

Keeping In Touch

Staying Connected, Growing Together • Fall 2021



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Welcome

The **Keeping in Touch** (KIT) resource was created to celebrate and support the creativity and dedication of all who participate in the quality education of young children. The resource strives to provide inspiration and knowledge to professionals in the Early Learning and Care Sector through informative articles and resources which promote inclusionary practices, cultural diversity and competence, programming ideas and community information. The KIT committee is comprised of professionals from various agencies within the Toronto Children's Services Every Child Belongs model. We welcome you to share this resource with your colleagues, friends, and family.



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Strengthening Teacher–Child Relationships

JOSIE IANNAACCIO, Resource Consultant

Early childhood professionals strive to create positive learning environments for young children. It is important to learn about the children in the program as this helps to understand children's strengths and needs. Relationships are essential for children's optimal social and emotional development. Respectful, warm, reciprocal, nurturing relationships, teach children how to develop responsive, consistent and nurturing interactions with others in their day-to-day life.

Listed below are strategies to consider when strengthening relationships.

- R Respond** and engage in play opportunities with children—be in the moment
- E Expand** on ideas, thoughts and interactions with children
- L Laugh** with the children
- A Appreciate** moments where children share thoughts, experiences and ideas with teachers and peers
- T Trust**—children learn to trust when there is consistency
- I Interact** with the children daily
- O Observe** closely, take time to learn about one another
- N Nurture**—help children with their growth and development
- S Smile**—use voice tone, body language, and facial expressions to show children you are paying attention
- H Help** children by offering positive feedback, strengthening their growth mindset
- I Information**—share experiences with families
- P Plan** activities with children to reinforce that their thoughts and ideas matter
- S Spend time listening**—tune into what the children are sharing, comment, ask questions and remember those special moments children share with one another

“People will forget the things you do, and people will forget the things you say. But people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Maya Angelou

Adapting in Early Childhood—Part 3 of 3 Adapting Materials

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(Part 1 found in Winter 2021 KIT, Part 2 found in Spring/
Summer 2021 KIT)

In this third part of the series, the process of adapting toys and activities for children will be discussed. This article builds on the work of Campbell, Milbourn and Wilcox's Adapting Hierarchy (2008). This hierarchy lays out a flexible and evolving process to adapting that is built on both an individual child(ren) and the environment (classroom/playground).

This article will examine the **enhancing** and **confining/angling** of materials as a way to make simple adjustments and alterations in structure or function of a toy or activity part/piece that result in a better match of a child's needs to play as independently as possible.

To **enhance** means to extend or enlarge materials to make them easier to hold and/or grab. Enhancing can also boost the sensory properties (colour, texture, sound, smell) of a toy or activity. Materials to extend/enlarge include knobs, dowels, pipe wrap and larger versions of similar toys (mega blocks for Duplo). Materials to enhance sensory properties include textures on handles/buttons, adding scents (cinnamon playdough), and high contrast backgrounds (yellow blocks on red placemats). See the example image of creative materials that have been enlarged (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, 2018)

To **confine and/or angle materials** means to either make provisions to keep pieces and parts nearby and/or raise materials up from flat surfaces to a different angle. Materials to confine include cookie sheets, burner covers, and/or hula-hoops. To change angles, use floor or tabletop easels, recycled binders, or even a wall. See the example image of confining using



Top image: Paintbrush, crayon, and pencil with enlarged handles. Bottom image: Tray and upside down burner cover for containment. Images provided by Holland Bloorview.

a tray and upside-down burner cover (Holland Bloorview, 2008).

The type of adaptation used with a child is meant to be reduced as the child gains the skills needed to use the materials without adaptations. However, it is possible that some children with physical disabilities will always need toy adaptations of some kind.

References

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Image by Alex Green from Pexels

Your Stress and Self-care During COVID-19

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Stress is a normal part of our life. It is necessary for daily activities. However, if under a state of prolonged stress, it can lead to adverse health outcomes. Persistent, unresolved stress, is a precedent to low motivation and increased high blood pressure and weight gain.

Families with children who require extra support are at risk of excess stress. Combining daily responsibilities with caring for a child with a complex diagnosis can be tedious and challenging. It is paramount for families to recognize the need for stress reduction strategies and engage in activities that enhance self-care (Keesler & Troxel, 2020).

Self-care is associated with improved mental and physical health.

What is Self-care?

Self-care is an intentional or planned activity or behaviour that promotes the well-being of an individual. It is described as being kind to oneself through behaviours that promote positive outcomes. Research and studies have shown that people who practice self-care manage stress better than people who do not.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in increased pressure and mental health challenges among families and children alike. Currently, and more than ever, self-care is critical to reducing stress and burnout, so conscious efforts must be made to mitigate stress. Self-care is associated with improved mental and physical health. It boosts immunity and enhances self-worth and self-esteem (Bermejo-Martins et al., 2021).

Article continued to next page...



Photo by Anthony Shkraba from Pexels

Examples of Self-Care

- Treat yourself to a manicure
- Wear your favourite PJs
- Go for a walk
- Exercise
- Enjoy a hot beverage
- Listen to music
- Watch a feel-good TV show or movie
- Incorporate deep breathing throughout your day
- Meditate
- Read a book
- Take a long bath or shower
- Take a nap
- Keep a journal to express your feelings
- Do a random act of kindness

References

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- Keesler, J. M., & Troxel, J. (2020). They Care for Others, but What about Themselves? Understanding Self-Care among DSPs' and Its Relationship to Professional Quality of Life. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 58(3), 221–240

Resources for Stress and Self-care

Canadian Mental Health Association

(<https://ontario.cmha.ca>)

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) - Resources on Stress

(<https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19/coping-with-stress-and-anxiety>)

City of Toronto – COVID-19 Mental Health Resources

(<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/covid-19-wellness-during-the-pandemic/covid-19-mental-health-resources/>)

Crisis Centre Resources on Self-Care

(<https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/coping-and-self-care>)

Government of Canada – Centre of Expertise on Mental Health in the Workplace

(https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/health-wellness-public-servants/mental-health-workplace.html?utm_campaign=not-applicable&utm_medium=vanity-url&utm_source=canada-ca_gcmmentalhealth)

Psychology Today – 10 Signs You Have

Pandemic Fatigue and How to Cope (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/the-squeaky-wheel/202008/10-signs-you-have-pandemic-fatigue-and-how-cope>)

Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

(<https://sunnybrook.ca/content/?page=mental-health-covid-19>)

UHN Patient and Family Learning Centres –

COVID-19 Resources (<https://guides.hsict.library.utoronto.ca/c.php?g=716817&p=5112742>)

Women's College Hospital – Crisis Hotlines/

Information (<https://www.womenshealthmatters.ca/feature-articles/How-to-support-your-mental-health-during-COVID-19>)



Image by Burst from Pexels

Types of Hearing Tests for Children

There are several methods of testing a child's hearing. The method chosen depends in part on the child's age, development, or health status.

Behavioural Tests: involve careful observation of a child's behavioural response to sounds like calibrated speech and pure tones. Pure tones are the distinct pitches (frequencies) of sounds. Sometimes other calibrated signals are used to obtain frequency information.

Physiologic Tests: are not hearing tests but are measures that can partially estimate hearing function. They are used for children who cannot be tested behaviourally due to young age, developmental delay, or other medical conditions.

Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR) Test: an infant is sleeping or sedated for the ABR. Tiny earphones are placed in the

baby's ear canals. Usually, click-type sounds are introduced through the earphones, and electrodes measure the hearing nerve's response to the sounds. A computer averages these responses and displays waveforms. Because there are characteristic waveforms for normal hearing in portions of the speech range, a normal ABR can predict fairly well that a baby's hearing is normal in that part of the range. An abnormal ABR may be due to hearing loss, but it may also be due to some medical problems or measurement difficulties.

Auditory Steady State Response (ASSR) Test: an infant is typically sleeping or sedated for the ASSR. Sound is transmitted through the ear canals, and a computer picks up the brain waves in the hearing section of the brain and establishes what the hearing

capacity is. The ASSR is often done together with the ABR.

Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE)

Test: this test is performed with a sleeping infant or an older child who may be able to sit quietly. In this brief test, a tiny probe is placed in the ear canal. Numerous pulse-type sounds are introduced, and an "echo" response from the inner ear is recorded. These recordings are averaged by a computer. Certain types of recordings are associated with normal inner-ear function.

Tympanometry: this is not a hearing test but a procedure that can show how well the eardrum moves when a soft sound and air pressure are introduced in the ear canal. It's helpful in identifying middle ear problems, such as fluid collecting behind the eardrum. A tympanogram is a graphic representation of tympanometry. A "flat" line on a tympanogram may indicate that the eardrum is not mobile, while a "peaked" pattern often indicates normal function. An ear inspection should be performed with tympanometry.

This article was used with permission from [Connectability.ca](https://connectability.ca/) (<https://connectability.ca/>), and retrieved from [Types of Hearing Tests for Children](https://connectability.ca/2010/09/23/types-of-hearing-tests-for-children) (<https://connectability.ca/2010/09/23/types-of-hearing-tests-for-children>)

[ConnectABILITY.ca](https://connectability.ca/)

Compassion, Kindness and Respect for Differences

NICOLE LIVINGSTONE, Child Care Consultant, Strides Toronto

The world can be a very difficult entity to absorb for adults, but what about our children? Children are our most precious and delicate link to our future. What are they hearing? What are they seeing? And how are they processing, information that isn't always child friendly?

As we continue to live through a global pandemic and are facing worldwide issues, this to some degree or another, continues to affect some communities to their core. From the Black Lives Matter movement: a scream from the black community to be treated equally. Anti-Asian Racism: a plea, to stop being blamed, for the Covid-19 Pandemic. The up-hill challenges of trauma and discrimination being faced by Indigenous people. Islamophobia, Xenophobia, and the ongoing struggle for equality for the LGBTQ2S+ community are also occurring. With all the uncertainty, suffering and divide flowing through our communities, one thing we have in common is our children having to process this overwhelming, and at times disheartening, flood of information.



Photo from Getty Images

As daunting as the above issues are, we should take a moment to remember a few things which can be learned from that link to our future mentioned above: our children. We can at times forget there are many things that we can learn from them. Often, they demonstrate compassion, kindness, and respect for each other's differences without judgment. Their ability to love, forgive and openly accept others, allows them to exist with their peers, regardless of their individualities.

What are the basic definitions of compassion, kindness, and respect for others? Simply put, compassion literally means "to suffer together". It has been defined as the feeling that arises when you are confronted with

another's suffering and feel motivated to help. Kindness is the quality of being warm-hearted, considerate, humane, and sympathetic. Respect for differences doesn't mean ignoring people's differences or simply tolerating them, rather it involves recognizing them, understanding their significance, and responding with interest, politeness, and care.

Imagine if we followed our children's lead and handled differences with acceptance, paired with compassion, kindness and a respect for our individual uniqueness, the potential for inclusivity would be endless. Communities could exist collectively and cohesively, and our children would continue to lead by example.



Peperomia Pink Lady. Photo by Diana Burgess

Health and Well-Being Benefits of Gardening and Plants

DIANA BURGESS, Resource Consultant, Lumenus Community Services

Have you heard of the term, “Pandemic Plant Parent?” When COVID-19 forced lockdowns and stay-at-home orders, some people decided it was finally time to adopt that long awaited family pet, while others opted to find their green thumb by adopting a plant. For many, myself included, the popularity of this “new” stay-at-home trend of collecting houseplants quickly took off to a collection of 25 (and growing, no pun intended).

Having an apartment or house full of plants serves an aesthetic purpose while providing the opportunity to nurture something. Plants can provide a greater sense

of fulfillment and purpose. Most importantly, plants are good for your health.

Plants essentially do the opposite of what we do when we breathe: release oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide. This not only helps to purify the air, but also eliminates harmful toxins. Extensive research by NASA has revealed that houseplants can remove up to 87% of air toxins in 24 hours. Perhaps the most important finding, and one that surprised researchers, was just how and what part of the plant was doing the bulk of the filtering: the roots and soil.

...being around natural environments improves the ability of children to focus...

Studies have also proven that seeing greenery and nature helps us feel more relaxed and calm, improves concentration and productivity and boosts our mood — making plants perfect not just for your home, but your work environment too.

Gardening also became a form of self-care during the pandemic. Plants have a scientifically supported healing effect by gardening a few times a week. This is proven to be associated with higher levels of perceived well-being, lower stress and increased physical activity.

Research has shown that children who spend time around plants have more cognitive capacity to learn. In addition, being around natural environments improves the ability of children to focus, concentrate, and engage more with their surrounding environment. Having children take part in a gardening or plant project, watching a seed they planted pop through the soil and grow into a plant that they continue to nurture with water and light is such a valuable life lesson.



Top: Philodendron Prince of Orange uncurling leaf. Middle: Hoya Australis Lisa. Bottom: Red Roses. Photos by Diana Burgess



Child gardening. Photo by Markus Spiske from Unsplash.

Benefits of gardening with children:

- They will have a better connection with nature and the earth
- They learn about the care involved in the planning process
- They develop patience as they wait for the seeds to grow
- They gain responsibility as they nurture and take care of the plants
- They learn about the growth process
- They may enjoy the benefits of gardening (e.g. eating and cooking with vegetables they have grown)

For additional benefits of gardening with children and ideas for creative theme gardens, please visit the website **Dig This: 10 Big Benefits of Gardening with Kids** (<https://bcparent.ca/activities/10-benefits-of-gardening-with-kids/>)

Health and Well-Being continued to next page...



Photo by Ketut Subiyanto from Pexels

Horticultural Therapy

Gardening is also very effective in providing therapy to those with extra support needs. Horticultural therapy involves the use of gardens and plants to help with physical and emotional healing. Benefits include: improved motor skills, enhanced creativity, increased social skills and improved self-confidence. Gardening reduces stress and helps children cope with anxiety and frustration.

Horticultural therapy can be implemented year-round. In the winter, individuals can work on garden related crafts such as birdhouses, painting flowerpots, planting terrariums or even make a garden using photographs when an outdoor garden isn't accessible. However, working outside in the soil and caring for plants is a key ingredient of Horticultural therapy.

To learn more about Horticultural Therapeutic Benefits please visit the website **[Gardening Know How](https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/special/accessible/healing-gardens-for-therapy.htm)**. (<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/special/accessible/healing-gardens-for-therapy.htm>)

Other Ideas to Grow With...

Flowers Generate Happiness. Having flowers around the home and office greatly improves people's moods and reduces the likelihood of stress-related depression. Flowers and ornamental plants increase levels of positive energy and help people feel secure and relaxed.

Therapeutic Effects of Gardening. Gardening can act as therapy for people who have undergone trauma. The act of nurturing something is a way for people to work through the issues surrounding traumatic events and improve their mental health.

Reduce Stress. Studies show that people who spend time cultivating plants have less stress in their lives. Plants soothe human beings and provide a positive way for people to channel their stress into nurturing.

Mental Health. Studies have proven that people who spend more time outside in nature have better mental health and a more positive outlook on life.

Concentration and Memory. Being around plants helps people concentrate better in the home and workplace. Studies show that tasks performed while under the calming influence of nature are performed better and with greater accuracy, yielding a higher quality result. Moreover, being outside in a natural environment can improve memory performance and attention span by 20%.

Improved Human Performance and Energy. Spending time in natural environments makes people better at doing their jobs. It also increases energy levels and feelings of vitality.

Improves Relationships and Compassion. Research shows that people who spend extended lengths of time around plants tend to have better relationships with others. This is due to measurable increases in feelings of compassion, another effect of exposure to ornamental plants.

Health and Well-Being continued to next page...



Photo from Nancy Rubin

Accelerates the Healing Process. The presence of plants in hospital recovery rooms and/or views of aesthetically pleasing gardens help patients to heal faster, due to the soothing effects of ornamental horticulture.

Educational Programs and Special Events. Parks and botanical gardens often play host to educational programs and special events, which contribute to the cultural awareness and education of the community (children especially). This raises environmental consciousness and appreciation.

Self-Care Tips

When you think about it, we share some of the same requirements to thrive that plants do. Here are some self-care tips that work for plants and humans alike:

- Stay hydrated
- Get lots of fresh air and sunlight
- Make sure you are getting the proper nutrients
- Talk nicely about, and to, yourself
- Know that it's possible to perk up after you wilt
- Give yourself the right conditions to thrive
- Cut off “dead weight” that’s bringing you down
- Tidy up your environment
- Allow yourself to have “seasons”
- If something isn’t working, troubleshoot

References

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- Em, M. (2021 October). **Control to Our Brains During Chaos.** Greatest. <https://greatist.com/grow/plants-mental-health>
- Michigan State University Extension. (2021 October). **Gardening with special needs: The benefits of horticultural therapy.** Michigan State University. https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/gardening_with_special_needs_the_benefits_of_horticultural_therapy
- Cooper, S. (2021 October). **How to Plant Seeds for an Easy Kids Gardening Activity.** Teaching 2 and 3 Year Olds. <https://teaching2and3yearolds.com/easy-kids-gardening-activity/>
- Nasa. (2021 October). **NASA Plant Research Offers a Breath of Fresh Air.** https://spinoff.nasa.gov/Spinoff2019/cg_7.html

“To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves.”

Mahatma Gandhi

Classroom Gardening Resources – Help to Get Started

Non-Toxic House Plants for Homes, Children, Cats and Dogs

<https://dengarden.com/gardening/Non-Toxic-House-Plants-For-Homes-Children-Cats-and-Dogs>

Plants That are Safe for Children

<https://www.kidsdogardening.com/plants-that-are-safe-for-children>

Indoor Classroom Ideas

<https://minigardenguide.com/indoor-classroom-garden-ideas>

Early Learning Gardening Guide

<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/sites/default/files/PDFS/early-learning-gardening-guide.pdf>

Little Green Thumbs

<https://www.littlegreenthumbs.org>

Create a Sustainable Program Connecting the Garden to the Classroom

<https://kidsgardening.org/create-sustain-a-program-connecting-the-garden-to-the-classroom-2>

Classroom Gardening Ideas

<https://www.weareteachers.com/classroom-gardening-ideas>

A Guide to School Gardens

<https://www.durham.ca/en/health-and-wellness/resources/Documents/SchoolHealth/SchoolGardenGuide.pdf>

School Tower Gardens

<https://www.towergarden.ca/school-gardens>

Benefits to Gardening for Preschoolers and Toddlers

<https://www.montessorinature.com/importance-benefits-gardening-children-toddlers-preschoolers>

Places to Visit Gardens in the GTA

Toronto Botanical Garden Admission is **FREE**

777 Lawrence Ave. East, Toronto, ON

Edwards Gardens (Next to Toronto Botanical Gardens)

Admission is **FREE**

Allan Gardens Conservatory

19 Horticultural Ave, Toronto, ON

Centennial Park Conservatory

151 Elmcrest Rd., Etobicoke, ON

Humber Arboretum Admission is **FREE**

205 Humber College Blvd., Toronto, ON

Toronto Music Garden

475 Queens Quay W., Toronto ON

Places to Visit Gardens Outside of the GTA

Chinguacousy Park – Brampton

9050 Bramalea Rd., Brampton, ON

Heart Lake Conservation Area (Medicine garden)

10818 Heart Lake Rd. Brampton, ON

Royal Botanical Gardens Fees apply

680 Plains Rd. West, on the border of Burlington and Hamilton

Niagara Falls Butterfly Conservatory Fees apply

2565 Niagara Parkway, Niagara Falls, ON

Cambridge Butterfly Conservatory Fees apply

2500 Kossuth Rd., Cambridge, ON

Brueckner Rhododendron Gardens

660 Lakeshore Rd. West, Mississauga, ON - within walking distance is a beautiful park with tree sculptures

Lochland Botanicals

2468 25 Side Road Milton, ON

The Oshawa Valley Botanical Gardens

155 Arena St., Oshawa, ON

Resources compiled by Brenda Wilson, Resource Consultant, Terry Tan Child Centre



Photo by Vanessa Kintaudi from unsplash

Self-Compassion

BRENDALEE SIMAS, Child Care Consultant, Child Development Institute

What is Self-Compassion?

“Self-compassion is a practice of goodwill, not good feelings... With self-compassion, we mindfully accept that the moment is painful and embrace ourselves with kindness and care in response, remembering that imperfection is part of the shared human experience (Neff, 2019).” Self-Compassion is mindfulness which involves recognizing when we’re stressed or struggling, without being judgmental or over-reacting. It is self-kindness; being supportive and understanding towards ourselves when we’re having a hard time, rather than being harshly self-critical. It is also connectedness; remembering that everyone makes mistakes and experiences difficulties at times. Everyone has something about themselves that they don’t like; something that causes them to feel shame, to feel insecure, or not good enough. We are not alone!

Why Practice Self-Compassion?

Self-compassion practice on a daily basis builds a sense of safety and resiliency within ourselves.

Research shows that people who are more self-compassionate are happier, less stressed and more resilient. Practicing self-compassion leads to more happiness, optimism, gratitude and better relationships with others. It is a powerful antidote to the self-criticism and perfectionistic thinking that can lead to stress, anxiety and depression. Self-compassionate people bounce back more easily from setbacks and are more likely to learn from their mistakes. Self-compassion is self-protection.

Self-Compassion Exercises



Figure 1. Mental Health with Self-Touch

Supportive Touch

Comfort yourself when you’re feeling badly by giving yourself supportive touch. This activates the care system and parasympathetic nervous system to help us calm down and feel safe. Your body will respond to the physical gesture of warmth and care, just as a baby responds to being cuddled. Physical touch releases oxytocin which provides a sense of security, soothes distressing emotions, and calms cardiovascular stress. For more information on this exercise, please go to **Mind Beacon**. (www.mindbeacon.com)

Article continued to next page...

Self-Compassion is mindfulness which involves recognizing when we’re stressed or struggling...

Self-compassion continued...



Figure 2. Mind Full or Mindful?



Figure 3. How to be Kinder to Yourself

Having compassion for oneself is really no different than having compassion for others.

Mindfulness

Practicing mindfulness can help us to “develop our capacity to stay present with difficult feelings in a warm and inclusive way... (Paul Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion*, p. 203).” By implementing mindfulness practices, you give yourself the compassion you deserve and need. Take moments to breathe slowly and deeply when feeling overwhelmed. Be present, stay in the moment and give yourself time to pause and think before responding to difficult questions or reacting to a tricky situation. Remember to use positive affirmations throughout the day, especially when you feel emotionally drained.

Self-Kindness

Write yourself some kind words of understanding and comfort. Let yourself know that you care about yourself. For example, “I understand how frustrated I am and I just raised my voice. Maybe I can try being extra patient with the children next week.” This can be taken a step further by writing yourself a letter from the perspective of an unconditionally loving imaginary friend. This imaginary friend is accepting, kind and compassionate and can see all of your strengths and weaknesses, while still being kind and forgiving towards you. For more information on this exercise, please go to **Mind Beacon**. (www.mindbeacon.com)

Having compassion for oneself is really no different than having compassion for others. It means that you offer understanding and kindness to others when they fail or make mistakes, rather than judging them harshly. Self-compassion involves acting the same way towards yourself when you are having a difficult time, fail, or notice something that you don’t like about yourself. If you don’t make the time to take care of yourself now, sooner or later, you will have to make time for illness.

Resources

Figure 1. Otis, R. (2020) **Mental Health with Self-Touch** (Photograph) Healthline (<https://www.healthline.com/health/supportive-self-touch>)

Figure 2. Buyukbay, S.E. (2017) **Mind Full or Mindful?** (Clip Art) Mind The Positive (<https://mindthepositive.com/how-are-you-mind-full-or-mindful-what-if-you-can-choose/>)

Figure 3. Ross, K. (2020) **How to Be Kinder to Yourself** (Clip Art) Mindful (<https://www.mindful.org/how-to-be-kinder-to-yourself/>)

Mindfulness Exercises (<https://mindfulnessexercises.com/free-self-compassion-exercises/>)

PositivePsychology.com (<https://positivepsychology.com/self-compassion-exercises-worksheets/>)

The School of Life. (2016, February 1). **Self Compassion** [Video]. YouTube. (<https://youtu.be/-kfUE41-JFw>)

Silky Roasted Butternut Squash Soup with Apples and Sage

LARISSA KOSTEVSKII, CWT Training Coordinator ,
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Have you noticed how rapidly our seasons change? A few weeks ago, the trees were wearing colourful dresses, and now, winter is just around the corner. With colder weather upon us, we tend to crave comfort food. I cannot imagine winter days without warm, savoury and creamy soups. Every member of my immediate and extended family, including children from age 1 to 27, adore this Butternut Squash Soup. I found this recipe in the “Yum and Yummer” book, written by Greta Podleski and invite you to give it a try in your kitchen.

Ingredients

(makes about 7 cups of soup):

- 1 large or 2 small butternut squash, about 3 lbs total
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 1/2 cups chopped sweet onions
- 1 large, sweet apple, peeled and coarsely chopped (a large, ripe pear would work too)
- 1 tbsp minced fresh sage
- 1/4 tsp each ground cinnamon and ground ginger
- 1/2 tsp each sea salt and black pepper
- 4 cups reduced-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 cup cooked navy beans or white kidney beans
- 1/3 cup half-and half (10%) cream (optional but really nice).

References

Podleski, G. (2017). Yum and Yummer: Ridiculously tasty recipes that'll blow your mind, but not your diet!
Silky Roasted Butternut Squash Soup, 76-77.



Photo from Adobe Stock Images

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 425C. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil or parchment paper and set aside. Carefully slice the squash in half lengthwise. Scoop out and discard the seeds.
2. Brush the cut sides of the squash with olive oil. Place squash cut-side up on prepared baking sheet. Roast for 45 minutes, or until squash is tender and lightly browned and slightly caramelized. Remove from oven and let squash cool for a bit.
3. Melt butter in a large soup pot over medium heat. Add onions and apples. Cook slowly, stirring often, until onions and apples are softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in sage, cinnamon and ginger. Mix well. Add broth, beans, salt and pepper.
4. Scoop out the flesh from the roasted squash and add it to the pot. Bring soup to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, for 15 minutes. Using an immersion blender, puree soup until perfectly smooth. Stir in cream if using. Bon appetite!

Hydro Bright Lights Child Care Centre in Etobicoke

Thank you to Hydro Bright Lights for sharing pictures of their children planting a garden in the playground. These green beans, strawberries, tomatoes, red peppers, basil, and mint were served in the program for snacks and lunches. Raised gardening beds provides accessibility for children and adults who use adapted equipment. If you would like more information about the process and benefits of gardening with children, reach out to the centre directly.

Hydro Bright Lights

<https://www.facebook.com/childcarehydrobrightlights>
(416) 207-6856



Gardening with children in our program.
Photos from Hydro Bright Lights Child Care Centre

Professional Learning and Links

City Wide Training Calendar

(www.citywidetraining.ca)

College of Early Childhood Education (CECE)

(<https://www.college-ece.ca>)

Connectability

Information and tools supporting inclusion

(www.connectability.ca)

Early Abilities

Speech and Language, Vision, Hearing

(<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/children-parenting/pregnancy-and-parenting/parenting/speech-language-vision-hearing/>)

The Hospital for Sick Children

(www.aboutkidshealth.ca)

The Garry Hurvitz Centre for Community

Mental Health (<https://sickkidscmh.ca/>)

How Does Learning Happen?

(<https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-does-learning-happen-ontarios-pedagogy-early-years>)

Toronto Public Health

(<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/children-parenting/pregnancy-and-parenting/parenting/healthy-child-development/>)



Photo from Getty Images

KIT Resource Committee Partners

Child Development Institute

Brendalee Simas, Child Care Consultant

(<https://www.childdevelop.ca>)

George Brown College

Jennifer Cloke-Campbell, Resource Consultant

(<https://www.georgebrown.ca/>)

Humber College

Josie Iannaccio, Resource Consultant and Larissa

Kostevskii, CWT Training Coordinator

(<https://humber.ca/>)

Lumenus Community Services

Amanda Boyd, Behaviour Consultant, Diana Burgess and Sheri Robb, Resource Consultants

(<https://lumenus.ca/>)

Strides Toronto

Nicole Livingstone, Child Care Consultant

(<https://strides-toronto.ca/>)

Terry Tan Child Centre

Brenda Wilson, Resource Consultant

(<https://www.terrytan.ca/>)

WoodGreen Community Services

Janet Scott, Resource Consultant

(<https://www.woodgreen.org/>)

“No act of kindness,
no matter how small,
is ever wasted.”

Aesop