

**QUESTIONS  
AND ANSWERS**

**ON MENTAL  
HEALTH  
DURING THE  
COVID-19  
PANDEMIC**

THINGS TO REMEMBER  
IF YOU ARE HAVING  
**MENTAL  
HEALTH  
PROBLEMS**

- It doesn't mean you are weak.
- It can happen to anyone.
- It can be brought on by stress and is often temporary.
- Talking to the people you love can really help.
- But you can – and should – get expert help if you need it.

# FOR PARENTS

HOW CAN I HELP  
MY **CHILD** COPE WITH  
THE **STRESS**  
CAUSED BY THE **COVID-19**  
**OUTBREAK?**

- What signs of stress should I be looking for?
- What can I do to help them?
- What should I not do?

# WHAT SIGNS OF STRESS SHOULD I BE LOOKING FOR?

Children react to stressful situations – like the COVID-19 outbreak – in different ways. They may struggle to tell you clearly how they feel, so you should look out for any changes in their behaviour.

Are they showing a much greater need to keep you close to them? Or are they pulling away, withdrawing from people and hiding their emotions? Try to be patient and understanding if they display any strong emotions, such as anger, anxiety, agitation or sadness. Try to make sure that they sleep (and that they sleep well). Repeated nightmares are often a sign of stress, and children who experience them will need you close by to comfort them.

Remember that children in very stressful situations may retreat back into behaviour they had grown out of, such as bedwetting, refusing to eat or eating with difficulty.

# HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD?

If they are going through a difficult and worrying time, try to get close to them and create a calm atmosphere that makes them feel comfortable enough to talk freely. Above all, really listen to what they are saying. And be sure to answer them in a way that shows that you have been paying attention and that you love them, using words that are simple, clear, sincere and reassuring.

Try to organize each day so that your child can enjoy a rich mix of activities, including time for school studies and plenty of time to play, have fun and do something creative.

It is very important to be clear and consistent about what is happening and why COVID-19 is serious, but also about the simple measures we can all take to protect ourselves and others from infection. Be honest, but also reassuring.

If you are separated from your child by COVID-19 (through hospitalization, for example), be sure to keep in constant contact if you can, through telephone calls or digital apps.

Do not hesitate to seek specialist help for your child if you think they are struggling with their mental health, but also for yourself. Your own mental well-being is vital!

# WHAT SHOULD I NOT DO?

If you see that your child is struggling to cope, try not to appear too agitated, anxious or worried about the situation. They are looking to you for reassurance.

Try not to leave them alone, even if their behaviour is adding to your own stress. Try not to punish them if they suddenly become aggressive, listless, bored, revert to infantile behaviour (such as bedwetting) or change the way they eat or sleep. These are all the normal reactions of a child in a very abnormal stressful situation.

Try not to let them fill their days with passive activities, such as watching TV or playing video games for many hours.

Never lie to your child about what is happening. Again, be honest, but be calm and reassuring.

## FOR ADOLESCENTS

# HOW CAN I COPE WITH THE STRESS CAUSED BY THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK?

- How might I react, psychologically, to a stressful situation? What should I look out for?
- What can I do to get better?
- What is the most important thing I can do?

# HOW MIGHT I REACT, PSYCHOLOGICALLY, TO A STRESSFUL SITUATION? WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?

In general, we respond to very stressful situations with reactions that are perfectly normal. These reactions rarely last long, often disappear very quickly, and you will probably be able to handle them on your own.

But there are a few things to look out for:

- extreme and constant worries about your health and the health of those who are dear to you
- changes in the way you eat and sleep
- struggling to pay attention and stay focused on what you are doing
- a deterioration in your physical health
- using alcohol and drugs to 'escape'.

If any of these or other reactions make you really uncomfortable for longer than two weeks, we recommend that you think about getting some professional help.



# WHAT CAN I DO TO GET BETTER?

Before you ask for professional help, there are some things you can try to help yourself get better. First, try to find out about what is happening and what is being done to stop the pandemic. But be careful not to overload yourself with endless news about the pandemic itself.

Take good care of yourself: so try to eat well, avoid alcohol and drugs, take exercise every day, try to breathe deeply and, very importantly, make sure you get a good night's sleep.

It is important to organize a regular routine for your days so that you have a balanced mix of activities that are both useful and enjoyable. Stay in firm control of your own time, looking for ways to connect to others, to learn, relax and unleash your creativity.

Yes, we all face real difficulties. But we all need look for – and focus on – the positives.

# WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I CAN DO?

The most important thing we can all do is to stay connected to other people, so that we are not alone. Talk to the people you love, your family, adults you care about (and who care about you), and your friends. If your mental health is suffering, do not be ashamed and do not isolate yourself. This can happen to any of us, and it is harder to recover if we close in on ourselves. So, choose the people you want to share your feelings with.

Try to think of the things that have helped you deal with difficult times in the past, and be ready to use them again.

And if you think you need more help, ask for it. There are professional experts who can help you through this.

# Report

ON THE MOVE  
VOICE MATTERS

U-Report is an anonymous service that lets you, young migrants and refugees in Italy, speak out on issues that matter to you. You just need to register on the platform, and you will receive information which can be useful for your life in Italy and you will have the opportunity to write your questions to us: together with a team of experts we will find together concrete solutions.

Through HERE4U, you will have access to counseling, information and support by experts. The service is free, online and anonymous. You just need to write us on Facebook Messenger.

## YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

**EVERYONE CAN JOIN.  
REGISTER WITH JUST A FEW CLICKS:**



- Scan the Q Bar Code
- 'Send a message' through Facebook Messenger

# STRENGTHENING REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN'S HEALTH STATUS

IN SOUTHERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE



Co-funded by  
the Health Programme  
of the European Union

The content of this brochure represents the views of the author(s) only and is his/her sole responsibility; it cannot be considered to reflect the views of the European Commission and/or the European Health and Digital Executive Agency or any other body of the European Union. The European Commission and the Agency do not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

## Sources:

IASC, My Hero is You, Storybook for Children on COVID-19

IASC, Basic Psychosocial Skills- A Guide for COVID-19 Responders

IASC Interim Briefing Note on COVID-19 Outbreak Readiness and Response Operations - MHPSS\_0

<https://www.who.int/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-coronavirus/healthyathome/healthyathome---mental-health>

[https://www.who.int/images/default-source/campaigns/together-at-home/healthy-at-home---mental-health/89890458-2933268806736300-904497009908514816-n.jpg?sfvrsn=2b6dca71\\_2](https://www.who.int/images/default-source/campaigns/together-at-home/healthy-at-home---mental-health/89890458-2933268806736300-904497009908514816-n.jpg?sfvrsn=2b6dca71_2)

[https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff\\_2](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff_2)

UNICEF-WHO et al. english-tip-02-covid-19-parenting-positive.pdf

UNICEF-WHO et al. english-tip-04-covid-19-parenting-behavior.pdf

UNICEF-WHO et al. english-tip-05-covid-19-parenting-stress.pdf