

# Supporting Childminder Wellbeing

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Dr Mary O’Kane is a Lecturer in Psychology, Early Childhood Studies and Education. Her research interests include childhood transitions; resilience and self esteem and the value of play. She is a regular contributor on the Anton Savage Show on Newstalk, Ireland AM, and other local and national radio stations discussing a broad range of parenting issues. She gives public talks on a range of topics related to child mental health and wellbeing, parenting and education. Her first book: Perfectly Imperfect Parenting: Connection Not Perfection was published in 2021. It can be purchased on: [www.drmaryokane.ie](http://www.drmaryokane.ie)

## Supporting Childminder Wellbeing:

‘In case of emergency put your own oxygen mask on first before helping others’ This metaphor is often used for self-care in everyday life. But there is a major issue here! If we only consider self care in the case of emergency, we will burn out. We need to reconsider time to care for ourselves now, before physical, mental, and emotional anguish forces us to slow down. Think Jennifer Aniston! You are worth it!

When we are in ‘fight or flight’ mode we shift to survival brain. This makes it harder for us to think, make decisions, and express ourselves. Remember the Rock (amygdala) vs Sheldon Cooper from Big Bang Theory (prefrontal cortex)!	Long, deep controlled breaths calm the body by slowing the heart rate, lowering blood pressure, and improving focus. It stimulates the vagus nerve, which is in charge of turning off the ‘fight, flight, freeze and fawn’ reflex.	The Exhaustion Funnel: The widest point represents a full and balanced life. But when things get busy, we start to let go of things that impact on wellbeing. Without the rest and play in our lives we lose our joy for life.
Q: Have I set boundaries in my working relationships, or is work encroaching on my home life? What impact is stress having on my life, and the lives of my loved ones? Has my ‘busyness’ become a badge of honour? When did you last make time for yourself?	Q: When did you last read a book for pleasure? When did you last play? When did you last really belly laugh? When did you last take time in nature? When did you last dance? When did you last spend time with your thoughts?	Unravelling: List one: a list of things you wanted to achieve today. List two: A list of every task you accomplished in the day. Look at how much you do in a single day. You are pretty amazing! But how much or how little did you do for yourself?
Tip No 1: Identify your stressors. List them, then rank them in order of severity. Focus on your top three stressors: brain storm any ideas on what, or who, might help.	Tip No 2: Start Saying No! Prioritise your mental health. When you are under real stress, practice the art of saying no to things that are not an absolute priority.	Tip No 3: Self Care. Commit to at least one well-being practice daily. This could be walking the dog, a meditation, going to the gym. Jennifer Aniston! You are worth it!
Tip No 4: Attitude of Gratitude: releases dopamine and serotonin, neurotransmitters which enhance our mood. Gratitude can be cultivated, one common practice is to keep a daily gratitude journal.	Tip No 5: Social Media can stop us connecting with the ones we love. Switch off notifications when with family/friends or put phone on silent. Turn off phone at night or keep your phone out of the bedroom. Have screen free time before bed.	Tip No 6: Human connection is a powerful antidote to stress. Make time to connect with someone supportive each day. This could be a phone call with a friend, a chat with a colleague over lunch, coffee with your partner, or a fun activity with your child.