Handouts for participants
Module 7: Carer support, advocacy and self care

Handout 1

FATIGUE:

Fatigue is described as the experience of physical and mental tiredness or exhaustion that can be triggered by stress, medication, overwork, or mental and physical illness or disease. Fatigue is different to general feelings of tiredness that we all experience from time to time. Physically, fatigue may be experienced as an intense lack of energy, feelings of muscle weakness, and slowed movements or central nervous system reactions. Fatigue can also trigger feelings of mental "fuzziness", difficulty thinking, concentrating and making decisions. When experiencing fatigue our body is signaling to us that something is wrong physically or emotionally (The Free Dictionary, 2014; Harvard Health Publications, 2011).

How will I know if I am experiencing fatigue?

Conduct a body scan looking for: signs of tiredness, exhaustion, lack of energy

Check in with yourself: Am I having difficulty with sleeping, eating, engaging in daily tasks, social or leisure activities or do not feel like talking.

Ask a support person if they have noticed you appearing more tired than usual.

What should I do if I am experiencing fatigue?

Seek medical assistance

Ensure that safe care continues for children in my care

Reach out to my supports

Seek to balance sleep, diet, exercise, relaxation, social or leisure activities, work/life balance and reduce stress
Handout 2

Potential Support Networks

Formal and Informal

- Emotional support
- Physical and practical support
  - Financial support
  - Professional development
- Task focused, problem-solving support
  - Respite care
- Community support
- Social support
### Handout 3

#### How Do You Feel Today?  
(please indicate which faces apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggressive</th>
<th>Anxious</th>
<th>Apologetic</th>
<th>Arrogant</th>
<th>Bashful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blissful</td>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>Cautious</td>
<td>Cold</td>
<td>Confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curious</td>
<td>Determined</td>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td>Disbelieving</td>
<td>Enraged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envious</td>
<td>Exhausted</td>
<td>Frightened</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>Guilty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Horrified</td>
<td>Hot</td>
<td>Hungover</td>
<td>Hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hysterical</td>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>Jealous</td>
<td>Lonely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovestruck</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Regretful</td>
<td>Relieved</td>
<td>Sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Surprised</td>
<td>Suspicious</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Other ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Handout 4

Self Awareness  Body Scan Activity – what am I feeling now?

My Early Warning Signs of Stress or Fatigue:
(examples: yawning, forgetting things, feeling impatient)

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__________________________________________________ ____________________________________
__________________________________________________ ____________________________________
__________________________________________________ ____________________________________

When I am really stressed or fatigued I experience:

Emotional:
(examples: crying, withdrawn, yelling at the kids)

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__________________________________________________ ____________________________________
__________________________________________________ ____________________________________
__________________________________________________ ____________________________________

Physical
(examples: sore back, headaches, dry eyes)

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__________________________________________________ ____________________________________
__________________________________________________ ____________________________________
__________________________________________________ ____________________________________
**Handout 5**

**Understanding Emotions**

Emotional feelings are signals from the subconscious to the conscious mind about a person’s life. They may be expressed in behaviour or consciously understood as an internal message regarding one’s life.

Generally happiness tells us that our expectations and experiences are matching each other. Unhappiness tells us that our expectations are different to our experiences. The degree of difference is equal to the degree of unhappiness.

Other understandings of emotional feelings:

- **Hurt:** What I was expecting of someone is different to my experience of them.
  
  **Solution:** 1. Check expectations 2. Check experiences 3. Try to bring them closer

- **Disappointment:** What I expected of a situation is different to what happened.
  
  **Solution:** 1. Check expectations 2. Check experiences 3. Try to bring them closer

- **Frustration:** The path I want to be on is blocked.
  
  **Solution:** How can I use my energy in another way to get on with life?

- **Fear:** Tells me that there are unknowns in my life.
  
  **Solution:** I convert unknowns to knowns by gathering information

- **Anger:** Is a secondary emotion – generates a lot of energy. Behind anger is a primary emotion – mostly hurt, disappointment, frustration or fear, sometimes sadness or guilt
  
  **Solution:** Look at primary emotions and resolve them

- **Sadness:** Tells me that an era has come to an end. The end of an era is the beginning of the next.
  
  **Solution:** Value what I learnt from my experience of this era – wisdom

- **Guilt:** Tells me that I am not following the way to which I was conditioned.
  
  Solution: I need to consciously choose whether I will return to the old way or do a combination of both.

- **Depression:** Tells me I am holding back my energy because I am not sure what to do with it.
  
  **Solution:** Notice the use of even a small amount of energy and how this helps to get on with life.

If we only follow emotions, then they control our life. If we make sense of emotions, we consciously choose what to do with our energy. When we lose our energy we can easily become fatigued.
Handout 6

Signs of stress

**PHYSICAL**

- Heart pounding
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Stomach distress
- Dizziness
- Lingering cold
- High blood pressure
- Dry mouth
- Fatigue
- Weakness

- Fidgeting
- Sweating
- Anorexia
- Back pain
- Headaches
- Insomnia
- Muscle tension
- Shortness of breath
- Generalized aches and pains

**PSYCHOLOGICAL**

- Depressed
- Bored
- Urge to cry
- Urge to hide
- Suspicions
- Negative attitude/thoughts
- Loneliness
- Lethargy

- Nightmares
- Helplessness
- Irritable
- Feelings of unreality
- Urge to run
- Worry
- Unable to concentrate
- Nervous

**BEHAVIORAL**

- Cigarette smoking
- Use of medications
- Impulsive behaviour
- Inappropriate crying
- Aggressive
- Overeating
- Initiative
- Isolation
- Using people
- Drug abuse
- Alcohol abuse
- Cynical
- Fault finding

- Antisocial
- Under eating
- Quickly angered
- Lower sex drive
- Accident prone
- Blaming
- Nervous laughing
- Overly argumentative
- Reclusive
- Decline in work effectiveness
- Inflexible
- Nagging
Handout 7

Stress Management Strategies

- Nutrition
- Alcohol and drug control
- Regular exercise
- Relaxation
- Support systems
- Hobbies
- Effective communication
- Sense of humour
- Cognitive restructuring
- Self-esteem
- Realistic goals
- Selecting priorities
Handout 8

Self talk

What do you usually tell yourself when you……

1. Think about having your hair cut differently

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_________________________________________________ _____________________________________
_________________________________________________ _____________________________________

2. Are given a lotto ticket

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_________________________________________________ _____________________________________
_________________________________________________ _____________________________________

3. Try on some new clothes

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4. Forget to attend an appointment or meeting

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_________________________________________________ _____________________________________
_________________________________________________ _____________________________________

5. Think about asking for help from your support network

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_________________________________________________ _____________________________________
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6. Are told that the Manager is looking for you

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_________________________________________________ _____________________________________

7. Are asked to do a 5 minute presentation to a group of 40 people

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_________________________________________________ _____________________________________
_________________________________________________ _____________________________________

8. Are invited to a school reunion

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_________________________________________________ _____________________________________
_________________________________________________ _____________________________________
Handout 9

Problem solving

When problems come up in your life, recognise them then ask “what would it look like without the problem?”. Tell yourself how you want it to be. If the problem is significant you may wish to go through the following process of clarification:

• Write down exactly what you believe the main problem to be

• Write down all possible solutions, even the bad or outrageous ones

• Think about each solution in practical terms

• Choose the most practical solution

• Plan how you will carry that solution out

• DO IT!
Handout 10

Personal Reflections

What supports my feelings of worth as a foster carer?

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__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What supports my feelings of worth generally in life?

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__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What are my attitudes, values and beliefs towards asking for support?

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__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

How does my body signal it is feeling fatigued or stressed?

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__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

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What are my barriers to seeking support if I am feeling fatigued or stressed?

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Additional Handouts

- The FAST brochure;
- The FCQ brochure;
- Information on Administrative Release and FOI;
- The summary page on the complaints process from the Office of the Public Guardian;
- Information on lodging an appeal from the Children Services Tribunal;
- Information on the Ombudsman; and
- Information on Judicial Review.