

Self-Care for Emergency Responders

When responding to the pain and distress of children and families, research suggests that the ability to identify, understand and manage one's emotional reactions is paramount. In doing so, provider self-care is key. When working with children and families with complex and challenging illnesses or injuries, it is recommended that health care providers routinely:

- **Be aware** of their own emotional reactions and distress when confronting others' traumatic experiences, and know what traumatic material may trigger them.
- **Connect** with others by talking about their reactions with trusted colleagues or others who will listen.
- **Maintain a balance** between their professional and personal lives, with a focus on self-care (e.g., Relaxation, exercise, stress management, etc.) to prevent, and lessen the effects of, workplace stress.

Here are practical strategies for preventing and reducing the effects of stress reactions in your daily routine:

- Eat sensibly and regularly every day.
- Get adequate sleep each night.
- Exercise regularly.
- Be aware of your stress level; take precautions against exceeding your own limits.
- Acknowledge your reactions to stressful circumstances; allow yourself time to cope with these emotions.

At work:

- Try to diversify tasks at work, or vary your caseload, to the extent that you can.
- Take breaks during your workday.
- Take vacation days.
- Use relaxation techniques (e.g., deep breathing) as needed.
- Talk with colleagues about how your work affects you.
- Seek out, or establish, a professional support group.
- Recognize your personal limitations; set limits with patients and colleagues.

Outside of work:

- Spend time with family and friends.
- Stay connected with others through community events, religious groups, etc.
- Engage in pleasurable activities unrelated to work, especially those that allow for creative expression (writing, art, music, sports, etc.).
- Be mindful of your own thoughts (especially cynicism) and feelings; seek out the positives in difficult situations.
- Engage in rejuvenating activities such as meditation, prayer, or relaxation to renew your energy.
- Seek therapy if your work is negatively impacting your self-esteem, quality of life or relationships.

Source: <http://www.healthcaretoolbox.org/index.php/self-care-for-providers.html>

