Hacking Stress: Reset with the 5 R’s

**Reframe:**
- Identify your stressor: “getting infected by Covid-19”.
- Reframe your stressor: “an opportunity to get healthier”.
- Reframing turns down emotional volume and tames an overactive immune system.

**Respire:**
- Do breathing exercises at rest.
- Integrate better breathing while you work, watch TV, cook, clean, garden.

- **Diaphragmatic Breathing**
  - Breathe in through your nose, inflating your belly.
  - Breathe out through pursed lips, deflating your belly.
  - Only belly moves, while chest remains still throughout.

**Reconnect:**
Share your joys and struggles with others:
- Connect online and live with distance precautions.
- Friends, family, coworkers, community, place of worship.
- Work resources: EAP or support groups.
- Professional help such as doctors or therapists.

**Remove:**
Media definitively changes our brain and blood chemistry and activates our immune system, especially if it invokes raw, primitive emotions like fear, anger, threat or survival.

- **Media Distancing**
  - Try to limit media exposure at bedtime and upon waking.
  - Schedule specific time blocks for news media consumption or protected news-free times.
  - Read headlines in an emotionally detached manner, do your breathing and if you feel negative emotions welling up inside you, disconnect immediately.

**Recognize:**
Your brain will not “re-wire” unless you allow it to truly soak in a positive experience for at least 15-20 seconds.

Within 2 hours of bedtime, ask yourself:
- “What are three things that went well today and what was my role in making them happen?” (“Three Good Things”, Bryan Sexton, Ph.D.)
- By day 4 or 5, the positive becomes noticeably louder.

---

Ronesh Sinha, M.D., two-time TEDx speaker and author of “The South Asian Health Solution”, is an internal medicine physician at the Palo Alto Medical Foundation who runs corporate health education and wellness programs for major Silicon Valley companies.