



Are You Taking Care of Yourself?

By Melodee Simmons, Preschool/Early Childhood Representative

Have you ever asked yourself this question: “Why do I want to work with young children?” Is it a job, a career, or a ministry? If it is a job, you do it for money. If it is a career, you do it for the children. If it is a ministry, you do it for the children and the Lord.

You have the responsibility of helping to make children into the people they are going to be. Children who attend school spend more time during the week with teachers than with their parents. Our job is to provide each child a secure, nurturing, and educational childcare experience that fosters self-discovery, a passion to learn, and positive self-esteem.

Positive learning happens in a secure and nurturing environment. To give the children what they need, you must look after yourself first.

Are you taking care of yourself? Sometimes we get so busy with work, family, friends, and other commitments that we tend to neglect our own needs. We wake up early and go to bed late. We eat on the run—and not always the healthiest foods. We forget how to relax, or we do not take the time to relax. We try to give to everyone else, but we forget about ourselves. We need to take time to be sure we are at our best, so we can give our best to the children we teach.

Take a minute to think about how you are doing in these areas:

Appearance: Do you try to look professional when you arrive at work? When you dress appropriately, you tend to feel different than when you dress too casually. However, you need to dress appropriately

so you can interact with the children while in a chair, on the floor, or in a myriad of circumstances or positions.

Job Performance: Do you take pride in doing the best job possible? When you are doing your best, you get a feeling of satisfaction that gives you motivation to keep going.

Professional Development: Do you take the opportunity to attend training classes whenever possible? Do you discuss ideas or concerns with other teachers? Do you take continuing education courses? It is helpful to network with other people who are doing the same job as yours. It lets you know you are not alone. Sharing ideas with others helps you remain updated and interested in what you are doing.

Self-reflection: Do you schedule time for yourself? Do you get enough sleep, eat right, take a walk, read an enjoyable book, visit with friends, etc.? Your health is important. If you are tired or not feeling well, you cannot give the children your best. Remember the importance of daily personal devotions. This will help you recharge and keep in mind what is important.

Assessment: Do a self-evaluation of your performance. It is always good, but not always easy, to take an honest look at yourself. What are your strengths? Where are your weaknesses? What areas need improvement?

Development of Professional Goals: Develop long-term and short-term goals. (Where do you want to be in your profession in 1 year, in 5 years, in 10 years?) Write down the goals. Then think about what you need to do, step by step, to reach those goals. Occasionally, look at your goals and evaluate how you are progressing. Check off the steps you have completed. As you watch your progress, you can determine what further adjustments you may need to make.

It is important to take care of yourself. You are an important part of the children's lives. They need you at your best to help them to do their best.

"Dear Friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well" (3 John 1:2, NIV).

Melodee Simmons lives in Houston, Texas. She has worked in private and corporate-owned centers in Christian and private preschools. She currently serves at the Giraffe Kids Learning Center and Development Academy. She is a registered trainer for the state of Texas. You may contact Melodee at melodee.simmons@yahoo.com.