

Tips for parents/carers for staying well at home

It is often impossible to think about supporting yourself without putting your child first; but it is impossible to sustain supporting your child without thinking about how to support yourself. This document thinks about the support for your child as the “seen” tip of the iceberg. However, it would not be possible to see this work without acknowledging the “unseen” base of the iceberg propping everything else up – the unseen part of the iceberg is your emotional wellbeing.

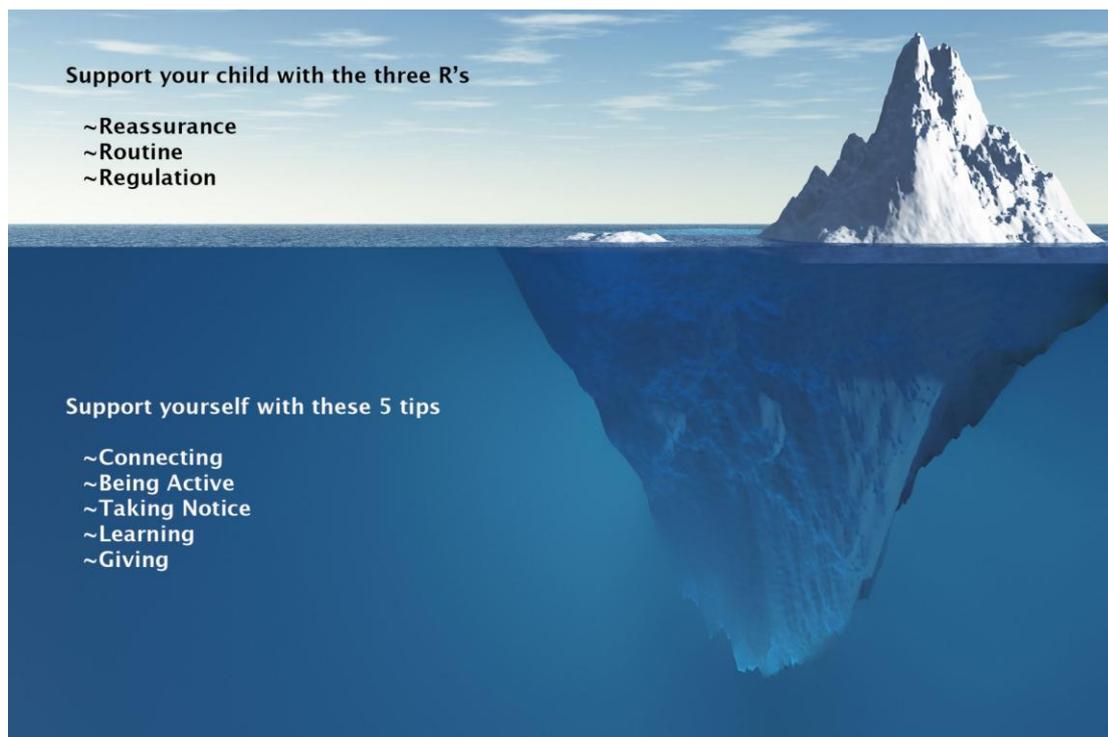
Supporting others – what’s seen

The iceberg metaphor helps us think about what’s visible and invisible in how parents/carers support children. It reminds us that what is unseen is often just as big and important as to what is seen. But sometimes the unseen is harder to pay attention to. Parent/carer mental health is often the silent unseen part of the iceberg. The unseen part of the iceberg (parent/carer emotional wellbeing) is the foundation and allows the seen part of the iceberg to exist.

We could think of supporting others as the tip of the iceberg – “what’s seen”

We can support others at this time through the “**three R’s**”:

- **Reassurance:** being available and sensitive to the emotional world of our children
- **Routine:** create predictable, safe and structured activities throughout the day
- **Regulation:** have different activities that get children moving and get them to slow down



Supporting ourselves – what’s unseen

We often forget to think about supporting ourselves. “What’s unseen” under the waterline could be thought of as our needs.

Mental health Ireland tell us the five steps to better mental health are **connecting, being active, taking notice, learning, giving.**

- **Connecting:** Contact friends and family as much as you need to – have a dinner, a coffee, a game together - use whatever medium you can e.g. WhatsApp, Houseparty, Instagram.
- **Being active:** It is important to ensure you are getting enough exercise - endorphins are happy hormones that come to life and will give you a lift through movement. The more meaningful the activity the more you get from it! Also see SMH “food and mood” page for healthy eating tips
- **Learning:** Get free learning tools in your home – Lots of learning on line e.g. free audio books: <https://www.librariesireland.ie/elibrary/audiobooks>
- **Giving:** Give with kindness, with a smile, with compassion. This can mean giving kindness to someone else, taking kindness from someone else, and giving kindness to yourself.
- **Taking notice:** It is important to pause and take stock of where you are at during the day. Sometimes it can be helpful to set an alarm to remind you to stop and breath. Try this
Take 10 deep breathes –down into your belly –drawing it in slowly and letting it out slowly – research suggests this can be enough to allow your mind and body a little break to get ready for the rest of your day. Check out SMH “two minute relaxation tip for parents/carers”

If you need support who can you reach out to – you can contact friends/family, your GP, your SMH key contact or any other SMH clinician you are in contact with.