

# My personal energy cup

Working with young children is wonderful, yet exhausting. Positive interactions, skillful group management, engaging STEM investigations all take energy. In order for staff and volunteers to manage groups of energetic, creative youth, they need ample stores of physical, mental, emotional and creative energy. Author Amy Dombro and her colleagues picture personal energy as coffee in a cup. After a good night's sleep, a cup is two-thirds full. Add a healthy breakfast and favorite song, and it's filled another quarter of the way. A hug from your spouse or a smile from a co-worker brings it full to the brim. A step in a puddle or traffic jam decreases the supply. One staff person remarked, "I know my cup is down to one ounce when tying a child's shoe for the third time feels like a major project." On any day some people and situations energize and others deplete energy. (Dombro, Jablon, and Stetson 2011)

Paying attention to your personal energy level is crucial to long-term survival in the out-of-school time world. Too often in emotionally intense professions, staff burn out because the personal energy cup is not well tended. In the natural ebb and flow of a day's work, staff encounter children and adults who will require their energy. As the level gets low, staff need to notice, pause, and seek ways to re-energize. This fill-up can come from many different sources. People differ in how they restore or rejuvenate.

Take ten minutes to think about your personal energy cup. In each category, list four to six sources of energy—the restoring, energizing, "fill-me-up" things in your life. When your personal energy cup is low, it is important to seek out these energizers.



**People who energize me**

**Activities that energize me**

**Places that energize me**

**Songs that energize me**

**Smells, tastes, textures that energize me**

**Reference:** Dombro, Amy, Judy Jablon, and Charlotte Stetson. 2011. *Powerful Interactions: How to Connect with Children to Extend Their Learning*. NAEYC.

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