



Strategies to Support Early Learning and Well-Being in Changing Times

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Presented by:

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Early childhood settings have been dramatically impacted by COVID-19. From changing safety guidelines to creating engaging environments and connections, supporting children to be resilient in times of stress and change is essential. This session explores foundational strategies to help guide and build resilience in young children.

Supporting Resources:

[OCALI - Center for the Young Child](#)

[Responding to Trauma and Supporting Resilience Module](#)

[Caring for Yourself, so You can Care for Others](#)

[The Best Version of You: Everyday Tips to Promote Self-Care](#)

[OCALI - Here To Help: Special Interests](#)

[Ohio Early Childhood Mental Health | Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services](#)

[Early Childhood Mental Health | Groundwork Ohio](#)

[CSEFL: Center on Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning](#)

[COVID -19 Mental Health Toolkit](#)

[BOLD Beginning!](#)

The 4 R's - Reflect, Regulate, Relate, and Relax:

Reflect

Make time to reflect on the relationships and interactions you have with the children in your care. Wonder about what you may want to improve in your unseen emotional environment.

- What are my thoughts and feelings about my classroom, my children?
- What are the children doing? What aren't they doing? Why might this be the case?
- What is my response to the behaviors?
- What is the quality of my relationship with each child? Are we connected? Are they connected with each other?
- What help do I need to ask for?

Regulate

Make it a priority to be in control of your own emotions and reactions.

- Know that you can have control over yourself, your thoughts, your beliefs, and your actions. You do not have control over the thoughts, beliefs, and actions of others.

- Know that you have triggers that cause an emotional reaction and sometimes you will be upset and dysregulated.
- Know that it is okay to ask for help.
- Practice your plan to re-regulate and get calm. Take deep breaths, hum a favorite song, and hydrate.
- Be patient with yourself and allow for time to change and adopt new ways of doing things.

Relate

Your ability to connect with others is the critical component to your role.

This is especially true for children who have learned from life that the world may not be safe and trusting others is risky. These are ways to relate that are rooted in early childhood experiences.

- Name what you see, notice aloud what the child is doing, and expressing emotionally.
- Take turns with words and social interactions. Wait for a response with attentive gaze.
- Respond with encouraging, enthusiastic reactions. These responses can be both verbal and non-verbal.
- Share in the child's interests. Ask questions about what the child likes and dislikes. Pay special attention to strong feelings like "I hate haircuts!" or "I love spiders!"
- Use shared interests to connect children with one another during play and activities.

Relax

It does not work to tell someone else to just relax. But it does work to tell yourself to relax. If you use strategies that help you relax, not just telling yourself to relax. Our work lives are demanding and therefore it is essential to take care of yourself.

- Take time for your favorite things. Make a list and put things on your calendar.
- Use your sense of humor. Laughter reduces seriousness and is good for the soul.
- Stop negative thoughts that prevent your mind from relaxing. Replace them with a positive, kind thought like "I am okay and good enough at what I do."
- Be realistic. Set fair expectations and be okay with lowering them.
- Be kind to yourself first, then kindness will flow out to others.

Additional Resources and References

Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University
[From Best Practices to Breakthrough Impacts, Key Findings](#)

Council for Professional Recognition
[Asking the Question that Counts: Educators and Early Childhood Trauma](#)

Environment
<https://www.virtuallabschool.org/preschool/learning-environments/lesson-1>

Erdman, S. ; Colker, L.; Winter, E. (2020). *Trauma & Young Children: Teaching Strategies to Support and Empower*. National Association for the Education of Young Children.

OCALI - Suite Of Resources Module
[Responding to Trauma and Supporting Resilience](#)