

## Tips for Dealing with Stress

(Adapted from Friend & Cook, 2010, pp. 170-171)

As a manager, it is necessary to be aware of your stress levels and your staff members' stress levels. When stress levels are high, emotions tend to run high and can negatively affect the positive, responsive climate you want to maintain in the program. The following are suggestions for dealing with stress whether it is your own or that of another staff member.

- 1) **Set realistic and flexible goals.** It is important to have written goals, but limit the focus to only two to three goals per year. Make sure your action plans and timelines for completing professional goals or program level goals are realistic and doable. Revise the timelines and activities for meeting these goals if needed.
- 2) **Focus on children and families.** Stress can be reduced when you keep the focus on the children and families that you serve. There are many professional distractions that can add stress (e.g., chairing a committee for a major event, serving as an officer in a local organization). Engaging in too many outside commitments can add stress and remove the focus from the children, youth and families that are served by the program. When taking on a task, it is good to ask, "How would adding this new task add to a positive relationship-based climate for the children and families?"
- 3) **Establish priorities.** Set priorities and help staff members to set their priorities. As a manager it is easy to spend a lot of time "putting out fires" and not spending time working on issues of long-term importance. Learning to allocate time to important tasks each week will help to meet individual and program goals. When a staff member is emotionally upset, it is important to listen with empathy, then set up a time to meet in the near future when you can discuss establishing priorities.
- 4) **Delegate when possible.** It is important to know what you must do as a manager and what can be delegated to other staff or personnel. A strong manager knows how to delegate and how to do it appropriately.
- 5) **Take care of yourself.** Taking time for journaling, yoga, or a walk each day can help reduce stress levels. Some programs make program-wide wellness goals where staff and managers support one another in maintaining healthy practices. This can also be a fun way to establish positive relationships among staff members. Some youth and families may even want to join, too.
- 6) **Celebrate accomplishments.** It is important for managers and staff to celebrate when individual and group goals have been achieved. Celebrate special events and milestones. If you have a large center, you may want to use email or bulletin-board notices that celebrate staff members' significant events (e.g., engagements, new babies, graduations, etc.). Some programs have a social committee that helps plan celebrations and special events for the staff.