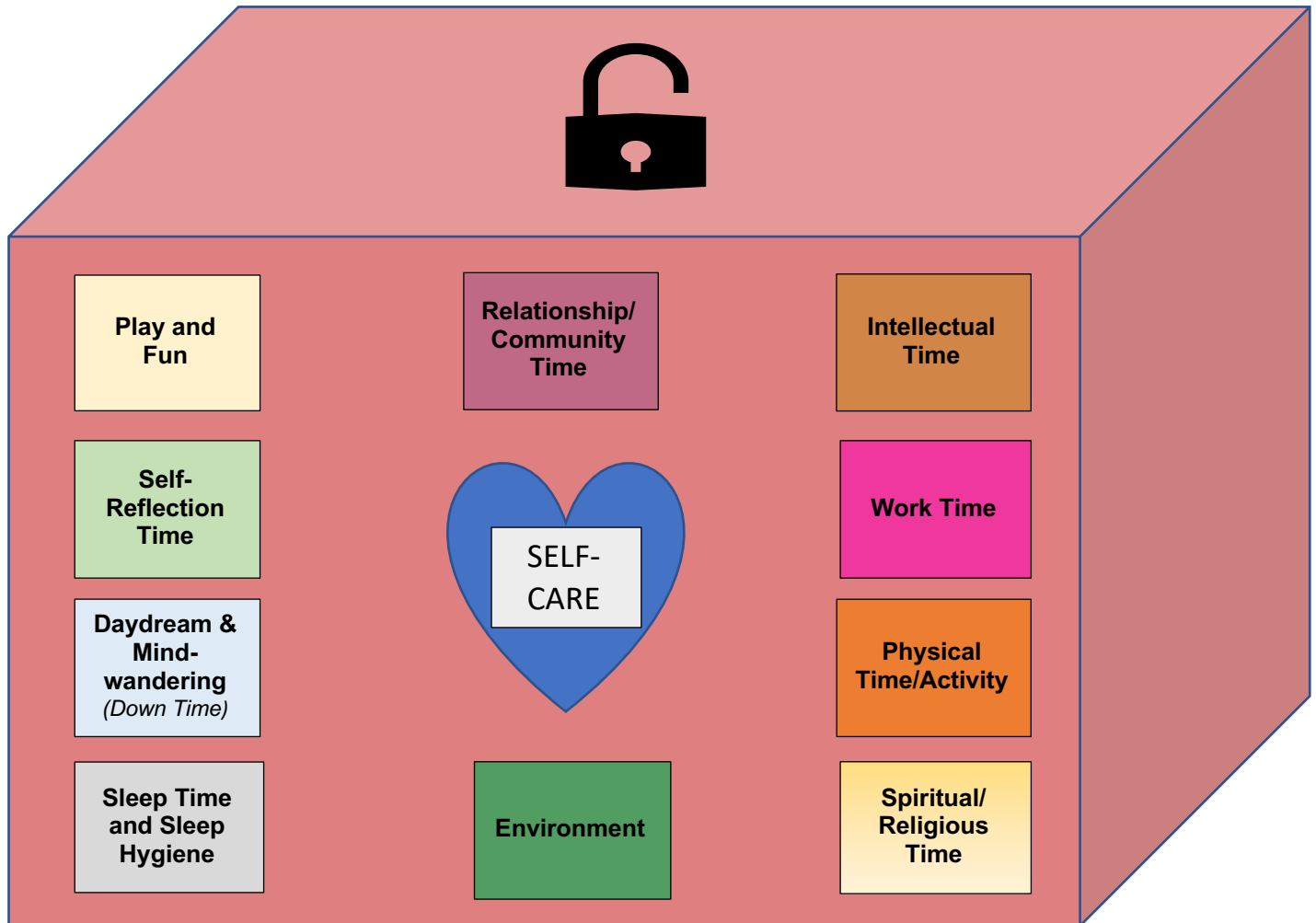




# Health & Wellness Toolkit

Nicholson, Shimpi Driscoll, Kurtz, Márquez and Wesley (2020) *Culturally Responsive Self-Care for Early Childhood Educators*



## **EXAMPLES OF EACH CATEGORY IN THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS TOOLKIT**

The following are examples of the types of activities that fall into each of the categories listed above. These are just examples and do not reflect all of the activities you might list for each of these categories. We list them to help you begin to think about your own Health and Wellness Toolkit ... where your strengths are and gaps or areas you need to attend to. You will see that many of these categories overlap and are not mutually exclusive.

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**Play and Fun** - Activities that are enjoyable and done for fun rather than as a task to be completed or for practical purposes. Examples: dancing, listening to music, going out with friends, arts and crafts, creative cooking, going on adventures, travel, exploring something new, taking a class. Think of a child who is caught up in the moment with an activity where they are playing and having fun. It can be learning, an activity, eating but it makes your heart leap with joy and it sends the happy hormone serotonin through you buffering all the stressors.

**Self-Reflection Time** - This refers to time we tune inward and reflect on our self and our life. So much time is casting the spotlight of our attention outward that focusing inward can keep us in tune with our emotional state and well-being. Examples: counseling, therapy, talking with a friend, journal writing, praying, meditation, yoga, mindful walks. Most of us orient our attention throughout the day outward on things that engage our senses (tv, work, a conversation, the children, making dinner). When we tell children, “pay attention” it usually means to focus outward. With time, our inner world is ignored and then creeps up and can hijack us like when our anger rises and then unconsciously comes out unexpectedly. Well-being and health can be achieved if we balance the practice of our focus inward on our sensations, emotions, thoughts and behaviors.

**Daydreaming, Mind-wandering (Down Time)** - The opposite of paying attention is daydreaming. Letting your mind wander while exploring ideas or creative thoughts. This activity allows the brain to live in a creative mode that often allows for new ideas and insights. Examples: lying on a blanket while looking at the stars or clouds, lying in bed and letting your mind wander, walking and thinking of ideas, writing and thinking of ideas, talking out loud with someone who allows you to explore creative ideas. Srinii Pillay, MD says in a blog for Harvard Health Publishing/Harvard Medical School that in your brain, there are circuits that promote mind-wandering and they are not all bad. In fact, these very circuits help you maintain a sense of self, understand what others are thinking more accurately, become more creative, and even predict the future. Without your mind-wandering circuits, your brain’s ability to focus would become depleted, and you would be disconnected from yourself and others too.

**Sleep Time and Sleep Hygiene** - Each person’s body needs a different amount of sleep. Only you will know what you need to feel rested and restored. Sleep hygiene tips from the American Sleep Association:



- Maintain a regular sleep routine
- Avoid naps if possible
- Don't stay in bed awake for more than 5-10 minutes
- Don't watch TV or read in bed
- Drink caffeinated drinks with caution
- Avoid inappropriate substances that interfere with sleep
- Exercise regularly
- Have a quiet, comfortable bedroom
- If you are a 'clock watcher' at night, hide the clock
- Have a comfortable pre-bedtime routine

**Relationship/Community Time** - Surrounding yourself with those who restore our energy, provide support and who care about us can help buffer toxic stress. When we choose to be with others who drain us or promote stress then this can add to our already existing stress. Some of these relationships are in our control and out of our control. For this section, think about what you have control over. Examples: being around friends who listen and support you, having relationships that challenge your thinking in a positive way, spending time with those who are fun and restorative, being with people who are healthy or help you grow and become a stronger person.

**Environment** - We can think about the environments that help us feel safe and restored. For some, it is predictable routines, others it is unpredictable and to go with the flow. Some like physical objects of beauty around them and some need things in order. Others may lean toward an environment where there is space to get away and then on the opposite are those who are restored when surrounded by friends or family. It may be if you are introverted, you prefer quiet and more reflective environments and more time alone. If you are more extroverted, you may get energy from being social. Some work best in environments that are decluttered, and others prefer the opposite.

**Intellectual Time** - Activities that help grow the mind and knowledge are things such as reading, taking classes, going to school, searching the internet, watching a documentary. This can be called pre-frontal cortex activities where you stimulate your thinking mind and gain new knowledge.

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**Work Time** - Well who needs to explain this one! How much you work and how stressful and restorative it is sometimes falls in or out of your control. However, what choices do you have to minimize the work stressors you may face. Examples: taking vacation days, saying no to tasks if you are able, scanning for strengths, perspective taking, reframing situations, prioritizing, not volunteering unless you have the energy.

**Physical Time/Activity (Exercise, Nutrition and Physical Health)** - How much physical activity one needs is individual, but it is recommended by the CDC to have an average of 150 minutes of mild to moderate exercise per week. Examples: walking, running, the gym, yoga, cross fit, hiking.

**Spiritual/Religious Time -**

Many people find that believing in a higher power or sharing values/beliefs within a religious community or having spiritual beliefs and practices grounds them in something greater than themselves. There are thousands of religions and different practices in the world.

Make a list of all the restorative activities and strategies you use (left column) and new strategies you could begin to add (right column) in each of the nine categories. If you have at least one strategy listed in each area that you can integrate into your life on a monthly basis, you will increase your likelihood of preventing burnout, compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress.

List the restorative activities you use	List strategies you could begin to use	Ideas of how to begin to build a new strategy
Play and Fun		
Self-reflection		



<b>Daydreaming and Mind Wandering</b>		
<b>Sleep and Sleep Hygiene</b>		
<b>Relationships/Community</b>		
<b>Environment</b>		
<b>Intellectual Time</b>		



<b>Work Time</b>		
<b>Physical Activity</b>		
<b>Spiritual/Religious</b>		

**Notes:**

**From our book:** Nicholson, Shimpi Driscoll, Kurtz, Márquez and Wesley (2020) *Culturally Responsive Self-Care for Early Childhood Educators*

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