

Actions for Heroes

A Guide for heart-to-heart chats with children
to accompany reading of
My Hero is You, How kids can fight COVID-19!



Introduction

The Guide

The *Actions for Heroes* Guide is developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings (IASC MHPSS RG) to accompany reading the children's storybook [My Hero is You, How kids can fight COVID-19!](#)

The storybook *My Hero is You* explains how children can protect themselves, their families and their friends from the coronavirus and how to manage difficult emotions when confronted with our new and rapidly changing reality. The storybook has been translated into [135+ languages](#) and multimedia [adaptations](#) have been made. You can read and download this book for free on the IASC website. The full links to these resources are available at the end of this Guide.

It is recommended that adults read the storybook WITH children. As they read the storybook, *Actions for Heroes* directs adults about how to have heart-to-heart chats with children (henceforth referred to as CHATS) and educate them about coping with COVID-19 related stressors and changes. It explains how adults can create safe spaces for children to openly share their feelings, including their fears and worries, about the coronavirus and frustrations at their changed daily lives. The Guide also directs adults on how to promote positive actions that children can take to protect themselves and others.

Actions for Heroes is an accompaniment to *My Hero is You* that will benefit caregivers and teachers reading *My Hero is You* with children. The intervention was developed through a comprehensive consultation, and field testing process among IASC MHPSS RG Members and countries using *My Hero is You*. We hope this resource will support children, their caregivers and teachers during these exceptional times.

The IASC MHPSS RG acknowledges Nancy Baron for preparing the script and Helen Patuck for her illustrations in this publication.

Translations, accessible formats and adaptations

Please contact the IASC Reference Group for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) (mhpss.refgroup@gmail.com) for coordination of translations and preferred formats. All completed translations and versions will be posted on the IASC Reference Group website.

If you create a translation or an adaptation of this Work, kindly note that:

- You are not allowed to add your logo (or that of a funding agency) to the product.
- In case of adaptation (i.e., changes in the text or images), the use of the IASC logo is not permitted. In any use of this Work, there should be no suggestion that IASC endorses any specific organization, products or services.
- You should add the following disclaimer in the language of the translation: "This translation/adaptation was not created by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). The IASC is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original English edition "Inter-Agency Standing Committee: *Actions for Heroes, a Guide for heart-to-heart chats with children to accompany reading of My Hero Is You*" shall be the binding and authentic edition."

For an overview of all completed translations and formats of *Actions for Heroes, a guide for heart-to-heart chats with children to accompany reading of My Hero Is You*, please visit: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/actions-for-heroes>.

CHAT messages

Please read this Actions for Heroes Guide BEFORE you begin to read the storybook with children and continue to use its advice after you finish.










It is best when children are informed with accurate information about the coronavirus and its risks and how to prevent the COVID-19 infectious disease by adults who are known to them and trusted, like caregivers and teachers. The language used to explain the facts can be simple and direct and can be modified to the age of the children. Children who are not well informed are at risk of not taking precautions seriously and of putting themselves and others at risk of infection. Also, poorly informed children can become unnecessarily worried because they feel that adults are hiding the truth from them. Even from a young age, children are aware of changes around them, so it is important to speak with even young children about what is going on.

Since the storybook encourages children to be heroes and take an active role in prevention, it is important for adults to balance an explanation of the problems and risks of the coronavirus with clear descriptions about how adults will protect children and what children can do to prevent infection and protect themselves and others.

As adults and children read the storybook, they will see 9 CHAT bubbles located throughout the book, which look like this:



The  CHAT messages in this Guide are:

 CHAT 1:	Staying healthy	p.10
 CHAT 2:	Children speak out	p. 13
 CHAT 3:	Coping with stress	p. 15
 CHAT 4:	Keeping each other safe	p. 19
 CHAT 5:	Solving problems	p. 22
 CHAT 6:	Everyone needs to be protected	p. 25
 CHAT 7:	Living with heartache	p. 27
 CHAT 8:	Being a citizen of the world	p. 30
 CHAT 9:	My hero is YOU	p. 34

Preparing to read and CHAT

When preparing to read with children, please remember:

- The story can be read with one child or a group of children.
- An adult or an older child can read page by page.
- It is best to read slowly and tell the story with a bit of drama.
- Adults and children both want to see the pictures, so sit close together but not too close, to allow for physical distancing.
- Arrange seating so children can easily see the pictures.
- Try to sit in a quiet space where you can avoid interruptions.
- When reading with a group of children, adults are responsible for ensuring that all of the children have a chance to safely share their thoughts and feelings during the CHATs.
- The CHATs are good opportunities for adults to teach children effective ways to manage their fears and stressful situations.

It is time to CHAT, when you see




Everyone who reads the storybook and chats with the children is referred to as “ADULTS” in this guide. They include:

- Parents
- Grandparents
- Caregivers
- Teachers
- Youth leaders.

Adults know the special dynamics of their cultures, environments and social norms. It is recommended that the CHATs are honest discussions that include positive actions children can take that are realistic and fit into their unique real-life experiences. CHATs and actions differ for children living in cities or rural areas, from different continents, or living in their homes or in a camp in another country, and vary depending on economic, social, religious and cultural values.


The CHATS vary depending on the relationship of the adults to the children. In addition to informing children about COVID-19, parents reading the storybook with their children should direct their CHATs to include actions showing how they as parents will protect the children and how the children can participate in protecting the family. When teachers or youth leaders read with children, they can direct their CHATs and actions towards showing how they will participate in protecting the children and how the children can be responsible and can protect their friends and classmates.

In each  CHAT, adults have conversations with children about different messages. The CHATS can go **in two directions...**



Sharing information

First, adults need to be well informed so that during a CHAT they share accurate information with children. Remember, even very young children have some awareness about the coronavirus since they are keen listeners. At every age, children hear adults talking and feel their emotional cues. Adults should answer children's questions honestly to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the coronavirus and its risks. The answers can be scary, so adults can use the CHATs to reassure children and explain the actions that they as adults and children can take to keep safe. For children, feeling safe comes not only from knowing adults are there to care for them, but also from learning ways in which they can feel empowered or strong enough to be heroes and take actions to protect themselves and those they love.

The second direction for  CHATs encourages adults to take the time to listen and hear what children feel and think about today's changed life.

Hearing children


To encourage children to chat freely, adults will:

- Sincerely take the time to show their interest in what children think and feel.
- **Listen** and be patient as children talk and **hear** what children say and feel.
- Talk **with** children. Do not talk **at** them or **to** them. Talk **with** them.
- **Ask questions** to show interest and understand children's thoughts and feelings.
- Reflect on what children say to have **two-way discussions**.
- **Educate** children and reassure them in an honest way about the present situation.
- Offer **realistic protection** to children.
- Offer **support** and love to children.
- In group readings, give equal opportunities for children to say what they want to say.
- Encourage children to listen and respond to each other in **respectful** ways.



Example of a CHAT that HEARs the child:

A father and his 10-year-old son, Salem, are reading the storybook together.

At  **CHAT 2** Dad wants to talk with Salem about his feelings regarding the coronavirus.

Dad: In the story, Sara worries about how to be safe. What about the coronavirus worries you?

Salem: I am afraid to die. Some nights it's hard to fall asleep. I worry I won't wake up.

Dad: I am sorry you worry at night. I didn't know you felt like this. What makes you worry that you won't wake up?

Salem: I heard some children died from corona. I don't know why they died but I heard someone say this. If I get the virus will I die?

Honest response to fact.

Dad: A very small number of children around the world got very sick from the virus and died. It is very rare. You are healthy and most of these children had other health problems in addition to the virus.

Salem: So, I won't die if I get the virus?

Dad: It is very unlikely that you will die if you get the virus. Most often children do not get seriously ill and die.

Salem: That's good to know.

Talk about feelings and protection.

Dad: I hope we can talk when you feel worried. When you worry at night, let's agree on what we can do to help you feel safe and sleep. What can we do?

Salem's Dad listened and encouraged him to share his feelings. He responded with kindness, support and accurate information. He offered to help Salem to find ways to feel safe at night. Salem responded positively and was encouraged to continue to CHAT.

Example of a CHAT where a child is not heard:

Let's imagine if Salem's Dad said the following:

Dad: In the story, Sara worries about how to be safe. What about the coronavirus worries you?

Salem: I am afraid to die. Some nights it's hard to fall asleep. I worry I won't wake up.

Unfortunately, Salem's Dad wants to quickly reassure Salem that he won't die in his sleep.

Dad: Don't worry, you will wake up.

Salem: Okay.

Salem ends the CHAT.

The CHAT was quickly over. Clearly, this is not what we want. Salem ended the CHAT because his feelings were turned off. Salem's Dad did not hear his fear. His Dad wanted him to know that he was safe and might have felt unsure how to discuss a difficult topic, so he gave him a quick answer. If Salem's Dad wants to understand how he feels and encourage him to feel that it is okay to share his feelings, his Dad needs to listen and respond to his feelings as he did in the first example.

Focus on the key messages

Whether we are chatting with one child or a group of children, in each CHAT adults should focus on essential messages and keep the CHATs brief to avoid losing the intensity of reading the story. Asking an open question like, "What makes you sad?" can be particularly challenging. Children could answer by talking about the coronavirus or about a bully at school. Adults should keep each CHAT focused only on the message of that CHAT. Adults should ask questions specific to the chat like, "What makes you sad about the coronavirus?" Children share. Adults listen and respond and share the message and lessons of each CHAT. Adults can offer to CHAT about other issues after reading the storybook.

Length of CHAT

We want to give opportunities for all children to share their ideas and feelings. However, some children like to talk, some rarely want to talk and some talk too much. Adults will need to control the length of each CHAT. If a child is talking a lot, adults should listen and remind them that we want to go back to the story, and arrange to talk more after they finish reading it. Some children do not feel comfortable speaking, and it is best not to push them. This is story time and children can listen and learn – not everyone needs to talk.

Unique CHATS

♡ CHATS vary by cultures and according to the personalities and the relationship of adults and children. A CHAT with a teacher will be different from a CHAT with a parent.



However, the purpose of the CHATS is always the same. The CHAT is a safe place for children to share their thoughts and feelings, to learn facts about the coronavirus, and to understand how they can take responsible action to protect themselves and others.

THE ARIO: Information for Adults

THE ARIO is a newspaper that offers adults guidance on how to CHAT with children. Please read each section before you CHAT to learn from the advice it gives and then read it again afterwards as a reminder.



Understanding the Guide

Adults should read the storybook with children and at each  they should lead a  CHAT about the lessons in that section. These tools are available to assist the adult to lead each CHAT. There are four tools:

THE ARIO: Information for Adults

This newspaper offers guidance to adults about how to CHAT with children. Please read The ARIO before you CHAT to learn from its advice and read it again after you finish the storybook as a reminder.

Key CHAT messages

These are the overall themes or messages for each CHAT. For example: **KEY MESSAGE 1: Staying healthy.** As you read the storybook, the messages in this Guide follow the themes in the story.

Let's CHAT

This is information for adults about what to share with children during this CHAT.

ASK the children



These are specific questions that adults can ask children to lead into this CHAT.

Throughout the storybook, children are encouraged to be heroes and citizens of the world whose actions form a global chain through which all people protect each other. During CHATs, adults promote this message of responsibility and action. Children are engaged about how to make choices and keep themselves and those they love safe, thereby giving them feelings of hopefulness and possibility.

READY: IT'S TIME TO START TO READ AND CHAT

As you open the storybook, this is said by adults FIRST.

Adults CHAT with children:

 *I know you have heard lots of talk about the coronavirus. It has changed our lives. This storybook was written to help us CHAT and share our feelings about the coronavirus. It will give us ideas about how we can stay healthy and be responsible to protect ourselves and others. Ready to listen and CHAT?* 

> Read this page of My Hero is You



THE ARIO

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS

ADULTS BENEFIT FROM LISTENING TO CHILDREN

BENEFITS FROM LISTENING

Adults ask open questions to invite children to talk about what they know about the coronavirus. As children speak, and they recognize that adults are listening, they can feel comfortable about continuing to share their ideas, thoughts and feelings.

Adults should listen patiently to all that children know about the virus. Some of their information will be factual, and some will not. After children respond, the adult can praise them for sharing what they know. They repeat what the children said that is correct. Without saying, "NO, that's wrong", they hear what is inaccurate and explain the facts.

Importantly, when adults talk to groups of children, they should be sure they are listening to each other. CHATS need to be safe spaces to talk freely, so it is important that adults prevent children from teasing or bullying each other. Adults are responsible for the CHATS and need to be sure that all children can chat safely.



CHILD SAYS: "NO. I DON'T NEED TO TALK ABOUT COVID-19!"



Let's imagine that a child says, "NO. I don't need to talk about COVID-19. I know everything about it. I'm a kid. I'm not going to die from this virus. I want to go and play."

Some children present themselves as knowing about everything. It is best not to offend them and remind them that at their young age it is unlikely that they know everything. We want to encourage the self-esteem of all children.

However, we also want them to accept their limitations, so they know it is okay when they do not know, okay to sometimes have feelings like being unsure or anxious, and okay to ask for help. We can tell them that even the most famous scientists are still learning about the coronavirus.

THE ARIO

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS

CHILDREN NEED TO KNOW THE FACTS ABOUT COVID-19

SHARE THE FACTS

Start your chats with children by sharing clear factual information about the coronavirus and COVID-19. Children can only learn how to protect themselves if they fully understand the virus and its risks.

WORLD-FAMOUS SCIENTISTS STILL LEARNING ABOUT CORONAVIRUS



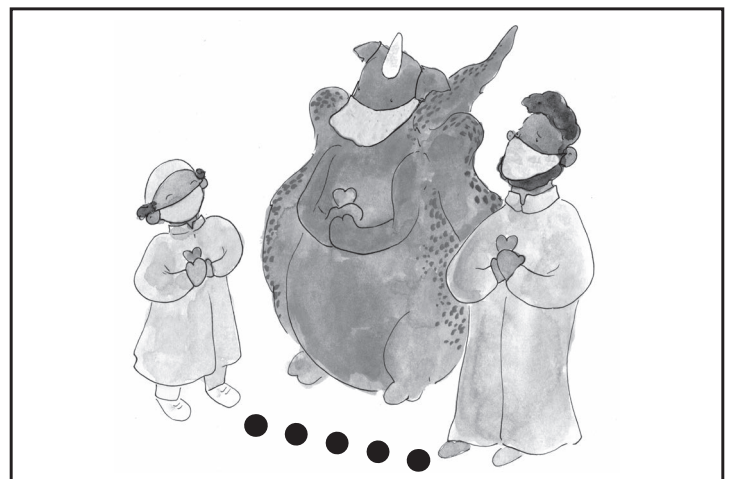
We are all still learning about this new coronavirus. Scientists do not have all the answers. Adults do not have all the answers. Yet, children are asking questions and adults must do their best to answer, as well as to let children know that we are all still learning.

If children challenge the risks to themselves, adults can respond with, "You are right. Children do not often get seriously sick from the virus. But some do and there are still risks. Many people, including children, can have the virus inside them and pass it to others. Your little sister has a heart problem and if she gets the virus it can be serious because she has other health problems. And Grandma and Grandpa need to avoid getting the virus because older people can become very sick and even die from the virus."

Children need to be part of helping to protect people and prevent them from getting the virus. If Sara asked, "I don't want to get anyone sick. How do I know if I have the virus inside me?" her Mum can answer, "Most often you don't know because you feel fine. Let's keep reading the story since it will teach us how to protect ourselves from getting the virus and prevent us from giving it to someone else."

HOW FAR IS FAR ENOUGH?

Different country health systems recommend 1-2 metres for "social" or "physical" distancing. Please check what is recommended in your country and use this with children. To be sure children understand how big the distance is you can pace it out or use a ruler or a piece of string, or have the children lie on the floor to measure 1 or 2 metres.



  **CHAT 1**

Let's CHAT 

Before we get into the story more, let's chat about the coronavirus and how you can protect yourselves and others from it. Tell me what you already know about the virus.

ASK children 

Tell me what you already know about the virus.



Children respond with the information about the coronavirus that they know. Children might say...

- "The coronavirus crawls onto you from tables and chairs and even pieces of paper."
- "The coronavirus is fake."
- "The coronavirus kills people."
- "I heard that we can get an injection in our arm that will protect us."

Let's CHAT 

Thanks for sharing what you know. Seems you have listened well to all that is being said around you.

The coronavirus is causing a disease called COVID-19. It is a new virus and the disease is contagious – that means that it passes from one person to another. The disease has become a global pandemic since it spread to countries around the world.

The coronavirus moves from one person to another through droplets that come from the mouth or nose of an infected person who talks, laughs, cries, coughs or sneezes. These droplets fly into the air and can land in the mouths or noses of people close by. The droplets can also land on a table, chair or other surface and if we touch it and then touch our eyes, nose or mouth, we can get infected.

You need to tell me right away if you or anyone you know has any of the virus symptoms like headache, cough, sneezing, body aches, fever or loss of sense of smell and/or taste. We need to be extra careful since having even one symptom can mean that you are infected and can pass the virus to others. The good news is that most people only get mildly sick. However, even if they feel better in a few days, they might still be contagious and need to stay home and keep away from everyone until their doctors say they are no longer contagious.

It's a sneaky virus because many people have the virus but feel fine. They can still give it to someone else even if they don't mean to do it. I know it all sounds scary. That's why we are talking and reading this book. I am doing everything I can to keep us healthy. I want to be sure that you know how to protect yourself and not get the virus!

I know you want to go out to play with your friends. But we must go out safely. To avoid the droplets from someone who is infected, it is best to wear a mask. We also need to physically distance to avoid the droplets, so we must stay at least one metre away from other people.

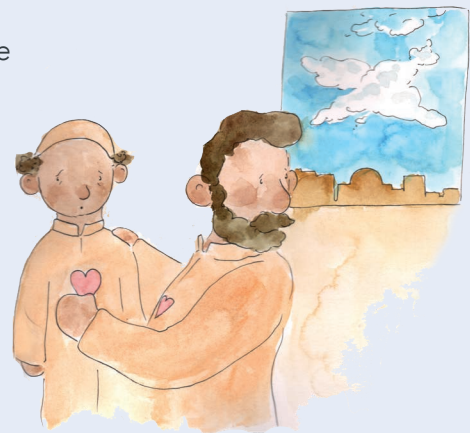
The best protection is washing our hands with soap and water, so we will wash our hands more than ever. If we avoid touching our eyes, nose and mouth, even if we touch the virus we can avoid bringing it into our body.

Scientists worked hard and studied the virus and created vaccines that they believe can protect people from getting it.

All over the world, people, like us, are reading this storybook and learning how to prevent the spread of the virus.

ASK children

Do you have any questions about the virus before we continue to read?



Children ask questions and adults answer their questions.

Let's CHAT

The virus has turned our world upside down. Let's continue to read about Sara and see what we can do to stay safe...

> Read these pages of My Hero is You

<p>Sara said in bed that night and did not feel like a hero at all. She felt scared. She wanted to get to school but her school was closed. She wanted to see her friends but it was not safe. Sara worried the coronavirus to stop saving her world.</p> <p>"Heroes have super powers" she said to herself, closing her eyes to sleep. "What do I have?"</p> <p>Suddenly a gentle voice whispered her name in the darkness.</p> <p>"Who's there?" Sara whispered back.</p> <p>"What do you need to be a hero, Sara?" the voice asked her.</p> <p>"I need a way to tell all the children in the world how to protect themselves so they can protect everyone else..." said Sara.</p> <p>"So what do you need me to be?" the voice asked.</p> <p>"I need something that can fly, something with a big voice... and something that can help!"</p> <p>With a whoosh, something amazing stepped into the room.</p>			<p>"What are you?" gasped Sara.</p> <p>"I'm Aris," he said.</p> <p>"I've never seen an Aris before," said Sara.</p> <p>"Well, I've been here all along," said Aris. "I come from your heart."</p> <p>"If I have you... then I can tell all the children in the world about the coronavirus!" said Sara. "I can be a hero! But wait, Aris, is it safe to travel with the coronavirus around?"</p> <p>"Only with me, Sara," said Aris. "Nothing can harm you when we are together!"</p> 
--	--	--	---

THE ARIO

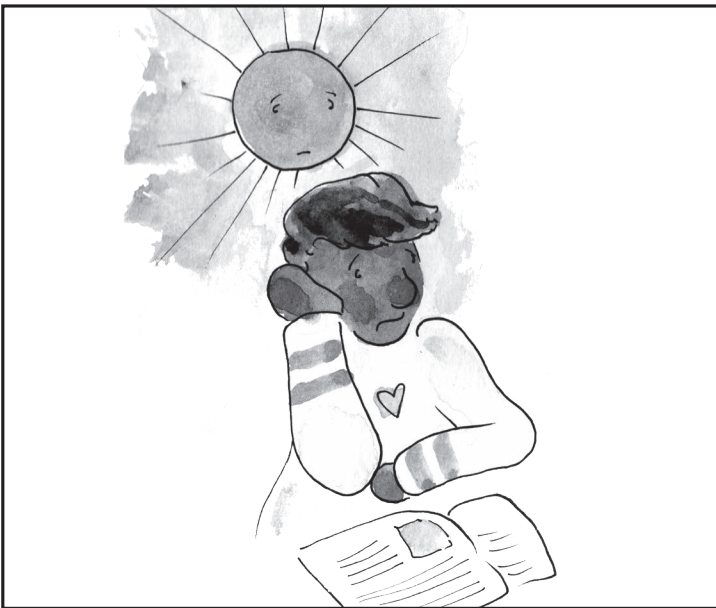
INFORMATION FOR ADULTS

CHILDREN SPEAK OUT

CHILD SAYS, "I LOVE BEING AT HOME"

Children have mixed feelings about how the virus has affected their lives. Some say that they hate the virus and that it has led them to be bored, lonely, angry and more.

Some children say they like being at home and spending time with their families. Other children say it's a relief not to attend school. Every child has a unique set of feelings.



AVOID JUDGEMENT. EXPERTS SAY, "LISTEN"

Adults need to listen and respond without judgement to what children share, especially about their feelings. Of course, some children are angry and frustrated. If we criticize children and disagree and tell them how they should feel, they might stop sharing. If a child says, "I want the virus to stay forever and stay out of

school" and the parent says, "School is important. With an attitude like that you'll never get good grades," the child will stop chatting. Children chat freely when adults listen and are not judgemental about what they say.

Children might also mention other reasons why they don't want to attend school, or other unrelated problems. If the children's CHATs are different from the messages in the book, adults can arrange to CHAT more after they have read further.

CHILDREN SPEAK OUT WITH IMPORTANT MESSAGES

We live in a challenging time. We can educate children about how to be safe, and encourage them to use their voices to be heroes who speak out to inform and protect others.



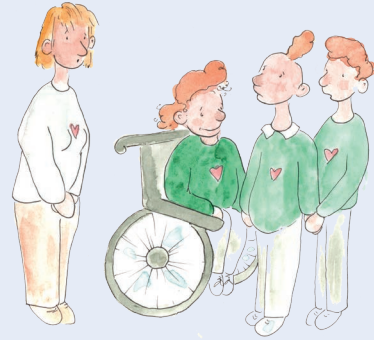
 **CHAT 2**

Let's CHAT 

In the story, Sara feels miserable. She feels that the coronavirus has turned her world upside down.

ASK children 

How do you feel about the coronavirus and what has it done to your life?



When you ask this, children will respond in different ways. They might say...

- "I'm happy. I like not having to go to school."
- "I miss my friends."
- "I hate the virus."
- "All day, every day, I am bored."

ASK children 

Right now, we don't know how to fight the coronavirus and make it go away. Sara has a different idea about how to help. What does Sara want to do?

When you ask this, children might say: "Sara wants to find a way to tell all the children in the world how to protect themselves, so they can protect everyone else."

ASK children 

Yes, Sara has courage. It's not easy for children to speak out and have their voices heard. Can you share a time when you used your voice to speak out for what you believe?

Children can give examples. If the children can't think of examples, adults can share examples that show a child speaking out.

Let's CHAT 

Sara went to sleep wanting to be a hero. In her dream, her imagination created Ario to help her figure out how to protect others against the virus. Let's keep reading to hear how Sara speaks out and makes her voice heard about how to protect others.

> **Read these pages of My Hero is You**



THE ARIO

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS

MANAGING OUR STRESS

ADULTS AND CHILDREN FEEL STRESSED

Today's times are stressful for everyone, in every country, in every city, on every street, across the world.

It is unrealistic to imagine that adults or children can be fully rid of all our stress. It is more realistic to learn to manage or cope with our stress. It is honest to acknowledge that we all feel stressed – adults and children – and CHAT with children about realistic ways they can cope that fit their ages, cultures and environments. Of course, you as adults also feel stress. Children will see and feel your stress and will often copy you.



BE HONEST AND SHARE YOUR STRESS

Finding ways to cope with your own stress is important for your peace of mind and is an example that your children can copy for how they can cope with their stress.

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S STRESS

Adults can assist children to find ways in which they can cope with their feelings of stress. It is important to be patient and try to understand children's reasons for feeling stressed. It is good to praise children for their efforts to cope and remain patient, since their stress won't disappear immediately.



BREATHING EXERCISES CAN HELP

Adults can teach children how to use breathing exercises to help them relax. It is good for adults to try the exercises themselves first so they feel the benefits, and then teach them to children. When adults teach the breathing exercises they should speak slowly and in a calm, low voice. If children breathe too fast, it will not be helpful. If children breathe too slowly, they will be uncomfortable. Adults can encourage children to continue to use the breathing exercises, to help them relax whenever they feel scared.

Some children might say, "The breathing did nothing." Adults can encourage these children to try it at times when they really feel scared and then see if it helps. Adults can also encourage children to think of other ways to relax.



CHAT 3

Let's CHAT

Ario flies Sara and Salem across the world. It is hard to believe that everyone is having the same symptoms of the same COVID-19 disease and that they need to take the same precautions. Sara and Salem are real heroes to go with Ario across the world and to share lessons about the ways we can protect ourselves to avoid getting sick.



ASK children

What is the advice that Sara and Salem are sharing?

Children will say: "They are warning everyone to avoid getting infected. They need to stay home and when they are outside not shake hands, stay apart from other people, wash their hands with soap and water, and cough into their sleeves not into the air."

Let's CHAT

Sara says that she feels "scared". Even in her dream, she is still scared and feels stressed about the changes the coronavirus has made to her life. Ario is a giant dragon, and even he is scared of the coronavirus.

ASK children

The big truth is that the coronavirus is scary. What does your body do when you feel scared?

Children might say:

- "I sweat."
- "I get a headache."
- "My legs want to run."
- "I feel jumpy."
- "I want to be sick."

Let's CHAT

Our bodies and our brains and our hearts talk together when we are scared. In our brains, we keep thinking over and over about what scares us. In our hearts, we feel scared. In our bodies [repeat what the children said].

We are all scared about the coronavirus. It is hard to be a hero and to protect yourself and others when you feel scared.

Even though the scary thing is still here, we can still take action to help us relax. Relaxing eases the feelings of stress in our bodies. When we ease the stress in our bodies, it slows down the thinking and the worry in our brains and calms our hearts and our fears.

Relaxing can help us to live with our stress. If we feel more relaxed, it is easier to think clearly and to find actions we can take.

ASK children

What do you do to help yourselves relax when you feel scared about the coronavirus?

Children might say:

- "I ignore it."
- "I get angry."
- "I go and play."
- "I cry."

ASK children

When you do these things, do you feel better?

Children might say:

- "Yes, for a little while."
- "No, it doesn't matter."
- "I don't know."

Let's CHAT

All your ideas are good. And, if they help you to relax, great. I have some more ideas about what to do when we get scared.

First, it is good to share and tell me or another adult when you feel scared. We can always CHAT, not only today when we read the storybook. I hope when you feel scared you will tell me and, together, we can find ways to help you to relax. Chatting can help us to relax. "A problem shared is a problem halved." There are lots of ways to relax. To relax, we can play sports, run, dance, sing or pray.

Ario says that, when he wants to relax, he breathes slowly and out comes fire. The fire sounds scary, but the slow breathing helps Ario to relax. We can do slow, deep breathing from our belly, without the scary fire.

Let's try it together. Breathing slowly and deeply can help us to relax. We breathe in slowly and as we breathe in we count in our heads 1...2...3...4...5. We hold our breathe and count 1...2...3. And, slowly we release the breath and count in our heads 1...2...3...4...5. Let's try it together. If you want, it's good to close your eyes. I will count aloud for you while you count in your head. We will do it 3 times.

Ready?



THE ARIO

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS

FEELING SAFE COMES FROM THE HEART

HOW CAN CHILDREN FEEL SAFE?

With the challenges of COVID-19, all children need support. Feelings of safety come from adults like moms, dads, grandparents, nannies, teachers and religious leaders. Where children live or the amount of money, toys, food or clothes that adults give them are not what help children feel safe.

Feelings of safety come from the heart. Adults offering sincere, compassionate support is what makes children feel safe. Feeling safe will allow children to cope with the challenges that now surround them.

CHATTING WITH A CHILD WHO HAS A PROBLEM

Teachers or other adults reading the story to a group need to take care about speaking with children about their problems in front of other children. If a child mentions a specific personal problem during a group reading, it is best to ask them to talk about it with you after the reading. It is always best to sit with the child separately to talk about how this child can feel safe.

It is particularly important to listen when a child says, "I never feel safe." It could take a long time to discuss this and understand why and what to do.

Whether you are the child's parent or teacher, your response should be similar. Since you are in the middle of reading a storybook, it is probably best to say to the child, "I am sorry to hear this. I would like to talk to you more about why you feel this way and what I can do to help. Let's read the story now and right after we can talk about it." Then, be sure to make time to talk to the child about their fears and find ways for them to feel safe.

GIVING HUGS?

Depending on the relationship with the child, there are different ways to physically show support. Parents or caregivers can give their children lots of hugs during and after the story to help them feel safe.

At school, with children wearing masks it is hard to see their emotions, so we need to ask how they feel since we cannot rely on body language alone.

Teachers cannot hug children freely so they need to find ways that are best in their culture to show their support. They can say to children, "Let's all give ourselves a hug." Teachers can hug themselves and teach the children how to wrap their arms around themselves and give themselves a hug. Adults can remind children that giving themselves a hug when they feel scared or sad can be helpful at any time.





CHAT 4

Let's CHAT 

Sara and Salem talk about how their grandparents make them feel safe. Living with the coronavirus has made everyone a bit scared. Feeling safe makes us take a big deep sigh of relief and feel the comfort of being hugged. Even if no one touches us, feeling safe lets us feel hugged. There are many ways to feel safe. For some kids, seeing their mother smile at them when they are having a hard time might make them feel safe. For other kids, staying at home and playing games with their brothers and sisters and not being teased helps them feel safe. Or having their father join their games can make them feel safe.

ASK children 

Who makes you feel safe, and what is it that they say or do that gives you a feeling of safety?

Children might say:

- "My Dad has no work. He stays at home all day now. He always looks miserable. Yesterday, we all put on masks and went outside. We just ran and tried to catch each other but did not touch. Playing with my Dad made me feel safe."
- "Eating dinner with my family makes me feel safe."a
- "Sitting around a campfire with the family all together makes me feel safe."

Let's CHAT 

The coronavirus makes us worry about another kind of safety. We worry about staying healthy and keeping our bodies safe from catching COVID-19. Ario praised Sasha because she is staying home. Her Dad is sick with COVID-19 and he is contagious and could give the virus to other people, so he is self-isolating and staying in his bedroom away from other people. Sasha is picking flowers outside and does not feel sick, but she lived in the same house with her Dad before he got sick.

Sometimes people can have the virus inside their bodies and feel fine, but they can still be contagious. Sasha is a hero because she is staying home and not taking any chances that she might have the virus and could make someone else sick. She and her Dad are staying home and keeping other people safe from getting sick.

Being in self-isolation is lonely. There are many things that Sasha could do to bring a smile to her Dad's face. It doesn't matter whether Sasha is in a wheelchair or walking or from the same country as us or from another, we can all bring a smile to someone we love. This is especially important when the person we love has a problem. For example, Sasha could sing outside her Dad's window.

ASK children 

In what other ways can Sasha help her Dad smile while he is sick?

Children could say:

- "Sasha could draw pictures and push them under the door of his room."
- "Sasha could put flowers on the tray her Dad gets for his food."
- "She could chat to her Dad outside his door."

ASK children

Let's pretend that we are Sasha's father. What does he say to Sasha after she sings to him to let her know how he feels about her singing?

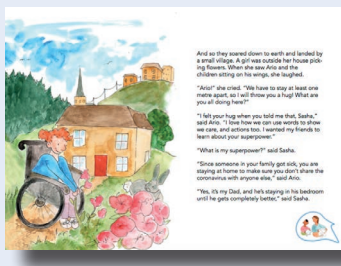
Children might say that Sasha's father could say:

- "Your singing made me feel better."
- "Your singing made me happy. Thanks. I love you."

Let's CHAT

Feeling safe and closely connected to other people during COVID-19 is important. We can feel hugged if every day we remember to do something for each other that brings a smile and makes us feel safe.

> Read this page of My Hero is You



THE ARIO

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS

FAMILIES FIGHT COVID-19 TOGETHER

FAMILIES ARE AT HOME DAY AFTER DAY

Before COVID-19, we wished for days when families could get extra time together. We welcomed days when dads and mums had no work or other things to do and children had no school and we could spend our days together. With COVID-19, too much of that wish has come true. Now, stuck together day after day, we often wish for more to do. Yet, it seems that we need to get used to being at home and surrounded by family more. Rather than wake up every morning dreading the day, it seems best to find new ways to improve being at home.

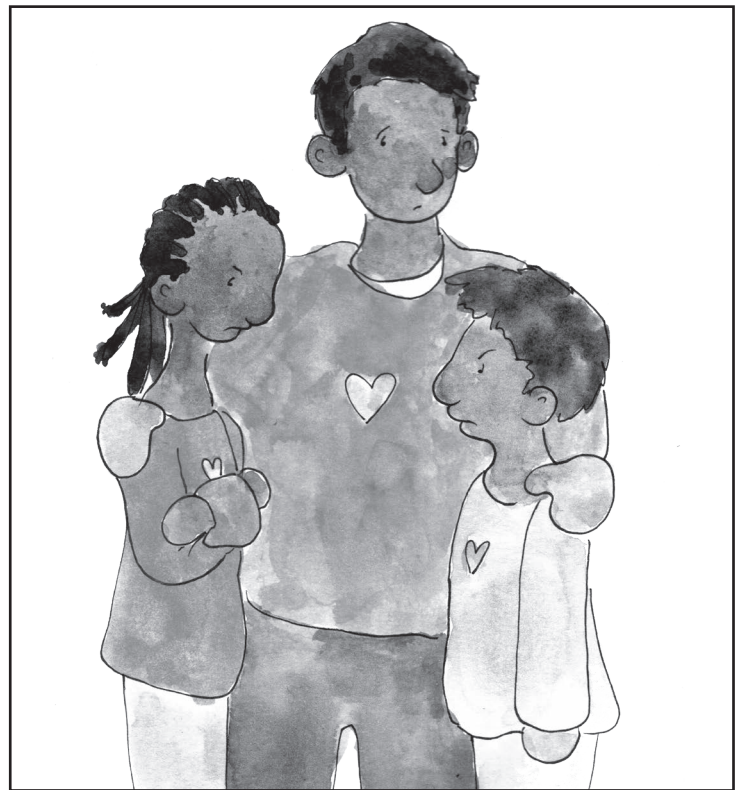
AGREE ON A DAILY ROUTINE



Families need routines for a set time to wake up, eat and go to sleep. It is good for everyone to have chores and to share responsibilities for cooking and cleaning. We need clear plans for how children can have space to do schoolwork and how adults can work from home. What to do for fun also takes some family planning, since the usual home activities may have become boring. It's not healthy for families to just sit around, so exercise and fresh air need to be part of a plan. However, like Sasha said, a bit of time alone and space for oneself also feels good.

TALK IT OUT

Continual family togetherness can lead to short tempers and disagreements. It is best for adults to agree with children on a few fixed ways to manage problems. For example, when a disagreement becomes tense and words and actions are making it worse, it is best to separate. It is always best to avoid saying or doing things in the heat of an angry moment that you will later regret. Moving to a separate space or corner and using slow breathing to relax and cool down is helpful.



It can be useful to involve a third party to mediate and to help solve issues. Then you can go back to being together after you agree that you are cool enough to talk. Problems are best solved with talk!

Each person talks – one by one – and everyone listens. The goal is to solve problems, so we need to stay positive and not blame or accuse each other or bear a grudge. Learning to compromise, with each person feeling heard, leads to solving problems together and giving everyone some of what they want.

  **CHAT 5**

Let's CHAT 

Being at home together all the time is both wonderful and difficult. First, let's talk about what's wonderful. [Adults share first, saying what is wonderful for them].

ASK children 

What is wonderful for you about us being at home together more than ever before?



Children might say:

- "It's wonderful doing my schoolwork with you. It's only you and me so I can understand everything."
- "It's wonderful to have Dad home and not at work all the time."
- "It's wonderful to stay up late together every night."

Let's CHAT 

Salem and Sasha talked about family fights. Sometimes families fight when they get angry or frustrated with each other. At other times, they end up fighting when they get tired or bored or just need some time alone. Sasha gave some good advice. She said that the best way to solve problems in her family is to be "extra patient, and extra understanding, and even quicker to say I'm sorry". I like Sasha's advice for fixing family fights.

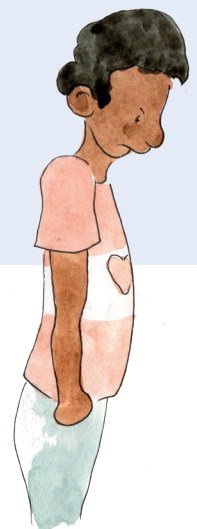
Fighting with your family always feels bad. We can think together about ways to fix family fights. I have one idea. When we feel angry or frustrated, we move away from each other. We find a separate room or corner to be in and we say, "Please, I need space" and everyone respects this. After about 10 minutes, we can ask each other, "Are you ready to talk?" If family members are fighting, it is best for them to wait long enough until both are cool and ready to talk. The fighters then sit together and talk. Each person talks – one by one – and everyone listens. The goal is to solve the problems, so we need to stay positive and not blame or accuse each other. Each person will have to give the other some of what they want to solve the problem. If we stay calm and talk, maybe we can avoid fighting in the first place.

ASK children 

What other ideas do you have to fix our problems to avoid a fight?

Children might say:

- "I like your idea. No one listens to me when I get angry. It makes me angrier."
- "My teacher needs to listen to all sides of a fight not just one kid."
- "My Mom needs to listen to me when I get angry."



Let's CHAT

Sasha's advice is also good in school. She said that the best way to solve problems is to be "extra patient, and extra understanding, and even quicker to say I'm sorry". Sometimes children fight in school. It is best if we take Sasha's advice and avoid fights by being patient and understanding with each other. Let's remember to listen when someone is angry to understand why. If it is your fault, say "I'm sorry". If the other person is being unkind or is teasing or bullying you, please tell an adult. Avoid the fight. Tell an adult, so they can help you to solve it.

> Read this page of My Hero is You



THE ARIO

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS

COVID-19 HAS NO BOUNDARIES



STAYING SAFE HAS EXTRA CHALLENGES WHEN LIVING IN A CAMP

COVID-19 has no boundaries. It has infected people across the world. Ario has flown into a camp where many people are living closely together.

Adults can teach children about why Leila and other children live in camps. Dangerous situations where people are fighting, or there is not enough food, or there was a flood or a fire or another disaster can cause people to move into a camp. Some people have to leave their homes and go to a camp in another country to live safely, while others can live safely in a camp in their own country. Most hope to return to their own homes some day but this is not always possible.

In these camps, people have greater risks of getting infected by COVID-19. It is difficult for children to follow the rules that can protect them if they live in crowded conditions with shortages of water and soap. In these situations, children become heroes by finding creative ways to stay safe from the virus. They can share information about practical ways to be safe that fit camp life to help protect others.

WE ARE ALL LEARNING THE SAME NEW RULES

Adults can explain that many people live in each camp and that it is especially difficult to follow the rules that can protect them from COVID-19. Even though it is more difficult for Leila, she is doing her best to follow the same rules to stay protected.

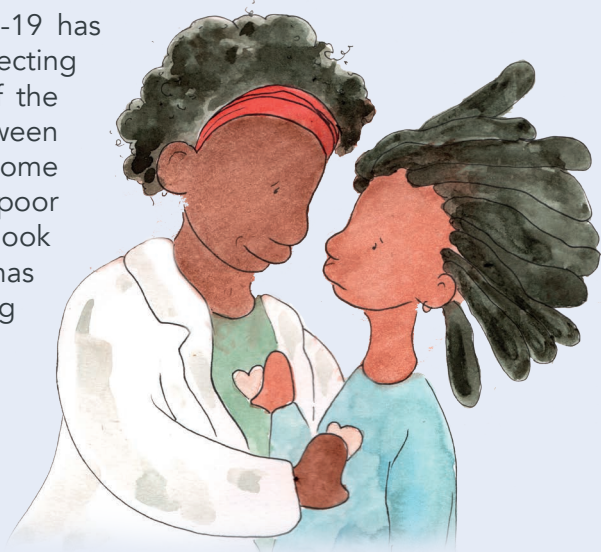


Let's CHAT

Ario took Sara and Salem far away. COVID-19 has no boundaries. It has travelled the world, infecting people wherever it goes – from one end of the world to another, crossing boundaries between countries and infecting people who live at home or in camps. It finds people who are rich or poor with all colours, ages and religions. If we look closely at the picture, we can see that Ario has landed in a camp where many people are living closely together.

ASK children

What challenges do you think Leila will have living in a camp and trying to stay safe from the coronavirus?



Children might say:

- “She might not have enough water to wash her hands.”
- “It might be hard to be physically distant if many people live close together.”
- “If her mother gets sick, where will they isolate if they live in one tent?”

Let's CHAT

Living in a camp is very difficult, so it will be harder for Leila to stay safe from the coronavirus.

Leila asked a question that I find hard to answer. She asked, “Is it true people can die from coronavirus?” I would prefer that your life does not include any heartache ever. Let's read how Ario answers Leila's question...

> Read these pages of My Hero is You



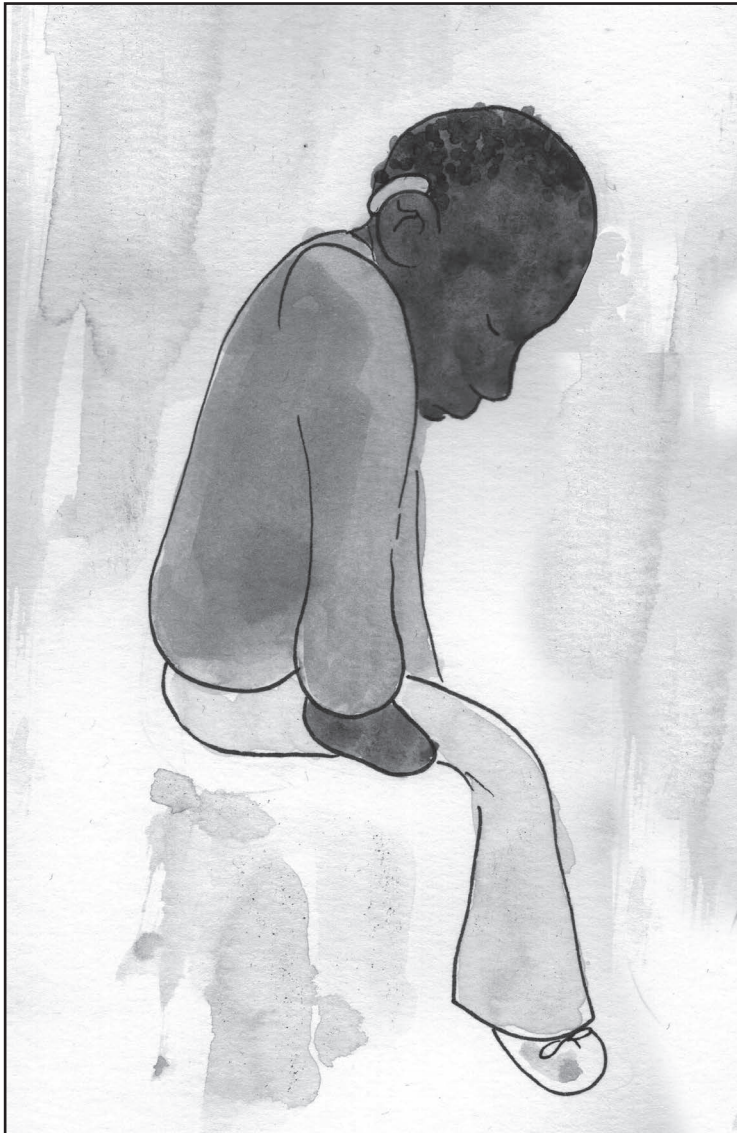
THE ARIO

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS

HOW TO DEAL WITH A BROKEN HEART?

ADULTS CAN PREPARE CHILDREN FOR LOSS

This is the most challenging CHAT. Adults have a responsibility to protect children, keep them safe and shield them the best they can from heartache. Sadly, this is not always possible. Life's realities force adults to prepare children for how to live even when their hearts ache. Adults will leave children unprepared and alone if they skip this CHAT and avoid leading them safely through reality.



"IS IT TRUE PEOPLE CAN DIE FROM CORONAVIRUS?" ASKS LEILA

The difficult answer to Leila's question, "Is it true people can die from coronavirus?" is "YES". It is best for adults to be honest so that children can trust them to tell the truth. As hard as it is, adults need to talk with children about living with death. For some people, faith and spirituality are important to help children to live with death. Adults can change this CHAT to include what is most important for their culture, traditions and religion.





CHAT 7

Let's CHAT 

Leila asked a question that is difficult to answer. She asked, "Is it true some people die from coronavirus?" Ario answered Leila's question by saying, "Some people don't feel sick at all, but some people can be very sick and some might die."

I would prefer that your life never includes any heartache. I, along with your whole family and everyone who loves you, will do everything we can to protect you. Sadly, death is a part of life and affects all of us. I am unable to protect you from experiencing death. This is one of the realities in all our lives that causes us heartache. Our lives take many twists and turns and I am here to help you to manage them.

Yes, some people do die from COVID-19. Most often they are people who are older or people who are already sick with another disease. We must be extra careful to protect these people from getting infected. Sometimes, mums, dads or big brothers, sisters or even children die from COVID-19. It does not happen often, but it can happen. Even when we are careful, sometimes people still get sick and die. No one is to blame. It is no one's fault. Having people we love die is something we will all experience at some time in our lives.

When someone dies, it really helps to talk about how we feel to someone who cares about us. We can hug each other. We can share the stories of our memories about the person who died. When people die, we miss them. By sharing memories of when we were happy together, we can remember these people and keep them alive in our hearts.

Now, we will learn the way that Ario suggested to Sara, Salem and Leila for managing their feelings when they feel sad or scared or unsafe. Ario suggested that they imagine inside their minds the look, feel and smell of a place that once made them happy. Ario thought that imagining a guest to go with you to this place could help you feel better. Your guest can be anyone you choose. So, think of who you want to take to that place with you. I suggest that we add a few deep breaths to all this imagining, like we learned earlier, to relax.

This imagining can help us when we are feeling sad or anxious. Right now, we are enjoying a story and that feel good. So, let me remind you of the creepy coronavirus with all its legs. That makes all of us feel a little scared.



Let's CHAT

Now, we will try to manage our anxious feelings. Please, close your eyes. Let's start with our breathing.

Slowly, as I count, take a deep breath, 1...2...3...4...5. Hold your breath, 1...2...3... Slowly, as I count, release your breath, 1...2...3...4...5.

Remember a time when you felt safe. Imagine a picture in your head of how it looked, remember how you felt in that place, and even remember how it smelled. Now, imagine that you are bringing your guest to that safe place with you. Let yourself feel safe. Now, imagine a happy time in that place with your guest. Imagine that you smile at your guest.

Slowly, as I count, take a deep breath, 1...2...3...4...5. Hold your breath, 1...2...3... Slowly, as I count, release your breath, 1...2...3...4...5.

Remember, I am here to help keep you safe. Whenever you feel unhappy, scared or confused, remember we can always CHAT.

Let's open our eyes. Let's come back from our imagining to each other and to Leila, Sara, Salem and Ario. In our storybook, Ario told Leila that he and many other people care about her and about Sara and Salem. Let's read what Leila answers.

> **Read this page of My Hero is You**



Leila said, "We can all care for each other."
"That's right, Leila," said Ario. "We can care for each other, wherever we are. Would you like to come with us on our last journey?"

Leila decided to travel with Ario and her new friends. Sara was glad Leila joined them because she knew that sometimes we need to support each other. They flew quietly, without words, but Leila knew her new friends cared a lot about her.



THE ARIO

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS

WHEN ARE WE SAFE FROM A PERSON WHO WAS INFECTED?

WELCOME BACK AFTER COVID-19

Some people catch the coronavirus and get sick, but most get better. Once they are no longer contagious, they are no risk to anyone. Logically, we should be happy to see them, and to eat, socialize and play together like before they were sick. Why doesn't it always happen like that? Why are some people who have had the coronavirus rejected by their friends, family and communities?



FEAR SHOULD NOT BE STRONGER THAN SCIENCE

Even though science teaches us that a person is now safe, many people don't want to take any chances, so they keep their distance. People who were sick are sometimes rejected by others. People don't want to be rejected, so sometimes they pretend to be well and continue to work, go to school and socialize even when they are sick with COVID-19. Others need to work to feed their families, so they decide to work even though they know they are sick.

Self-isolating when you are sick is helping to stop the spread of the virus. Children can be heroes and learn to be responsible citizens by saying when they are sick, so they can get the care they need. Children can learn to love and care for people at a distance when they are sick and be ready to accept their friends and family back into their lives just as soon as they are no longer contagious.





CHAT 8

Let's CHAT 

Feeling safe and cared for, Sara, Salem and Leila circle the world with Ario. At the next stop, Ario introduces them to Kim, who explains all about how he felt when he was sick with COVID-19.

ASK children 

My first thought is, "I'm glad I wasn't there when Kim got sick. Why would I think that?"

Children might respond:

- "The coronavirus can jump from Kim to you and you don't want to be sick and die."
- "I'm also glad I'm not there."
- "No one wants to be near anyone who was sick with COVID-19."

Let's CHAT 

We know that the coronavirus is sneaky. We don't see it as it passes from one person to another with ease. This virus does not infect all people in the same way. Some people get very sick and some less sick. Sometimes, we can't tell that people have the virus at all. Not everyone who gets sick tells other people that they are sick – they keep it a secret. Sometimes people are rejected if they get sick, so they keep it a secret because they don't want to lose their friends. To keep everyone protected from the coronavirus, it is important that everyone says, "I feel sick. I need your help," immediately when they are sick.

ASK children 

What can we do to encourage everyone to speak out immediately when they are sick?

Children might respond:

- "We can let them know we won't reject them."
- "We can offer them help, like buying them food, when they are sick."

Let's CHAT 

It is a big relief that the coronavirus doesn't stay in a person's body forever. When they are no longer contagious, we have no worries since we will not get the coronavirus from them. They are the same person as they were before they got sick. It is safe to talk and play and be together. People will feel safe to say, "I am sick" when they know that they will get our support. There are many kind, safe ways we can show our support. Adults can help by delivering food and medicine to people who are sick and running errands for them. Adults and children can call them on the phone and tell them they care about them. Children can copy Leila and sing at their windows. Most important is to remember to care for those who are sick – especially if they are older or alone.

Let's CHAT

Back to our story – it is almost the end. Ario puts Sara back into her bed. Her journey around the world has ended. When Sara began her journey, she was scared and felt that the coronavirus had stolen her life. She wanted to be a hero and protect herself and to tell children all over the world how to be safe. When she went to sleep, she did not know how to do this. As Ario says goodbye, Sara tells him, “You are my hero.” I imagine Ario smiled when he said, “You are my hero too, Sara.”

ASK children

What did Ario and Sara do that makes them both heroes?

Children might say:

- “They told children all over the world how to be safe and avoid catching the coronavirus.”

Let's CHAT

They were heroes because they went around the world and made sure that all children knew how to protect themselves from being infected by the coronavirus.

ASK children

What did all the children learn to do to be protected?

Children might say:

- “To wash our hands with soap and water.”
- “Stay home.”
- “If I go outside to play, then I don't touch my eyes or nose until I wash my hands.”
- “When I am outside of the house, I should wear a mask.”



Let's CHAT

It is important to remember all these rules of protection to avoid getting infected with the coronavirus:

- Wash your hands with soap and water many times a day.
- Don't touch your eyes or nose until you wash your hands.
- Stay at home or close to home if you go out to play.
- Avoid big groups of people.
- Wear a mask outside of the house.
- When outside of the house, keep a safe physical distance.
- When you return to school, follow school rules to stay safe.

If you do get the coronavirus or you have symptoms and might have the virus, be a hero, be responsible. Immediately, tell those people close to you so you can keep them safe and not infect them. When you know people are sick, offer your kind support. Lastly, when they are healthy again, be there just as you were before they got sick.

ASK children

Do you have any questions about anything we have read or talked about?

Let's CHAT

When we join together, we can keep each other safe so we are all protected. Let's go back to Sara. She's now in her bed...

> [Read this page of My Hero is You](#)



THE ARIO

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS

YOU ARE THE HERO!

THANK YOU, ADULTS!

The storybook is finished, and you have shared a lot of important information with children to teach them how to keep themselves and others safe from the coronavirus.

You can feel proud that your children can now be HEROES and help to protect others.

Please continue to chat with your children about the messages that all of you have learned from the storybook.



 **CHAT 9**

Let's CHAT 

I like this last picture in the storybook where Sara and her Mum are smiling and hugging. At the beginning of the book, Sara was miserable. Now, Sara is smiling. She chats with her Mum and shares all about her adventures around the world. Sara's Mum says, "My biggest hero is you." Sara's smile says that she agrees. Sara feels strong like a hero because she now knows how to protect herself from the coronavirus and feels that she can help others to protect themselves.



ASK children 

Can you share some stories of times when you were a hero protecting or preventing yourself or others from getting the coronavirus?

Children might say:

- "Grandma went outside to the market. I saw that she forgot her mask and ran home to fetch it for her."
- "My Dad was sick with the coronavirus and my little brother kept sneaking into Dad's room to play with him. I locked Dad's door and took my brother to the window and we made silly faces through the window to Dad."

Let's CHAT 

These are great stories and they show that you have learned a lot. Now that you know how to be a coronavirus hero you can protect your friends and families and show them how to be safe.

YOU are my hero!

> **Read this page of My Hero is You**



Links to *My Hero is You* further resources

- *My Hero is You, How kids can fight COVID-19!* storybook available in 135+ languages:

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/my-hero-is-you>

- Adaptations and country level initiatives of *My Hero is You, How kids can fight COVID-19!*:

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/adaptations-my-hero-is-you>

- Stanford Animation based on *My Hero is You, How kids can fight COVID-19!*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdO7MHICkys>

This video shows the story of Sara through a beautiful short animation. If your internet connection allows, you can watch the animation together with your children and reflect and chat together afterwards. You can ask children questions such as, 'what did you like about the video?', 'what did you learn from the video?'.

