

All about parents' and carers' mental health

What does it mean for parents and carers to look after themselves?

Looking after parents' and carers' mental and physical health is just as important as looking after children's. Some ways parents and carers can look after themselves can be to eat well, exercise regularly and have positive relationships. Early childhood staff can help parents and carers to do this by providing them with support and encouragement.

Why is it important for children for parents and carers to look after themselves?

When parents and carers look after themselves and have support to do this, they are more likely to feel good. This means they are more able to provide their children with the best care possible. Being healthy helps parents and carers relate to and make good decisions for their children. This promotes positive mental health and wellbeing in children and allows families to enjoy time together.

Children's mental health and wellbeing is promoted when parents and carers look after themselves.



How can parents and carers look after themselves?

- ▶ Aim to eat a healthy diet, this creates a nourished body.
- ▶ Try and exercise for half an hour each day (e.g., play a ball game outside with your child).
- ▶ Build and maintain positive relationships (e.g., with friends, family or early childhood staff) Being able to draw on a support is especially helpful during challenging times.
- ▶ Try to recognise stress and understand what might be causing it. This helps to be able to respond appropriately, for example, by relaxing, problem solving or making healthy decisions.
- ▶ Developing or maintaining personal interests (e.g., reading, drawing or walking), may give parents and carers time alone to relax and have balance in their life.

Parents' and carers' health is as important as their children's.

How can early childhood staff help parents and carers look after themselves?

- ▶ Provide families with specific information on topics (e.g., recognising stress).
- ▶ Encourage children to look after themselves and explain to families how you have been doing this.
- ▶ Provide families with contact details of health professionals.



This resource and further information on the national KidsMatter Early Childhood initiative is available to download at www.kidsmatter.edu.au. The KidsMatter Early Childhood team also welcomes your feedback which can be submitted through the website.



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