

THE IMPORTANCE OF SAFETY, PREDICTABILITY, AND CONTROL IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY AND CRISES

Life continues to be unpredictable and challenging as we face the ongoing impact of COVID variants and other stressors. Daily activities like kids attending school, working on-site and even socializing can seem like big decisions. Of course, the main goal for ourselves, friends, and families is to feel as safe as possible in our lives. We know that differing views on vaccines and treatment can create tension within families and even at work. It's no surprise that people are feeling overwhelmed during these difficult times.

However, hope is **not** lost. We can best cope in the face of ongoing stress by identifying where we have control in our lives and to remember that we may be vulnerable, but we are not powerless.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has been referred to as a potentially traumatic experience. Trauma is an overwhelming physiological response in which a person experiences a loss of control, vulnerability, and immobilization. Knowing this, experts have learned one of the best ways to manage trauma is trying to restore a sense of **safety, predictability, and control (SPC)**.



SAFETY

- Reduce sources of toxic stress when possible
- Avoid situations or people that trigger unpleasant or harmful memories
- Increase a sense of internal and emotional safety through self-care
- Maintain and foster positive, nurturing, relational, and social connections
- Remember that emotional safety comes through positive relationships



PREDICTABILITY

- Consider ways to maintain or build structure, rituals, and routines
- Maintain a schedule
- Learn what helps you feel more organized
- Prepare for disruptions to routines when possible



CONTROL

- Make choices when possible
- Find small islands of mastery - what are you good at and enjoy doing?
- Collaborate whenever possible - personally and professionally
- Focus on strengths - for you, co-workers, and family
- Control the situations you can; and recognize what's out of your control

SPC DURING CHALLENGING TIMES

The framework of safety, predictability, and control can guide you during these times as we continue to face worries regarding COVID variants and various societal tensions. Bringing a sense of safety and routine to our lives is a form of self-care. We can best work and support loved ones when we are taking care of ourselves both physically and mentally. Here are some ways to identify how best to engage in SPC self-care:

- **Create a routine.** What are the rituals and routines that you and your family consistently take part in and how can you maintain (or start) those during this time?
- **Discuss it with your family.** What kind of schedule would you like to maintain? Especially if you or your children are home, it's important to discuss it with members of your household and write out a plan.
- **Identify what makes you feel most organized.** To-do lists? Setting goals?
- **Give yourself and your family choices** (within a predictable structure) and collaborate around decision making.
- **Focus on your and your family's strengths.** What you focus on grows.
- **Help others.** When we help others, we are foremost helping ourselves. What can you do to feel like you are helping? How do we encourage family and friends to be helpful even from afar?
- **Control what you can control.** Providing small islands of mastery are a great way to help give you a little sense of control.
- **Learn a new skill.** Is there something you've been thinking about trying? Ramp up your cooking skills? Playing an instrument?
- **Most importantly, be kind to yourself.** We are all doing the best we can at any given time.

