WEBINAR SERIES

Promoting health throughout the life-course during the COVID-19 pandemic

Ensuring mental and psychosocial well-being

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Childhood & Adolescence: A stage of vulnerability

• Worldwide 10-20% of children and adolescents experience mental health conditions

• Half of all mental illnesses begin by the age of 14

• Neuropsychiatric conditions are the leading cause of disability in young people in all WHO regions
Childhood & Adolescence: A stage of vulnerability

• If untreated, these conditions severely influence children’s
  • development
  • educational attainments
  • potential to live fulfilling and productive lives

• Children with mental disorders face major challenges with
  • stigma
  • isolation
  • discrimination
  • lack of access to health care and education facilities

• This is in violation of their fundamental human rights
COVID-19 pandemic and Mental Health of Children and Adolescents

• As a result of COVID-19, children and adolescents have experienced unprecedented interruptions to their daily lives and it is anticipated that these disruptions may be precipitants of mental illness, including anxiety, depression, and/or stress related symptoms.

• The disease outbreak, restriction of mobility, closure of schools, long screen hours, constant negative media coverage, lack of discipline and clear time boundaries, lack of social gatherings and interaction and physical distancing, mental state of parents and caregivers etc. are contributing to stress and anxiety among children and adolescents.

Source: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7363598/#:~:text=As%20a%20result%20of%20COVID,symptoms%20(Lee%2C%202020).
Global Scenario:

Age distribution of confirmed COVID-19 cases, COVID-19

WHO surveillance : January to July 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age groups (years)</th>
<th>Cases (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-14</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
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</tr>
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<td>65-84</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
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<td>85+</td>
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Mental Health Status of Adolescents in South-East Asia: Evidence for Action

April, 2017
Mental health and substance use disorders are the largest contributors to the regional and global burden of disease (6%).

In the South-East Asia Region, suicide is the second most common cause of mortality among people aged 15–29 years.

Mental health problems in young people thus present not only a major public health challenge but are also a development issue in LMICs and central to achieving the SDGs.

Mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, or other conditions may lead to behavioural problems such as tobacco, alcohol, and drug use.
Mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression in early adolescence often go undiagnosed and untreated, especially in developing countries, due to limited access to psychological and psychiatric services and substantial social stigma attached to mental health issues.
Children and Adolescents: vulnerability to MH conditions during COVID-19 pandemic

• **Home confinement:** immediate and lingering psychosocial impact on children due to drastic changes in their lifestyle, physical activity and mental excursions.¹

• **Parents in isolation:** impacts the MH of children- Psychiatric consequences including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, psychosis, depression, delinquency and even suicidal tendency²

• **Learning gap** will be widened between children from lower and higher-income families during institute closure due to lack of alternative way of education (online class).³

• Child abuse, domestic violence and teenage promiscuity, altered routine,

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Signs of psychological distress in children

- Difficulties in sleeping and eating
- Nightmares / bed wetting
- Being withdrawn or aggressive or Cranky behaviors
- Stomachache / Headache (No physical reason)
- Having fears, being afraid to be left alone
- Clinging, depending behaviors
- New fears manifest
- Decreased interest in playing and engaging in playful activities
- Being sad, crying more than usual or for no apparent reason
Likely Consequences

• It is natural for children to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and worry during an ongoing pandemic like COVID-19.

• Fear and anxiety about their own health and the health of loved ones can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions.¹

• Long term consequences:
  • Mental Illnesses
  • Problem in personality development

What will be the Consequences

• Developmental issues:
  • Impact on Child’s Development (Cognitive development, Socio emotional development)

• Health risks of excessive screen time or gaming
  • It replaces healthy behaviours and habits such as physical activity and sleep, and leads to harmful habits such as reduced sleep or day-night reversal, malnutrition, headaches, neck pain, etc.
  • It may lead to the development of gaming disorder.¹

Children with disability

- Children with pre-existing mental and physical disability are at most risk

- Most online platforms for education are not compatible with assistive technology used for teaching children

- Challenges of online learning coupled with a lack of recreational activities can be frustrating for these children

- Disruption in daily routine and uncertainty can make children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) more anxious, grumpy and restless
Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak

Children may respond to stress in different ways such as being more clingy, anxious, withdrawing, angry or agitated, bedwetting etc.
Respond to your child’s reactions in a supportive way, listen to their concerns and give them extra love and attention.

Children need adults’ love and attention during difficult times. Give them extra time and attention.
Remember to listen to your children, speak kindly and reassure them.
If possible, make opportunities for the child to play and relax.

Try and keep children close to their parents and family and avoid separating children and their caregivers to the extent possible. If separation occurs (e.g. hospitalization) ensure regular contact (e.g. via phone) and re-assurance.

Keep to regular routines and schedules as much as possible, or help create new ones in a new environment, including school/learning as well as time for safely playing and relaxing.

Provide facts about what has happened, explain what is going on now and give them clear information about how to reduce their risk of being infected by the disease in words that they can understand depending on their age.
This also includes providing information about what could happen in a re-assuring way (e.g. a family member and/or the child may start not feeling well and may have to go to the hospital for some time so doctors can help them feel better).
Set aside time to spend with each child

- Ask your child what they would like to do
  - Choosing builds their self-confidence. If they want to do something that isn’t OK with physical distancing, then this is a chance to talk with them about this. (see next leaflet)

Ideas with your baby/toddler

- Sing songs, make music with pots and spoons
- Copy their facial expression and sounds
- Stack cups or blocks
- Tell a story, reading a book or showing pictures

Ideas with your teenager

- Talk about something they like: sports, T.V. show, friends
- Go for a walk – outdoors or around the home
- Do a workout together

Ideas with your young child

- Read a book or look at pictures
- Go for a walk – outdoors or around the home
- Play dance and freeze!
- Do a chore together – make cleaning and cooking a game!
- Help with school work

Listen to them, look at them. Give them your full attention. Have fun!

Want more helpful tips from UNICEF and WHO?

EVIDENCE-BASE IS HERE

COVID-19

PARENTING: QUALITY TIME

Can't go to work? Schools closed? Worried about money? It is normal to feel stressed and overwhelmed.

School shutdown is also a chance to strengthen relationships with our children and adolescents. Quality time is free and fun. It makes children feel loved and secure, and shows them that they are important.
My Hero is You, storybook for children on COVID-19

This book was a project developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings (IASC MHPSS RG). The project was supported by global, regional and country based experts from Member Agencies of the IASC MHPSS RG, in addition to parents, caregivers, teachers and children in 104 countries. view and update the story.
Sara fell asleep and when she woke the next day, Ario was gone. So she went to her safe place to talk to him, then drew everything they had seen and learnt on their adventure. She ran to her mum with her drawing to tell her the news.

“We can all help people be safe, Mum,” she said. “I met so many heroes on my adventure!”

“Oh Sara, you are right!” said her mum. “There are many heroes keeping people safe from the coronavirus, like wonderful doctors and nurses. But you remind me that we can all be heroes, every day, and my biggest hero is you.”
REMEMBER

• Reassure your child
• Empower them
• Maintain your own clam
• Engage them in activities
• Manage their emotions
• Beware about media exposure
• Educate them - health safety
• Routine
Parents and Caregivers:

• Promote an environment where children have fun and feel safe and healthy.

• Facilitate a space where children are listened to, they can express their thoughts and feelings, and are free to ask any question and are answered.

• Remember children will observe adults’ behaviours and emotions for cues on how to manage their own emotions during difficult times.

• So parents and caregivers need to stay calm.

Adolescents

• Stay connected and maintain social network (through emails, WhatsApp, FB, twitter)
• Keep daily routine
• When stressed, engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing
• Exercise regularly, keep regular sleep routines and eat healthy food
• Keep things in perspective, positive thinking
• Avoid listening to or following rumours that make you feel uncomfortable
• A near constant stream of news about an outbreak can cause anxiety and distress.
• Seek updates and practical guidance at specific times during the day from credible sources
Online resource center for screening, diagnosis and management of common mental disorders and addictive disorders and mental and psycho social well being
BehavioR
Online resources for management of alcohol use disorders

Alcohol use disorders Online Learning Resources
BehavioR
Multimedia content
Parents /caregivers:

• Stay informed, but do not spend too much time on social media
• Talk to your children and other family members about COVID-19
• Check-in with your child’s school, teachers and therapists
• Check-in with your child’s health-care provider by calling or using telehealth services when required
• Prioritize self-care both for yourself and your child
• Reassure your child/children and be patient with them

The considerations presented in this document have been developed by WHO as a series of messages that can be used in communications to support mental and psychosocial well-being in different target groups during the outbreak.

The composite term ‘mental health and psychosocial support’ (MHPSS) is used in the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines for MHPSS in Emergency Settings to describe ‘any type of local or outside support that aims to protect or promote psychosocial well-being and/or prevent or treat mental health condition’.

The global humanitarian system uses the term MHPSS to unite a broad range of actors responding to emergencies such as the COVID-19 outbreak, including those working with biological approaches and sociocultural approaches in health, social, education and community settings, as well as to ‘underscore the need for diverse, complementary approaches in providing appropriate support’.
The IASC Guidelines for MHPSS in Emergency Settings recommends that multiple levels of interventions be integrated within outbreak response activities.

These levels align with a spectrum of mental health and psychosocial needs and are represented in a pyramid of interventions ranging from embedding social and cultural considerations in basic services, to providing specialised services for individuals with more severe conditions.

Core principles include: do no harm, promote human rights and equality, use participatory approaches, build on existing resources and capacities, adopt multi-layered interventions and work with integrated support systems. Checklists for using the guidelines have been produced by the IASC Reference Group.2
Global and Regional Guidelines on continuing essential services

- Programme Activities
- Modifications of safe delivery of services
- Transition towards restoration of activities