



CARING FOR YOURSELF

While You Care For Children

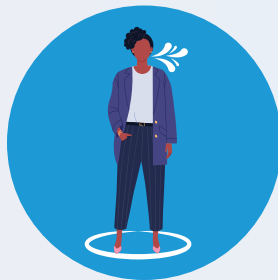
A big part of your job is taking care of others. But making time to care for yourself is important too. Mindfulness helps you manage stress and well-being and can protect against burnout. Mindfulness can also help you be a better listener, be more open to family perspectives, and increase feelings of compassion.

It might be hard to imagine fitting mindfulness into your busy routine. That's why we recommend brief practices that can be used throughout the day to care for yourself and stay present with the children.



Try mindful transitions like using a listening bell.

Take a brief pause before transitioning between activities and ring a bell or chime (Kids can do this too!). Listen fully to the sound, staying with it until it completely fades. Take a deep breath into your belly. Exhale fully, then move on to the next activity.



Practice "feet on the ground."

Choose a consistent time to do this practice (like before you start circle, when you return to the classroom after outdoor time, or before you begin a diaper change). While standing, focus on the sensations of your feet touching the floor. Feel the solid support below you. Take three deep breaths. Extend each inhale all the way down into your feet. With each exhale, imagine releasing your breath out the soles of your feet.



Use active mindfulness each day.

Select one activity you do many times each day (handwashing is a great one). Use that time to pay close attention to the sensory experience of this activity. Notice all the small body movements you make. Pay attention to the sensations of touch, sight, hearing, and even smell as you complete your activity. Focus completely on your senses, allowing any thoughts, if they arise, to simply go.



Choose a daily activity to signal your transition from work to home.

Perhaps it is walking to or from the bus stop or putting on your coat. When you perform this activity, slow down and focus on each small movement you make: the feel, smell, and sounds you experience. Let your mind be immersed in these sensations. When your transition is complete, let go of what happened before and allow yourself to focus on your next activity.

The hardest thing about mindfulness is remembering to practice. Experiment with different practices and use the ones that work best for you. Making mindfulness part of your regular routine might be easier if you partner with interested friends or colleagues. When you practice with others, it's easier to make mindfulness part of your daily routine.