

Caring for Self and Others

This resource was developed to support Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) with the [Sexual Abuse Prevention Program](#) educational requirement, which may cause discomfort and be challenging for RECEs due to the sensitive content.

Through the Sexual Abuse Prevention Program, the College of Early Childhood Educators (the College) is taking a proactive approach to help prevent child sexual abuse. The program's intent is to empower RECEs through member education that builds on their skills and experience as trustworthy, knowledgeable and caring professionals.

The College understands that it can be difficult to engage with content related to child sexual abuse. The purpose of this resource is to provide RECEs with information about how to prepare and care for themselves, and possibly other RECEs, before and as you engage with the program content. This resource includes ways to find professional help for additional support.

This is a difficult subject for everyone – but it is important.

As a caring professional, you work closely with children and their families. Because of these close relationships you hold a unique position of trust. Standard VI of the [Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice](#) says that RECEs “understand that as a result of their professional knowledge and role, they are in a unique position to recognize possible signs of child abuse, neglect and family violence, and have a particular duty to report their suspicions”. Building on your knowledge and skills related to child protection and the prevention of child sexual abuse helps to reinforce the position of trust you have with children, families, and the learning community.

Although the program is designed with a focus on prevention, engaging with its content can be emotionally, mentally and physically distressing. For some, this content can be particularly difficult due to lived experience related to abuse, including, but not limited to sexual abuse or violence.

The Sexual Abuse Prevention Program content was developed in partnership with the [Canadian Center for Child Protection](#) (C3P), an organization dedicated to reducing sexual abuse and exploitation of children through programs, services, and resources. The content and structure of C3P's training was built to support various learners. C3P also received feedback in consultation with those impacted by child sexual abuse.

For some professionals, this subject is particularly difficult, due to their own experiences.

If you are finding it difficult to engage with the content due to past or recent experiences, you are not alone. Whether a traumatic event(s) happened as a child, youth or adult, all can be devastating. Experiencing a traumatic event(s) can harm a person's body, their sense of safety, affect the way they feel, behave and think ([CAMH, 2021](#)).

People who've experienced traumatic events in their lives can have traumatic memories. Being exposed to certain events, people or information can cause a stored memory to resurface. Triggers are unique to each person, and they can happen unexpectedly making survivors feel any range of emotions: paralyzed, scared, anxious, angry, and unsafe ([SSAIC, 2021](#)). Being able to understand what is happening for you, and learning about why you have certain responses can help you:

- know when you need to rest, stop, or pause
- be compassionate and gentle with yourself
- check in with yourself before you engage or re-engage with the content
- consider doing the program alone or with someone you trust
- recognize when you might need to reach out to a trusted friend, family, or community member
- realize you may also need professional support that is right for you

Taking care of yourself is important and that is particularly true for caring professionals, like RECEs.

At times it can be hard to do the things that are essential to your health and well-being, such as getting adequate sleep, nutrition, and exercise, and maintaining social connections. Taking care of yourself and noticing when you need help is important – *it's not selfish* – especially as a caring professional. Self-care includes activities that are supportive to your physical, social, mental, spiritual and emotional health and well-being. The way in which you care for yourself will be unique to you. Know that *you are worthy of self-care and being cared for*.

Some ways to care for yourself

Before starting the program consider the following strategies below. For example, you may complete the program:

- alone, in groups, or with a trusted person
- in multiple sessions instead of all at once
- without listening to the testimonials in the C3P Commit to Kids modules, which are not required for completion
- with a plan of who you can reach out to in the event you experience distress – a trusted friend or family member, or crisis centre

Check in with yourself regularly. Recognizing how you are feeling isn't something you may do every day or be comfortable doing but being aware of how you are feeling is an important part of self-care.

The reflect on questions below, inspired by the [Trauma-Informed Practice Workbook](#) (Jean Tweed Centre, 2021) may help you recognize how you are feeling and whether you need support from a friend or professional.

- How am I doing?
- What do I need right now?
- What is hardest about this work?
- What worries me the most?
- Am I experiencing trauma - if so, what can I do?
- Who can I talk to about my concerns?
- What can I do to care for myself today and in the days ahead?

Caring for yourself may be too difficult to do alone

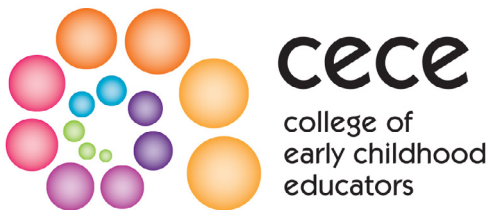
The College will be offering workshops to support RECEs with information on available resources and enhance awareness related to trauma-informed care, trauma responses, processing and dealing with triggers. These workshops will be facilitated in partnership with the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres and Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes.

Below are organizations that can help you if professional support is required.

- **ConnexOntario**
(Province-wide, French & English)
24/7 Distress Line: 1 866 531-2600
www.connexontario.ca
- **Talk 4 Healing**
For Indigenous women, services available in 14 languages
24/7 Distress line: 1 855 554-HEAL (4325)
Toll free: 1 888 200-9997
Thunder Bay: 807-346-HELP (4357)
www.talk4healing.com
- **Fem'aide**
(Province-wide, French) 24/7 Distress Line: 1-877-336-2433
www.femaide.ca
- [Services aux femmes](#), Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes (AOcVF)
- [Find Support – Sexual Assault Centres in Ontario](#), Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, OCRCC
- [Sexual Assault Centres, Crisis Lines, and Support Services](#), Ending Violence Association of Canada
- [Support Services for Male Sexual Abuse Survivors](#), Ministry of the Attorney General

Other resources for information and support

- [Recognizing the Effects of Abuse-Related Trauma](#), Centre for Addition and Mental Health (CAMH)
- [Violence impacting Indigenous people and communities](#), Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC)
- [Survivor's Toolkit](#), Saskatoon Sexual Assault and Information Centre (SSAIC)
- [Toronto Rape Crisis Centre / Multicultural Women Against Rape](#), TRCC/MWAR



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Cette publication est également disponible en français sous le titre : *Prendre soin de soi et des autres*

If you require an accessible format or communications support, please contact us at 1 888 961-8558 / communications@college-ece.ca.

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