

Keeping a Journal

Practicing reflection about your emotions and feelings will contribute to your ability to recognize indicators of stress, and as we have learned, identifying and labeling your emotions will help you manage them. This, in turn, will help you to regulate your emotions during stressful periods.

Over the next few days, use 10 minutes in the evenings to review your days and monitor your body's reactions to stressful encounters. Try to notice patterns among stressors and your body's reactions to them. Try to notice how stress affects your muscles. For example, do your neck muscles tense up, resulting in pain and or a headache? Do you notice jaw clenching? Does your back ache?

Identify a situation that creates a stress response. This could be an actual situation in which you find yourself (e.g., dealing with challenging behaviors in the classroom or your program) or it could be a situation that creates anticipatory stress related to a future event (e.g., a difficult conversation with a parent). Either way, try to capture these stressful circumstances and your reactions. Record these incidents across the week. Typically, you will have at least one incident to report. Being able to identify antecedents and consequences of your stress-related responses is the goal of this exercise. An example is provided to guide you.

At the end of the week, notice your specific behavioral patterns (e.g., What stresses you? How do you respond? Do the strategies you choose lessen or ease the stress response?)

Self-Monitoring Daily Stress

TRIGGER INCIDENT: Describe what happened or what you anticipated would happen in your scenario.	SYMPTOM(S): Did you notice a stress-related physical symptom? If so, what was it (shallow breathing, chest tightness, etc.)?	YOUR RESPONSE: What strategy did you employ to regulate your emotions or stress responses (e.g., controlled breathing, going for a walk)?	RATING: 0. no technique employed 1. technique not effective 2. technique somewhat effective (reduced symptoms) 3. technique worked (no stress response or stress response terminated)
Example: <i>I was beginning to worry about a hard conversation I needed to have with a parent in my program.</i>	<i>Breathing got shallow. Started to clench my jaws. Tension moved to forehead and began to get headache. My thoughts went negative. I can't do this. They'll be upset or yell at me. They'll think I'm not a good caregiver. I wish this job didn't involve talking to parents!</i>	<i>I focused on my breathing and made it more controlled—deeper and slower.</i>	<i>Breathing helped to calm me down.</i>

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Reflection Notes/Patterns Identified: