

Taking Care of Yourself When Caring for Children Affected by Trauma

What is secondary trauma?

When you care for children who have been through something scary or hard, it can start to affect you too. This is called secondary trauma — when you feel stressed, sad, or tired because of what others have gone through. It's common for caregivers to feel this way. You're not alone.

Signs of secondary trauma

You may notice:

- Feeling tired or overwhelmed
- Feeling numb or burned out
- Trouble sleeping or getting sick often
- Difficulty focusing at work
- Mood changes, such as feeling sad, angry, or anxious

How to take care of yourself

Remember: You can't help others if you're not OK. Just like on an airplane, you need to put your mask on before helping others.



Take care of your body and mind by:

- Resting, eating healthy, and moving your body
- Relaxing — try deep breathing, quiet time, or journaling
- Doing things you enjoy



Set boundaries by:

- Knowing when you need a break
- Can't leave the room? Try quiet time, music, or an audio story for the children.
- Asking for help when you need it — from your team, a supervisor, or a counselor



Check in with yourself by:

- Noticing how you feel
- Talking with someone you trust
- Joining a support group or getting counseling if needed.



Lean on your team or other support networks by:

- Sharing your experiences with co-workers in meetings or check-ins
- Getting training on trauma-informed care
- Using local wellness resources or taking part in activities in your community
- Helping each other — we all need support!