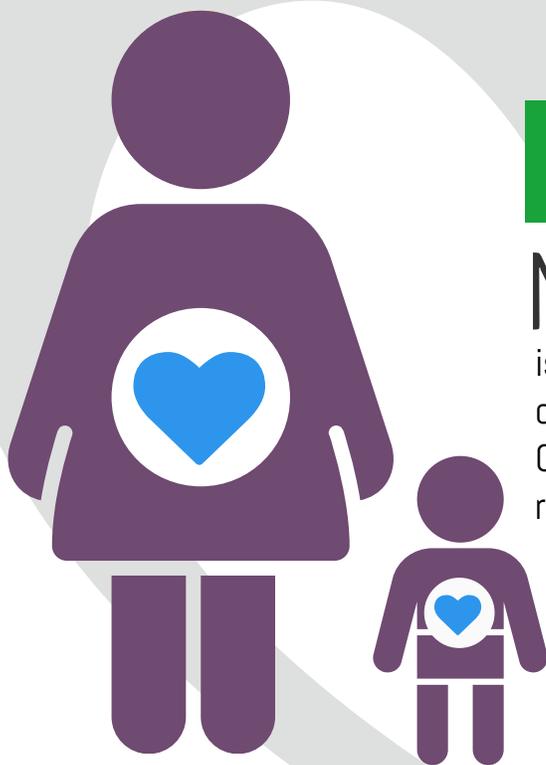
We have a shared stake **to make sure babies develop sturdy brain architecture**, because this foundation supports a lifetime of learning and productive participation in society. A reliable caregiver who is responsive to a baby's needs is the base for secure attachment, which allows an infant to explore and learn.



Toxic stress from broken caregiver-infant relationships can push a baby's stress hormones into overdrive. When constantly present, these hormones disrupt brain and physical development. And babies can't learn if their brains and bodies are working against them. **The antidote to toxic stress?** Affection and protection by a nurturing caregiver.



Secure attachment is a fundamental building block of social function. Children need relationships with sensitive caregivers to self-regulate, get along with others, solve problems, and be productive -- the basis for civic and economic prosperity.



INFANT MENTAL HEALTH

is the optimal social, emotional, and cognitive well-being of children ages 0 to 3, developed by secure and stable relationships with nurturing caregivers.



West Virginia Infant/Toddler Mental Health Association

Supporting the social and emotional well-being of children

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5 Simple Tips

To Support Your **Infant's** Social Emotional Health During



Dressing

- 1 Talk about what you are doing.**
"Mila, Daddy is going to put your shirt on now."
- 2 Practice patience.**
"David, this shirt is hard for mommy to get over your head, I am going to try a different way."
- 3 Leave extra time.**
"It will be time to go to child care soon, let's get you ready Sasha."
- 4 Offer positive words.**
"Ellen you wiggled your foot into the sock. Way to go!"
- 5 Have fun.**
"We got your shirt on Dedrea, let's clap your hands!"

You Are Your Child's First Teacher!

Together, you and your infant can make dressing a special time for connecting. When you show patience and use gentle words, your infant learns from you how to be kind and patient. When you talk positively about what you are doing together your child learns that you like taking care of them, *"Daddy is going to dress you in warm clothes today for our walk, it's chilly outside."*

