

## Part 1: Messages for Parents and Caregivers

### **COVID 19: well-being of you and your children**

The following tips will help you to reduce the stress and anxiety of you and your children related to the outbreak of COVID 19. These are tips for you as a parent, but they can also be used by older children who take care of children or by other caregivers of children.

#### **Why your well-being is important:**

- You will be able to think clearer
- You will be able to cope better
- You will be more patient
- You will be able to understand the feelings and behavior of your children better
- Your well-being will help your body to be stronger
- Children up to 12 years old make sense of the outside world by the way that you react to that outside world. Their well-being is directly linked with your well-being.

#### **Tips for your emotional well being**

- Have enough rest, but do not stay too long hours in bed
- Take every day some time for yourself
- Talk with friends or neighbors
- Do not search for news related to COVID 19 continuously. Instead, keep yourself informed through searching news on dedicated moments once a day.
- Try to distinguish facts from rumors
- Ensure that you can exercise/ move your body every day, even if you cannot leave the place where you live
- Once you follow all guidelines regarding hygiene and contacts with others, congratulate yourself that you are doing everything that you can do to protect yourself and your family
- Accept that you are human. You will have feelings of anxiety, fear or anger. Once you recognize these feelings, try to think about beautiful things, try to talk more softly and slowly and breathe normally.

#### **Tips for helping children feel better:**

For all ages: Children need to see that not everything in their life has changed. Stick to the routine of eating times, cleaning times, playing times and sleeping times

#### **Tips per age group: 0 - 3 years old**

- Children are sensitive to your emotional and physical closeness. Try as much as possible to address them in the same way as you did before, even if they are babies.
- Around the age of two, children often use the word 'no'. Accept this as normal behavior

### Tips per age group: 3- 6 years old

- Remind your child that you are there to take good care of the child
- Some children might lose abilities that they acquired before, e.g. they start bedwetting
- Children in this age explore things and like to be busy. Do not limit this, but ensure this is done in the place where you live

### Tips per age group:6- 11 years old

- Children in this age group can have nightmares and fears about losing parents, grandparents or other people who are close to them. Respond that you understand the feelings, and normalize the feelings. 'if you think that grandma is in danger, that is scary...'
- Ask your child what they are thinking and/ or afraid of. (especially younger children may have made their own explanations and perceptions that can be much more frightening than reality)
- let the children speak and allow them to express what they fear. you can use sentences like " some children fear that...."
- Talk to children about the facts, do not exaggerate but be honest- do not make false promises
- Inform children why we have the "stay at home policy"- it is to prevent the spread of COVID 19- not because it is dangerous to go outside
- remind your child that you are there to take good care of the child
- remind the child that this situation will not be forever (but do not give false promises)
- Do not keep news media on the whole day
- Avoid talking about number of seriously ill people or deceased.

### Tips per age group:12 years and older

- Children in this age group are likely to explore the existing information themselves. Yet, they might not have the ability to distinguish facts from rumors yet. They might confront you with messages that can provoke panic. Stay calm and help them understand the reality.
- Children might have outbursts of anger. This is in general a characteristic of this age group, but in times of increased stress and uncertainty there might be more outburst.
- Children in this age group depend emotionally heavily on the friends who are of the same age. Accept that your child goes through a difficult time in case these contacts are restricted. Yet, do not allow for exceptions on restrictions
- Children in this age group often isolate themselves when they are at home. It is normal in this stage of their development.
- Children in this age groups need facts- share the facts and truth. They are very sensitive and know quickly when you are hiding the truth. This will cause them not trusting you.