

Safety, Predictability, and Control in Times of Uncertainty and Crises

During periods of high stress, crisis, or trauma life can feel unpredictable and challenging. People often usually experience a wide range of reactions that may make daily activities like going to work, attending school, or socializing feel challenging. 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.

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

The framework of safety, predictability, and control can guide you during times of high stress. 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? Discuss it with family and write out a plan.

› **Get Organized**

Identify what makes you feel most organized. To-do lists? Setting goals?

› **Encourage Choices**

Give yourself and your family choices (within a predictable structure) and collaborate around decision making.

› **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? Ramping up your cooking skills? Playing an instrument?

› **Be Kind to Yourself**

Most importantly, remember that we are all doing the best we can at any given time.