



WE LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS VE

CARE SKILL No. 4 CALM, COOL AND COLLECTED

“We cannot control what emotions or circumstances we will experience next, but we can choose how we will respond to them.” Gary Zukav

Goal: Develop and use a self-care plan which is a set of strategies to help us cope effectively with job stressors. Having strategies to stay calm, cool, and collected allows us to model for others and helps people around us remain calm themselves.

Caregivers play a key role in helping children and young people learn how to manage their emotions

- Role model by learning to identify and cope with our own emotional responses.
- For people who have experienced trauma to learn new skills, it is particularly important to feel safe and secure. Our ability to remain calm contributes dramatically to the sense of safety and security of others.

It is normal to have intense emotion when we are working or living in environments where intense emotion and stress is the norm

- Be curious and begin to recognise the experiences (triggers) that lead to strong emotions in you.
- People are triggered by various experiences, some could include:
 - Reactions directed toward us that may appear to come out of nowhere
 - Extreme emotional, physical, and/or behavioural responses from others
 - Feelings of helplessness and isolation
 - Feeling overwhelmed by daily expectations and the day to day pace
 - Relationship challenges such as patterns of approach and rejection or demand for attention/attachment.

Develop a [Self-Care Plan](#) to cope with strong emotions

- **Identify two in the moment strategies** such as: taking a deep breath, counting to ten, stretching your muscles, stepping away, asking for help, bringing in humour, engaging in positive self-talk (“I can get through this”), and reminding yourself the person’s extreme physical or verbal response is probably not about you.
- **Identify two ongoing strategies** such as getting enough sleep, eating a balanced diet, getting regular exercise, finding ways to have fun, having and using a go-to support person, spending time with a pet, regularly checking in with yourself about how you are feeling, engaging in a repetitive action like knitting, painting, or walking (any repetitive action can help you calmly focus your attention on the present), thinking about something that elicits a positive feeling, and talking with a supervisor or a colleague about incidents or issues you find emotionally difficult.

CARE PRINCIPLES



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When we notice any of the following behaviours or responses in ourselves, it is time to revisit our self-care plans and get more help and support

- Feelings of despair, hopelessness, or helplessness
- Becoming a rescuer or being overly involved
- Withdrawing or using avoidant behaviour
- Experiencing an increase in physical or mental health symptoms
- Using counter aggression.

What can you do?

As a LWB staff member or carer...

- Develop a [self-care plan](#) that includes at least two in the moment strategies and two ongoing self-care strategies to help you stay calm, cool, and collected.
- Identify the experiences and/or people that are most challenging for you.
- Recognise the changes in your body that indicate you may need to use a calming strategy.
- Pay attention to any external stressors that might be affecting your ability to stay calm, cool, and collected.
- Seek support when you need it. As a reminder, the *LWB Employee Assistance Program (EAP)* is available to all staff and carers.
- Explore with caregivers if their response to a situation may be related to past experiences or feelings of ineffectiveness or powerlessness.

When you feel strong emotions during interactions with children, young people, family members, staff or others, here are some things you can do in the moment...

- If possible, take a break from the situation, step back physically and/or mentally and **take a deep breath**.
- Ask yourself the Four Questions (*What am I feeling now? What does the other person feel, need or want? How is the environment affecting this? How do I best respond?*)
- Use positive self-talk (*I can do this. The day is almost over. We got through this before*)
- Remember, unless it is a matter of immediate safety, you don't need to react or respond in the moment; you can take some time to think about your response
- Remind yourself that the behaviour is probably not about you.
- Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes; most people have good intentions and are doing the best they can with the skills they possess.

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