

# Gauteng Community of Practice

Learning Brief

March 2022

## Prioritising Our Mental Health

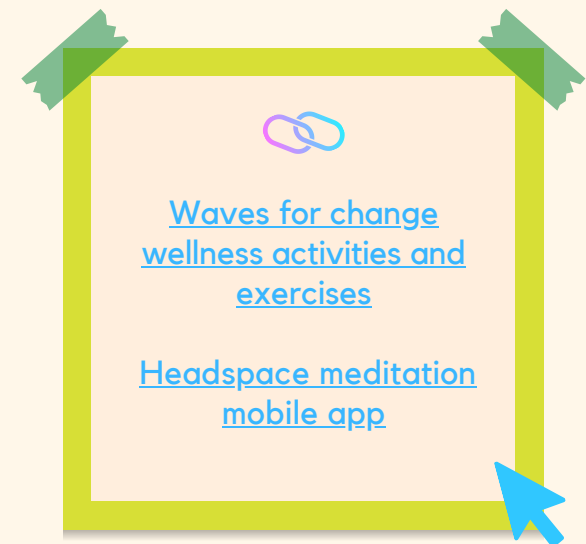
The opportunity for practitioners to reflect and express their feelings is a rare one. In March, the first Gauteng Community of Practice (CoP) explored practical ways in which After School practitioners can take care of their mental and emotional well-being. We shared key lessons on prioritising self-care practices in the work that we do.

### Key self-care activities for After School practitioners

#### Practice meditation and breathing exercises

This exercise involves finding a quiet space in the morning to breathe and centre yourself. There are various YouTube resources and mobile apps that can be used as a guide to effective meditation and breathing exercises.

It is important that it is done in a still environment where one has time to themselves. Taking a minimum of 5 minutes a day to do conscious breathing exercises helps to disengage on stressful thoughts, improves the functioning of the central nervous systems and gives you an opportunity to escape negative thoughts.



#### Explore and acknowledge where you are emotionally

We work with children from different environments facing diverse challenges. Often, our role is to support and guide our learners through their feelings and experiences. For us to do so effectively, we need to be in touch with where we are emotionally. As we constantly show up compassionately for our learners, it is important to be mindful of our triggers as well. We must be at an emotional place where we are able to do this.

Taking time to reflect on personal emotions is key in identifying the cause and finding ways to navigate spaces without being easily triggered.



#### Hold space

This involves being present in the spaces that you occupy, for yourself and for those around you. Holding space for ourselves looks different for all of us - from taking time to sit in the sun on a frustrating workday to taking time to do something that makes you happy. Holding space for others on the other hand has some common factors, namely listening attentively without interrupting, judgement, or the need to solve the other persons problem. Listening is enough.



#### Learn to let go

We often obsess with areas of work that we struggle with or cannot seem to do well enough. It is important that as practitioners we are realistic about what we can do and what we are not so good at or don't have time to do. We can gain awareness of this through our own reflective practice as well as from seeking constructive feedback from those around us. We can then give our best to the things we enjoy and do well, while learning to let go or ask for support in the areas where we are struggling.

Take a short breath, go for a walk, find time for yourself as a practitioner. Then, connect with other practitioners, draw on your support network, and ask for help. We need take care of ourselves, so we can take care of others.



### ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next Gauteng CoP will take place in **July 2022**. This would be an in-person session. More details to follow.

TLT will also host an in-person **4-day basics training for practitioners** in the sector. This will take place in **June 2022**. Please be on the look out for invitations.