



Keeping Current through Lifelong Learning

A diploma or certificate is an important step on a journey of lifelong learning. But as knowledge constantly changes and develops, how do you stay informed? Regular time set aside for personal and professional growth provides you with a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment, keeps you challenged and energized and gives you the motivation to continue. Feel free to expand on the following suggestions as you develop your own personalized strategies for keeping current.

Six Ways to Keep Yourself Growing

1. Stay informed

- Stay abreast of current research – for example, *Research Connections Canada* (CCCF) volumes contain current Canadian research relevant to child care. Check out the Child Care Resource and Research Unit at www.childcarecanada.org on the Internet.
- Build a library of reference materials on early child development.
- Subscribe to magazines and journals such as *Interaction* (CCCF) and *Young Children* (National Association for the Education of Young Children), and to provincial newsletters and bulletins.
- Compile a list of agencies where you can access documents and videos in your community.
- Find out about and attend upcoming conferences. Take workshops on a variety of topics.
- Register for evening courses offered at a local college or via distance education.

2. Join forces

You Bet I Care! consistently found that when care providers are part of a professional child care organization, the quality of child care measurably improves.

- Join a child care organization in your province/territory. Members of provincial/territorial affiliate organizations automatically become members of the Canadian Child Care Federation.
- Join an international organization. Learn how others do things in your work setting, in your community and in your travels.

3. Get wired

- Access to a computer and computer literacy opens many doors. Even if you don't own a computer yourself, you can access one through a friend, colleague, community centre or public library. Set up a free email account.
- Learn how to search the Internet. Bookmark websites of interest. *Child & Family Canada*, www.cfc-efc.ca, is dedicated to the health and well-being of children and families. Share interesting sites you discover with colleagues.
- Join a Listserv that is dedicated to improving the quality of child care and/or is moderated. Be selective in your choice to ensure that dialogue on the list you join is child-centred and professional.

4. Challenge yourself

- Train to become a mentor to new colleagues entering the field. Connect with your provincial/territorial child care organization for contact information.
- Supervise students.
- Volunteer in your community.
- Start a discussion group in your workplace.

5. Know yourself

- Keep a journal. Seek out a mentor. Be open to feedback from colleagues, parents, supervisors.
- Be an active participant in your performance appraisal.



- The Guide to Self-Reflection in *Partners in Quality, Tools for Practitioners in Child Care Settings* (CCCF, 2000) can help you begin to assess your strengths and weaknesses.

6. Care for yourself

- Regularly participate in physical activity — try dancing, yoga, aerobics, swimming, walking etc.
- Nurture your mind, body and spirit — join a choir, take art classes, join a book club, go on regular walks with a friend. Laugh! Have fun!
- Remember that to give your best, you need to be healthy and have a positive outlook on life.