

Looking after yourself

FOR PROFESSIONALS

As a professional working in out-of-home care (OOHC), it's vital to look after yourself. Staying attuned to your emotions, stressors and anxieties is extremely important. Your emotions can also impact the decisions you make.

Signs of stress

- Feeling physically or mentally exhausted most of the time
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Loss of concern for the kids or families you're working with
- Feeling like you can no longer make a difference
- Feeling unsatisfied in your work or relationships
- Taking longer to complete work tasks, or spending more time procrastinating
- Feeling moody or frequently lashing out at others
- Often feeling sick, suffering headaches or stomach upsets
- Using alcohol, food, caffeine or drugs to help you cope or feel better

Helpful strategies

There are a range of strategies and supports that will help reduce the impact of working in the OOHC space. These include self-care strategies and supports in your workplace. Once you identify strategies that work for you, they will be most effective if you make them part of your day-to-day routine.

Set boundaries

Prioritise, set limits and work with your manager to determine what you can say 'no' to

Self-Care Strategies

- Learn to recognise your body's signs of stress
- Set limits – learn to prioritise tasks and actions
- Schedule time for relaxation, leisure and exercise
- Maintain consistent sleep routines
- Maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle



- Be optimistic in your thinking – reflect on the positive aspects of your life, including the impact of your work with kids and families
- Seek support – talk to a friend, family member or therapist
- Take leave and plan for regular breaks
- Wherever possible have lunch away from your desk
- If you are not on duty, limit responses to work emails, phone calls or texts
- Take time to connect with culture and spend time with your community
- Take time to be spiritual in a way that's meaningful to you

Social connections

- Maintain social connections outside of work. Keep in touch with family and friends
- Develop and maintain networks with colleagues and those working in the same field
- Join professional networks or bodies to build relationships with others in your

Field supervision

- Participate in regular reflective supervision to discuss concerns, issues and successes relating to kids on your case load
- Talk openly about any concerns or anxieties around kids on your caseload
- Tell your supervisor if work tasks are becoming overwhelming, and discuss strategies to manage or reduce the burden
- If you participate in group supervision, ensure you discuss kids on your caseload. Seek support, ideas and alternate perspectives from your colleagues
- Use supervision to discuss and plan workloads, access to leave and training opportunities
- Use supervision to discuss the expectations and parameters of your role

Developing knowledge and competency

- Improve your knowledge, skills and confidence in supporting kids in OOHC
- Attend training - LINKS Training and Support offers a range of professional training
- Join professional associations and bodies to access current information, research and professional support

If you identify a change in your ability to cope, please speak to your manager. Your employer has wellbeing initiatives and services to support you.