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Self-care

Handouts and supplies:

- ⇒ ParentCorps FAQ
- ⇒ ParentCorps outreach flyer/postcard
- ⇒ Paper and colored pencils (for closing activity)

Estimated time:

⇒ 30 minutes

Key:



Read out loud
(purple text)



Facilitator note



Question or prompt for group

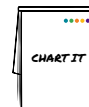


Chart it

Welcome & Introductions

- ➡ Welcome caregivers as they join.
- ➡ Distribute handouts and supplies.



Hi everyone. It is so nice to see all of you! My name is _____, I am _____ (**your role**). Let's start with a quick question.



Start with an opener. Please choose 1:

- *How many of you got an instruction manual when your first child was born?*
- *If you counted the number of times you were given advice about parenting, what number do you think that would be?*
- *What is one piece of parenting advice you've received that has stuck with you to this day?*

Reflect and affirm responses from caregivers.

Thank you all for sharing your thoughts and experiences. Parenting is hard and children don't come with instruction manuals. Also, all advice may not work for every child. ParentCorps' tagline is "Come for the strategies, stay for the community." We chose it because although we offer strategies that could be useful to parents and caregivers, we also focus on building community among pre-K parents and caregivers. We want to make sure you don't feel alone in your parenting journey. In the ParentCorps Parenting Program caregivers come together once a week for 12 weeks and meet with a trained facilitator. During the group, participants support one another, share ideas and talk about issues related to raising children in a nurturing, judgment-free environment.

I am so excited to introduce you all to ParentCorps today. I will be taking you through part of a session to give you a glimpse of what to expect from the program. ParentCorps was developed by researchers in New York City in 1999 to provide a place for connection, learning, community building, reflection, and support for caregivers of pre-K children. Since then, thousands of families have participated and their voices have informed what the program is today. Each session is 90 minutes long and focuses on a different topic. You will see the topics listed on our flyer. ParentCorps values flexibility so it's okay to join the program as often, and for as long as you would like!

👉 Are there any questions?

Wonderful! We'll start with our discussion now.

Today our topic of discussion is self-care.



Self-care has been getting a lot of attention lately and even some important criticism. Finding the money and time for some versions of self-care can feel close to impossible and can add to your stress, defeating its purpose. Raising children is hard, expensive and time consuming, especially when children are young. We'll keep this in mind as we talk about self-care. Additionally I would like us to hold in mind that the most important person in your child's life is you. Caring for yourself is a big part of taking care of your child.

So let's get into it! We start each session of our parenting program sessions with an activity and I will start us off with one now.

Opening Activity



So we mentioned that today we're going to spend time together discussing self-care. Let's play a quick game we call "Would You Rather" and explore some activities that we might find enjoyable or energizing. As parents and caregivers, we're often plowing through our days with very little gas in our own tanks. We'd like to start this conversation by tuning into some of the **things that might "fill your tanks."**

To play this game, I'm going to present you with two options, then repeat each option.



If you are **in person**, say the following:

I will then ask you to move to the side of the room when I give the choice you prefer. So, for example, do you prefer pizza or tacos? How many for pizza? If so, you will go to this side of the room. Who'd rather have tacos? You will go to the other side. That's how the game goes.

 **Everyone okay with this?**

Opening Activity



If you are virtual, say the following:

I will then ask you to type your choice in the chat when I give the choice you prefer. So, for example, do you prefer pizza or tacos? How many for pizza? If so, you will type pizza in the chat. Who'd rather have tacos? If so, you will type tacos in the chat. That's how the game goes. Everyone okay with this?



Okay so...

- Would you rather go for a walk or dance to your favorite song ?
- Would you rather go to bed early or sleep late in the morning?
- Would you rather sleep for an hour or read a book for an hour?
- Would you rather take a long, steamy shower or take a bubble bath?
- Would you rather listen to music or watch a funny show?
- Would you rather have alone time or spend time with friends?



Make connections throughout the game, for example: *“Looks like most of you prefer listening to music over watching a funny show.”*

As you can see from our game, self-care looks different for different people. There is no right or wrong way to practice self-care, and we don't always need the same things all of the time. You might crave one thing one day and another under different circumstances. You've been in front of a computer all day? Maybe you need a walk in the neighborhood to see other actual human beings! You've been with your kids all day? Self-care may just be five minutes in the bathroom, ALONE.

Maybe some of the activities we mentioned in our game don't appeal to you, and/or you might have other ideas.

? Anybody want to share something you do to take care of yourself that we didn't mention?

Something that we often do in our parenting programs is what we refer to as “real talk” – sort of an opportunity for a quick reality check. “Self-care” in general sometimes gets kind of a bad rap from busy, stressed parents and caregivers! How many of you are thinking, “Are these people crazy? I don't have the time or the money for a spa treatment! Or even a half hour of reading alone!”?

Opening Activity



We know that the reality is that sometimes none of the things we mentioned in our game seem doable! But here's something that we want you to keep in mind; the flip side of self-care is simply knowing our capacity for stress, fear, anxiety, sadness. When you keep tabs on where you are physically, mentally and emotionally, you're more likely to try to take moments for yourself to sustain or just preserve your energy. These small efforts to care for ourselves can help you:

- ⇒ **Feel calmer, more centered and self-aware.**
- ⇒ **Be a less resentful, less stressed caregiver.**
- ⇒ **Model for your children how to manage stress and care for themselves.**

Also, sometimes we don't really know what we need at any given moment. As caregivers, we're often so caught up in attending to everybody else's needs that we can't even identify our own!

Here are a few questions you can ask yourself that may help you get in touch with what self-care looks like for you:

- **What brings me joy?**
- **What or who makes me calm?**
- **What or who energizes me? What or who drains my energy?**
- **What do I want to start doing more of?**
- **Is taking on a particular commitment necessary? How would saying "No" feel?**
- **What do I need to feel supported by a friend or partner?**

Now I would like you to think about what a typical day looks like for you. Let's take a moment. Close your eyes if you feel comfortable, and run through your day in your mind. As you do so, see where you can find a few minutes for yourself. It could be as soon as you wake up, after dropping your child off at school or during your commute. Consider taking five to ten minutes to ask yourself one of the questions I just shared, or take a few deep breaths, or maybe take the time to do absolutely nothing at all.

- ❓ **Does anyone have any questions about the things I have shared? Any comments?**

Closing Activity



A couple of thoughts we want to leave you with today:

Long walks, bubble baths and facials are all great ways to practice self-care. Yet, at its core, self-care is about being kind to yourself. This includes giving yourself grace, setting boundaries and speaking to yourself with compassion.

Setting boundaries can be as simple as pausing when someone asks you to do something. You don't always have to say yes right away. When possible, you can ask for a moment to think about it.

Closing Activity

Also think about the things you say to yourself. How you talk to yourself matters! Parenting is often hard work and if you beat yourself up instead of building yourself up, your motivation and energy level will suffer!

One thing we do with kids in our classroom program, Friends School, is have them read a daily affirmation with us to help them remember how awesome they are, even when things get hard. Here's one we use with them:



Read our ParentCorps affirmation poem: "I am"

I am...
I am beautiful!
I am special!
I am strong!
I work hard!
I am kind!
When I fall, I get back up!
When my friends fall, I help them get up!
I am the only me,
and I am perfect just the way I am!

In the spirit of affirmation - because we are all the right parent for our child and we are all doing the best we can - as we wrap up today, we'd like you to write down four or five things that you might include in a daily "I am" affirmation statement.



Provide paper and colored pencils.

 Does anybody want to share their affirmation

Wrap-up:



Thank you for joining me today. ParentCorps will begin_____ (Provide a start date if it has been set or say that we will be there soon.) Please see the handouts for more information about our program and to learn more about supporting your child's transition to pre-K. I hope to see you all again soon!