

Reflection, Regulation, & Relaxation The 3Rs of Self-Care in Managing COVID-19 Related Stress

The current public health crisis is causing significant levels of stress for many people. Loss of income, uncertainty, social isolation, limited access to medical care, grief from a broad range of losses, and many other stressors combined with fears related to the virus itself are causing toxic levels of stress.

Acknowledging and addressing the impact of overwhelming stress is necessary for maintaining our own and our family's health and wellbeing.

One framework for thinking about how to do this is the 3Rs:

Reflection is the most important of the three Rs. It is about:

- **Noticing** your reactions and patterns, which allows you to plan for how to engage in intentional self-regulation and self-care
- **Reflecting** on what you and the people around you are doing, and systems you are working with, your relationships with them, and what support you might need is a vital part of reducing the impact of stress
- **Planning** for how you can healthily cope with the impact of toxic stress

Regulation is about how you choose to respond in the moment when you start to experience a stress response. It is about:

- **Remembering** that the people around you are also experiencing intense levels of stress. They may have strong emotional reactions, and those strong emotions are contagious
- **Knowing** what your own trigger points are and what upsets you
- **Practicing catching and releasing** your own defensive reactions and having compassion for any self-protective tendencies
- Most of all, **noticing** when you are reacting,
 - **Stopping** to take time to calm yourself when you do get angry or hurt,
 - **Asking for help**
 - **Debriefing** when necessary

Relaxation is about keeping yourself strong and balanced. It is about:

- **Finding the balance** in your life
- **Making time** for yourself to **relax** and “**play**” (whatever that means for you)
- Maintaining and developing your **social support system** and your **sense of humor**
- Being **gentle, patient, and realistic** with yourself

The 3Rs of self-care is adapted from the State of Victoria Child Safety Commissioner (2007)