

Shelter From the Storm: Self-Care for the Shelter Professionals

You are helping families who are coping with a big event! You are a caring and compassionate individual who really wants to make a difference for people in need. Even though you signed up to be the “helper,” your needs are important too! The truth is that if you do not take care of yourself you will not be able to care for others. Meeting your own physical and emotional needs is critical to accomplishing your goal of caring for others.

Consider trying one, or more, of the self-care tips described below.

TIPS

- A. Meet your basic needs. It is easy to become busy helping everyone else. Find another shelter professional to be your self-care buddy. Take time throughout the day to give each other breaks. Ask each other: When was the last time you slept? Ate? Drank water? Sat down?
- B. Take 5–10 minutes during the day to be quiet and listen to your breathing or meditate.
- C. Inhale for 2 seconds and exhale for 4 seconds, then say to yourself an affirming statement (e.g., “I’ve got this.”).
- D. Do a check for muscle tension in your body—do you feel it in your neck, back, stomach? Stretch your body.
- E. At the end of the day think of all you accomplished and give yourself a pat on the back! You did a great job! There will always be more to do, but you have earned some rest.
- F. Set reasonable goals for how you can care for others while still taking time to care for yourself. This keeps you strong to return and help again.
- G. Remember: You are better able to stay calm and provide care when you take good care of yourself!

Know yourself and your situation! Are you ready to give care? It’s important to know that it’s okay to tell others if you need to sit this one out. If you have had recent losses, or are experiencing your own physical or emotional challenges, it is important that you let someone know that—even though you want to—you may not be able to help now.

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Did you know?

- ✓ Very young children’s brains are growing at a rapid pace in the first few years of life.
- ✓ A young child’s brain development is affected by their sense of safety and security.
- ✓ You can help them to feel safe and secure by supporting them through partnering with their family to care for them.

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ZERO TO THREE and Save
the Children wish to express
their deepest gratitude to
everyone who has shared
their thoughts, ideas, and
additional contributions
to the development of this
publication.

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Continued on back