



A Hopeful, Healthy & Happy Living & Learning

TOOLKIT

Parent-Caregiver Guide

A glimpse into the lives of six families around the world during the COVID-19 pandemic



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**This booklet has been developed for parents and caregivers
and is designed to provide guidance and inspiration
around psychosocial wellbeing in the household in the face of challenges
presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.**

A hopeful, healthy, and happy living and learning toolkit has been developed by REPSSI, MHPSS.net and the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support (PS Centre) with support from Education Cannot Wait. There are three tools in this toolkit. They are: (1) Guide for Teachers, (2) Parent-Caregiver Guide and (3) Psychosocial Activity Guide for Teachers, Parents and Children. The toolkit is designed to facilitate support for everyone affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but may be useful for anyone, anywhere, and any time.

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Foreword

A Hopeful, Healthy and Happy Living and Learning Toolkit

The **COVID-19 pandemic** has made life very difficult for families and school communities across the globe. Schools have been closed in many countries for short or more extended periods of time and many schools have switched to remote teaching for all their students. Movement restrictions during curfews and lockdowns have also had consequences for children, preventing them from being outdoors enjoying sport and other leisure activities. Apart from frontline workers, everyone has been confined to home and parents and caregivers have found themselves with the added responsibility of supporting their children's learning. For a substantial number of children, the pandemic has had profound effects on their own psychosocial wellbeing and that of their families. They may have had parents, caregivers, siblings or close relatives who have lost their jobs and their homes. Some children will have witnessed family members falling ill with COVID-19 and may even have lost loved ones. It has been a time of great uncertainty.

Education cannot wait. A hopeful, healthy, and happy living and learning toolkit has been developed by REPSSI and the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support (PS Centre) in response to the pandemic. We have put together a set of materials directed towards children, parents, caregivers and teachers in various settings, which promote psychosocial wellbeing

and link with key life skills to strengthen social and emotional learning. There are three tools in this toolkit, including the Hopeful, Healthy and Happy Guide for Teachers, the Hopeful, Healthy and Happy Parent-Caregiver Guide and the Hopeful, Healthy and Happy Psychosocial Support Activity Guide for Teachers, Parents and Children.

The Guide for Teachers has been designed for teachers in supporting children in their return to school in the wake of the pandemic. It opens with a set of general group-building exercises, followed by themed activities focussing on 16 key life skills supporting the personal, cognitive and interpersonal development of children. The exercises are suitable for a wide range of different age groups from pre-school to secondary school. The exercises could also be combined with sports and leisure activities in clubs or community centres, and in safe spaces for children in humanitarian settings.

The Parent-Caregiver Guide features six fictional families from different corners of the world who are facing challenges in their lives in the course of dealing with COVID-19. Positive messages to encourage parents and caregivers in the care of their children at this demanding time are given such as structuring the day, taking time to check in with one another, using positive discipline, talking about loss, dealing with stigma, and protecting children online. At the end of the guide, there is a useful checklist for the whole household to help everyone reflect on how



they are doing as a family. There is also a set of prompts for families who wish to make a COVID-19 hero book.

The Psychosocial Support Activity Guide for Teachers, Parents and Children features fun activities for children at home, in school or for remote use. In a home learning environment, for example, the activities could be done with a sibling group. Each activity is flagged as best done with a group or whether it may be adapted for use with a single child. The activities have been carefully designed to engage with children in relation to social and emotional learning around self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and decision-making.

We hope the Education cannot wait. A hopeful, healthy, and happy living and learning toolkit provides useful resources for families and school communities for current times in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. We feel it has a broader reach too, being equally relevant to any kind of crisis or emergency in seeking to support the health, happiness and hopefulness of communities wherever they may be.

Introduction

Across the globe COVID-19 has made things very difficult for parents and caregivers and the children in their care. Often schools close, reopen with new safety routines, close again, plan to reopen, postpone reopening, and so on. As well as having to work from home and run the home, many parents and caregivers are also trying to keep their children up to speed with their virtual schoolwork, using the platforms of the internet, television or radio. At the same time, everyone is confined to home and cut off from the support of friends and loved ones. There is also a lot of anxiety around whether the vaccination will work. The boundaries between school and home, as well as between teacher and parent, have become blurred. Parents may struggle to become teachers and children may struggle to become pupils of their parents. With

the whole family occupying the same space day after day, the strain and tension can build up. If one or both caregivers have lost their job or have lost some or all of their income, the financial pressure can add even more stress.

This parent and caregiver guide uses 'made-up' families to demonstrate how you can keep your stress levels down and make each day a little easier for the whole family including yourself. The key message to parents and caregivers is this: Try to encourage, promote and reward healthy, co-operative, helpful, caring behaviours contributing to self development and peace in the home, rather than become trapped in a cycle of frustration, conflict, punishment and resentment.



How to use this guide

You can read these stories with other caregivers in the home and discuss them. Depending on the age of your children, you can even read them together with your children simplifying and explaining where necessary. Take them on a 'coping with COVID-19 journey across the planet.' Each story might become a children's story – showing the child or children the illustration, explaining a little about the family in the illustration, explaining where in the world they live, the challenges they face, and how they meet these challenges. You might add details of your own, allowing time for the child or children to ask questions, providing answers, asking them how this story might help them in their own life.

Once you have read all of the stories, you might want to move towards supporting your child or

children to make their own story about coping in the time of COVID-19.

There is also guidance in supporting your children to make their own or family hero books in the time of COVID-19.

We hope this guide is useful for you.

For a story for children about a hero in the time of COVID-19, see <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/my-hero-you>



The Importance of Structure

MEET THE BEN FAMILY (LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM)

The Ben family lives in London in the United Kingdom. Mrs Ben works for a computer company but due to COVID-19 works from home. Mr Ben lost his job due to COVID-19 and is unemployed. Their 10 year old son Luke is disabled (he has Down syndrome) and requires a lot of attention. Luke loves drawing. Their 12 year old daughter Holly enjoys spending time on social media on her phone. Mr and Mrs Ben think she enjoys this too much and try to limit her time online. Both Holly's school and Luke's care centre are closed due to COVID-19.

DAILY SCHEDULE OF THE BEN FAMILY

In the beginning, the family found it difficult to find a routine under the new circumstances. Every day felt a bit chaotic and was simply a struggle to get through. The family noticed that Luke especially was not coping well with the unstructured time – he was anxious, frustrated and acting out. However, by developing a schedule together a sense of structure and calm began to establish itself.

	Mon	tues	Wed	thurs	fri	Sat	Sun
7am	break fast	break fast	break fast	break fast	break fast	break fast	break fast
8am	home WORK	home WORK	home WORK	home WORK	home WORK	free time	free time
9am	One on one time Holly	One on one time Luke	One on one time Holly	One on one time Luke	one on one time Holly	One on one time Luke	One on one time Holly
10 am	One on one time Luke	One on one time Holly	One on one time Luke	One on one time Holly	One on one time Luke	one on one time Holly	One on one time Luke
11 am	house cleaning	house cleaning	house cleaning	house cleaning	house cleaning	house cleaning	house cleaning
12 PM	free time	free time	free time	free time	free time	free time	free time
1 pm	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch

- The Ben family made a daily schedule a week in advance for themselves.
- Children will follow a schedule better if they help to make it and to put it into practice (give them turns to be 'the person in charge').
- The schedule has time for structured activities, chores, fun activities to do, as well as free time.
- The structure and predictability of the schedule can help children feel more secure leading to more pro-social behaviour.
- The structure can also help parents and caregivers feel that things are more under control and relieve their stress.
- The schedule includes physical exercise in each day - this helps with stress and helps children burn up lots of energy.
- A big emphasis is placed on hygiene such as handwashing while singing a fun song that takes twenty seconds (for younger children).



Image by Yo David Soto from Pixabay

Supporting children with special needs

during COVID-19

- Children with special needs (physical, social, intellectual or psychological disabilities) face additional barriers and require special assistance.
- Changes in routine may be confusing for children with special needs and may lead to feelings they can't describe or understand such as fear and frustration. Behaviour changes sometimes may occur.
- Providing a comfortable and predictable environment may help your child feel safe and in control. This is true for all children.
- Spend time together doing things your child enjoys.
- If there has been a change in the child's schedule due to COVID-19, your child may have difficulty with the change in schedule and/or the environment.
- Help your child to keep busy throughout the day and try to keep a structure in your child's day.
- Depending on the disability you may need to repeat activities/instructions/messages many times before your child can understand.
- If your child attended school or a centre for children with disabilities before the lockdown, he or she may not understand why things have changed. Explain that in order to help keep everyone healthy, sometimes students have to stay home instead of going to their school or centre. Reassure your child that he or she is safe at home.
- Familiarise yourself with means of communication used at school with your child such as the type of sign language used or braille. This will help maintain his/her inclusion in activities at home.
- Your child may miss friends and family. Stay connected at regular intervals with family and friends by phone or through other electronic devices.
- It is alright to reach out to others to get the support you need.

START THE DAY ON A POSITIVE NOTE, EMOTIONAL CHECK IN AND EMPATHY

- The family begin their day enjoying breakfast together.
- Mrs Ben asks if everyone slept well.
- Mr Ben often asks the whole family to name two feelings they are feeling, one good and one not so good.
- He then asks everyone to retell what the others are feeling to encourage empathy (understanding the emotions of others) as a life skill.
- Holly and Luke help to prepare the meal and set the table.
- Older children can help care for younger children, taking pressure off parents.
- At the start to the day, parents should keep things positive and set a positive tone for the day.
- The family can review the plans for the day (connected to learning and to other parts of their lives). Everyone can take a turn to say a) what they are looking forward to on this day and b) what they are worried about.





One-on-one time, Emotional check in

- By listening to children they will feel supported and reassured.
- It is important to listen to your children especially when they share how they are feeling and doing.
- Be open and show them that you hear what they are saying.
- It can help to even summarise what you have heard before responding by saying, "What I hear you saying is..."

ONE-ON-ONE TIME (SPECIAL TIME WITH EACH CHILD)

- With so many people in the home, things can become crowded and chaotic and children can feel unsettled and neglected.
- That is why it is important to spend one-on-one time with each child separately.
- It can be for just 20 minutes or longer, as often as feels possible.
- It can be at the same time each day so children or teenagers can look forward to it.
- This one-on-one time can take the form of homework support, or it can be doing something the child chooses, for example, playing their favourite game with them, or just talking and listening, tuning in to the child.



Promoting Pro-Social Behaviour rather than Negative Discipline

MEET THE NAIDOO-KALA HOUSEHOLD (CALCUTTA, INDIA)

In the Naidoo-Kala household there is Deepa, Giva, Aarush, Krisha and Aditya. Deepa and Giva are both widows who now live in the same home to support each other because their husbands are no longer alive. Deepa used to work as a seamstress and Giva used to work in a shop. Aarush is six years old, Krisha is four years old

and Aditya is two years old. They live in a high-density suburb in Calcutta, India. Both Deepa and Giva are unemployed due to job losses as a result of COVID-19. To put food on the table they run a small business making and selling masks to protect people from COVID-19.



- It is understandable that when children are confined indoors they make a noise and a mess.
- It is also understandable that adults in the same space as them might become irritated and angry.
- Deepa who is trying to do some work. However, she manages to control her anger and does not resort to shouting or violence.
- When Deepa encounters anti-social or 'bad' behaviour such as fighting, shouting, teasing or quarrelling amongst her children, she takes five deep breaths, counting up to five with each breath. Then she communicates the desired behaviour - *"I know you can play this game without fighting and making such a big noise and mess"*- rather than shouting *"YOU MUST NOT MAKE SUCH A LOT OF NOISE AND SUCH A BIG MESS!"*
- Instead she rewards pro-social (helpful and considerate) behaviour and uses positive discipline methods rather than shouting at or hitting the children.
- We often think of discipline as punishment after someone does something wrong. Positive discipline refers to promoting desired behaviours rather than punishing anti-social or unhealthy behaviours.
- Parents often feel like they are policemen and women -always controlling behaviour and always saying, *"Do this,"* or *"Don't do that."* You may want to make a different child 'the leader' on different days, empowering the children to own and promote the different rules and structure of the day.
- In the box below there is a list of pro-social behaviours and psychosocial skills you might want to encourage and reward.

Rewarding and encouraging pro-social behaviours

Whether under lockdown, in quarantine or self-isolation, or not, the following psychosocial skills or life skills are important both for psychological and social wellbeing. These are important skills for both children and adults:

SELF-AWARENESS

RECOGNISING AND ACCEPTING EMOTIONS

BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND OPTIMISM

SELF-MANAGEMENT

SELF MOTIVATION

GOAL SETTING

ORGANISATIONAL AND TIME MANAGEMENT

IMPULSE CONTROL

SOCIAL AWARENESS

PERSPECTIVE TAKING AND EMPATHY

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

NEGOTIATION AND CO-OPERATION

NEGOTIATING PEER PRESSURE

HANDLING CONFLICT AND ASSERTIVENESS

GETTING HELP WHEN IT IS NEEDED

MAKING GOOD CHOICES

See the Psychosocial Support Activity Guide for Teachers, Caregivers and Children that is part of this toolkit for more information on how to support children to develop these skills.

Positive discipline

- **Positive discipline** is a discipline model used by schools and by parents. It focuses on the positive points of behaviour rather than on punishment. It is based on the idea that there are no bad children, just good and bad behaviours.
- Discipline is important but we should not only associate it with punishment. Rather think of discipline as the ability to regularly abide by rules and have control over one's behaviour.
- Desired behaviour can be taught and reinforced while weaning the undesired behaviours without hurting the child verbally or physically.
- People engaging in positive discipline are not ignoring problems. They are in fact actively involved in helping the child learn how to handle situations more appropriately while remaining calm, friendly and respectful to the children themselves.
- Positive discipline is in contrast to negative discipline. **Negative discipline** may involve angry, destructive, or violent responses to inappropriate behaviour. It is recommended that you use no negative discipline at all.
- Children are much more likely to do what we ask if we give them positive instructions and lots of praise for what they do right.
- Catch problem behaviour early and redirect your child's attention towards a desired behaviour.
- Shouting at your child will just make you and them more stressed and angry. If you hit them you will be teaching them to use violence or physical force to solve conflicts. It might also affect the trust relationship. Get your child's attention by using their name. Be firm, but kind and with affection. Speak in a calm voice and give your instruction or communicate whatever it is that you want.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Aarush (six years old) and Krisha (four years old) get into a big fight. This happens often. Deepa goes online and reads up about conflict resolution and mediation for children.

She found this:

https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/young_children_can_learn_how_to_resolve_conflicts_with_adult_guidance_and_s

- **Help children calm down.** Often when children are faced with conflict they are full of emotion and are not ready to begin a process of resolution. Approach the child calmly at their eye level and use gentle touch. Acknowledge that there is an issue and suggest some ways to calm down. *"I see that you have a problem. It looks like you*

might need to take a few deep breaths to relax a little." Stay neutral! When adults attempt to find blame in a conflict the situation can easily escalate strong emotions. Children at this point need to feel they are being heard in order to calm down.

- **'Contain' emotionally charged situations.** Young children lose control in emotionally charged situations because their ability to control their emotions and behaviour is less developed. Adults therefore can help them a great deal by 'containing the situation' and being the calm one who is in control of the situation.
- **Talk about wants and needs.** All children who are involved in a conflict need to have an opportunity to express what it is that they want or need. Stay focused on the 'want' and don't focus on what happened. Reflect what the child is feeling by acknowledging their feelings with a head nod, short phrases,



or repeating what they are saying in a clear manner. *"You really wanted that toy and Krisha had it in her hand."* Give the child's feeling a name. *"It is frustrating to want something that someone else has."*

- **Define the problem.** After getting the child to voice his or her want or need you will have to turn the issue into one neutral statement. Repeat what the children involved in the conflict are saying in a clear statement. *"Hmmm, I see that two children want to play with the same toy."*
- **Help the children find a solution that is fair to both parties.** One easy way to get the children thinking about ways to solve a problem is to restate the issue and ask a question that begins with the word 'what.' *"What could you do to solve this problem?" "What other choices do you think might work?"* Help the children who are involved in the conflict to brainstorm a list of solutions before you assist them in moving forward to put one into practice. In many cases it may seem much

easier to just tell children what they should do. But by solving the problem for children you are depriving them of an opportunity to learn how to solve their own problems. Children can only learn this skill by trial and error. Both parties involved in the conflict will need to try the solution to see if it will work.

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY – CREATIVE LESSONS

- Deepa and Giva know that the children are losing out on educational experiences at school and that Aarush in particular needs practice with maths.
- Giva creates a game which is fun but that also demands mathematical reasoning.
- Deepa gets creative with lessons too. She does cooking with the children to give them practice weighing food, which also strengthens their maths ability.



Looking after babies and young children under lockdown

- The younger the child, the more dependent they are on adult care.
- Looking after babies and young children is even more demanding and stressful under lockdown with all its added stressors and demands.
- There is also the real possibility that due to COVID-19 the usual caregivers might not be able to look after their children and this is likely to be difficult for the affected children.
- Very young children tend to feel overwhelmed by sensing their parents' or caregivers' anxiety.
- This may present with regressed, infant-like behaviours such as being more clingy, not wanting to sleep alone, etc.
- Often anxious children in this age group experience a change in eating or sleeping habits.
- These behaviours indicate their need to be protected.
- Sleep when your baby sleeps so you recharge your own batteries.
-

Communicating with your baby

- Follow your baby's lead by copying or mirroring what they are doing.
- Repeat and react to their babbling or words.
- Use your child's name when you speak to your baby.
- Use words to describe what your baby is doing.
- Engage in deliberate 'to and fro' interactions. Do not just stimulate your child but allow child to return an action or speech.
- Make their environment interesting!
- Babies respond to stimulation and thrive on back and forth/to and fro interactions.
- Let your baby explore the world through their five senses.

Babies learn through play!

- Position yourself at your baby's level and make sure they can see and hear you.
- Play peek-a-boo, sing songs or lullabies, stack blocks or cups.
- Make music together - banging on pots, playing with rattles, shaking jars filled with beans.
- Share books together - even at a very early age! Describe what is happening in the pictures. Let your baby explore books with all of the senses.

Internally Displaced People Camps and Covid-19

MEET THE AHMED FAMILY (NORTH-EAST SYRIA)

The Ahmed family live in an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in the north-east part of Syria. They have been in this camp for the past five years, ever since their home was destroyed in the Syria crisis and they had to flee.

Ahmed, the father, Amal, the mother, Omar, the seven year old son, and daughter Leila, who is 18-months old, try to adjust to make the best of their life in the camp. Omar's dream is to be a doctor and to help people.



When Omar turned six, Omar joined one of the schools in the neighbourhood with the support of a humanitarian organisation. He had the chance to enjoy his childhood in a safe space where he could meet new friends, learn to read and write, learn to draw, sing, play and have fun. In spite of these opportunities, Omar did not adjust well to school.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the region, all the schools were closed, including Omar's school.

- Omar feels bored in the small tent his family lives in and he fights with his sister Leila.
- He cries a lot and he has lost his appetite. He has difficulties sleeping and says that he has scary dreams. These problems existed even before the COVID-19 pandemic began.
- He is definitely more distressed because of the situation, which leads to bed wetting as well.
- Ahmed and Amal are desperate and do not know how to deal with Omar.
- Before they moved to the IDP camp, both of them worked. Ahmed was a carpenter and Amal was a seamstress, but they no longer have these jobs.
- With no income and Omar's behaviour, the whole family is now very stressed and overwhelmed.

tents, social conflict, lack of adequate social services, high unemployment levels, being dependent upon humanitarian organisations and services for survival, loss of home and country, etc.

- Many feel despair, isolation and uncertainty and are cut off from opportunities to do things that are important to them or that contribute to their future. These might be things they had in their lives before having to move to the IDP camp.
- Behaviour problems, substance use and other effects of crisis and hardships, and feelings of anxiety, sadness, depression and hopelessness are widespread.
- Many find meaning in their lives by becoming involved in social or spiritual activities. Some people find it meaningful to engage in activities that help them get ready for the life they hope to lead after the camp such as trying to learn new skills or languages. Some like to learn new things just to keep busy.

PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES IN AN IDP CAMP

- People living in IDP camps face many similar psychosocial issues to people living outside of camps. However, the stress might be worse because of the conditions in an IDP camp. These might include overcrowding, living in

Tips for parents and caregivers living in IDP camps

- Many of the issues faced by households in IDP camps are similar to the issues faced by households outside of IDP camps. Read the stories about the other five families across the world and see what tips or solutions might work for you.
- For example, try to structure your days, start the day on a positive note and spend one-on-one time with children every day. Keep calm, don't shout or hit, encourage and promote pro-social behaviours. Be creative in home schooling lessons and encourage learning through play, share household tasks and chores and make them fun for everyone. Praise family members regularly and work with the concept of multiple intelligence (see the story about the Bhengu family). Practise and teach good anti-COVID hygiene. Support children who have experienced loss with the grieving process, arranging physical activities so everyone can burn off some frustration and energy. Reach out to teachers and other parents for support, practise self-care (see text box below) and take time for yourself, and model peaceful and loving relationships.
- Some of these tips might help Omar and the rest of the Ahmed family.
- You might see that someone in your family seems to be suffering from the effects of a traumatic event or loss and they are struggling to adjust (like Omar). This could be depression, anxiety, nightmares, bedwetting, loss of appetite, or thinking a lot about or remembering upsetting events. If this goes on for a long time, make sure this family member receives specialised support or counselling.
- If you as a parent or caregiver are suffering from the effects of traumatic events or are finding it very difficult to adjust and this goes on for a long time, try to go for your own support or counselling.

For other tips about how to parent in the time of COVID-19 see:

<https://www.covid19parenting.com/home>

Also see: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/the-refugee-experience/201805/want-help-refugee-children-thrive-support-their-parents>

Self care in the time of COVID-19 in an IDP camp

STRATEGY 1: DAILY ROUTINE

- Maintain a daily routine as much as you can.
- Give yourself permission to take regular breaks during the day. It is not selfish to take care of yourself.
- Eat and drink water at regular hours or when your religion permits this.
- Try to avoid using unhelpful coping strategies like smoking, alcohol or taking other drugs.
- Try to limit the time you spend watching, reading or listening to the news. Set a regular time for watching the news from a reliable source like the Ministry of Health or WHO every day, if this is available at the camp.
- Sleep is one of the most crucial ways to stay physically and mentally healthy. Try to get at least seven hours of sleep a day if you can.

STRATEGY 2: EXERCISE

- Plan regular exercise activities that make you feel good. For example, go for a daily 30-minute walk or run. It can be a family fun activity.
- Adapt games that you play to the need for physical distancing and avoid getting too close to your partner.
- Breathing exercises reduce stress and help you to focus mentally. Take 10 minutes to do breathing exercises every morning or evening.

STRATEGY 3: STAY CONNECTED

- If you are religious stay connected to God, your own beliefs or something greater and beyond yourself through your own spiritual practices.
- Take time to stay in touch with your family and friends. Even if you can't see them in person, you can have video or voice calls.

STRATEGY 4: ACCEPT YOUR FEELINGS

- You may experience different emotions at different stages of the outbreak. These are all normal responses to an extremely challenging situation.
- Feeling stressed is not a weakness and it doesn't mean you don't know how to take care of your family.
- If you feel stressed or overwhelmed, know that there are ways to get support. It is ok to say you are not ok.
- You are not alone in this situation. Reach out to your friends or any family member in the camp or someone else that you trust.

STRATEGY 5: STAY HOPEFUL

- Try to think about strategies in the past that have helped you to cope with stressful situations.
- Focus on what is in your control. Pay attention to things that are going well and share and celebrate the successes and small wins with your friends and family.
- Remember this is a marathon, not a sprint. Even though this is a marathon, it will not last forever and the COVID-19 pandemic will end.

Talking about Corona and Loss

MEET THE BHENGU FAMILY (DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA)



The Bhengus live in Durban, South Africa. Mama Bhengu who is 70 years old lost her daughter Zinzi last year. Zinzi died after becoming infected with the corona virus. Mama Bhengu who used to have a close relationship with her daughter and grandchildren before Zinzi died now has her eight year old granddaughter Zanele, and her 10 year old grandson Zak living with her.

Zanele and Zak's father died many years ago. Both children who have already lost both their parents are worried that their grandmother might become infected with the corona virus and die. Mama Bhengu no longer works but receives a small state grant to support herself and her grandchildren.

- Mama Bhengu has always kept a spotless home and has always insisted that everyone do their share of cleaning as well as pay attention to personal hygiene.
- She makes sure everyone in the family washes their hands before meals. This is something they have always done, but is very important during COVID-19.
- In some households and communities it might be hard to find soap and water or hand sanitizer, but good hygiene and the wearing of masks are more important now than ever. Washing hands without soap is not as effective as washing with soap but is still better than not washing at all.
- Try to get the whole family to wash their hands as often as possible.
- Let children teach each other how to wash their hands.
- Mama Bhengu has also designed a game to be played inside or outside in which the children have to wear masks and practise physical distancing remaining 1.5 meters apart from each other. This is more difficult outside. They begin with 10 points each and as soon as one of them gets too close to another, the one who made the approach loses one point. At the end of the day they report how many of the 10 points they still have.

DEALING WITH LOSS AND FEAR OF DEATH

- Mama Bhengu has noticed that the children, who have experienced so much loss already and are still grieving the loss of their parents, are worried about her catching the virus. She uses a mealtime when they are sitting down together to talk about the corona virus and to share age appropriate information.
- She begins with what the children know and then adds information.
- When the children first came to live with her after their mother died, Mama Bhengu felt overwhelmed. She especially found bed times difficult, when the children would get clingy and miss their mother and sometimes start crying. She used to hope that if she ignored this, it would go away. She believed she was helping the children by not touching on the painful loss of their parents, thinking it would make them feel worse to remember and talk about them. But then she learnt from a friend who is a social worker that children also need to grieve and that children need to be encouraged to remember their parents, not to try to forget them. This releases some of the painful feelings, helps them to grieve and builds a positive memory of their parents in their minds and hearts.
- She started talking more about their parents and asked the children what they liked best about their parents and about what they missed. She gave each child a Memory Box and encouraged them to collect special things which represented memories of their parents and put them in the box.
- Mama Bhengu shares information about who will care for the children should anything happen to her.
- She also makes an effort to keep things positive.
- Mama Bhengu also supports the children to grieve (see box below).

Supporting children to grieve during COVID-19

- Be aware of the specific losses children under your care have experienced. This could be death as well as losing 'the old normal.' There are losses associated with life before COVID-19 such as attending school, being able to play with friends, having no need for masks or social distancing, enjoying freedom of movement, etc.
- As a caregiver, loss might include unemployment, or not making enough money, loss or reduction in support services, and other changes in lifestyle.
- Be aware that children who have lost loved ones or caregivers in their lives (both recently and not so recently) are likely to be anxious about their present caregivers or loved ones contracting the corona virus and dying.
- Children whose parents or caregivers contract the corona virus might be very worried that their parent or caregiver will die. It is therefore important to tell the children that most people who get COVID-19 just get flu-like symptoms and recover even without treatment and are not at risk of dying. Also tell them that if they become very sick, treatment exists to make them well again.
- COVID-19 restrictions have made it difficult to have funerals, burial ceremonies or other practices following the death of a loved one. These traditions and ceremonies help people to grieve in a healthy way so it is important to find other ways of marking someone's death such as virtual ceremonies.
- Grief is a normal response to loss in general, especially in contexts of disasters or severe adversity. People cope with loss in different ways. Common grief reactions include:
 - Shock, disbelief, or denial
 - Anxiety
 - Distress
 - Anger
 - Periods of sadness
 - Loss of sleep and loss of appetite.

Grief and loss guidance for parents during COVID, Communicating with children about death and helping children cope with loss is an excellent resource developed by the MHPSS collaborative in 2020.

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/2ba48ijt4kckt2i/AAAA-neAKfK216Rwc5-ZguX4a?dl=0&preview=Grief+and+loss+guidance+for+parents+during+COVID19.pdf>



SUPPORTING REMOTE LEARNING

- Mrs Bhengu does not know much about information technology (IT) but is able to distract Zak while Zanele listens to an educational programme on the radio.
- Supporting remote learning might involve, for example, IT support such as helping families get online to connect with the internet. It might be making sure other children do not create a disturbance whilst a child engages with lessons over the internet, TV or radio.
- Even though some schools and education

departments are making lessons available online or over the TV or radio, children need support to engage with these platforms.

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE - THE MANY WAYS WE CAN BE CLEVER

- All children need to have confidence in order to deal with difficult experiences in life and to thrive. In order to have confidence they need to be praised for what they are good at and do well. One way we can do this is



- by focusing on their different strengths or 'multiple intelligences' and giving lots of positive feedback to each child.
- Every child has different types of intelligence and capabilities. There are many forms of natural intelligence. This includes emotional intelligence, mathematical intelligence, dance-music intelligence, etc. (See box below).
- Try to find out more about these and identify all your children's natural intelligences and set up opportunities for them to succeed in these intelligences every day.
- Praise them for their successes and abilities.
- Praise them also for other things they do, for example, being considerate to others in the family. This is a form of emotional and social intelligence.
- They may not show it, but after praising them you'll see them doing that good thing again. It will also reassure them that you notice and care.
- Every day Mama Bhengu makes a point of walking around the home, checking how everyone is doing and praising good behaviour and each child's form of intelligence.

THE THEORY OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE

It is old fashioned and not right to think that some people are clever and some people are not so clever (or stupid). We are all clever in

different ways. Howard Gardner, a professor from Harvard University, tells us that there are nine kinds of intelligence.

Type of Intelligence	Description
1. Visual - spatial intelligence	You learn best by seeing charts, graphs, maps and pictures of things and also communicate best using these things. You might also be good at art and at drawing and making things
2. Mathematical - logical intelligence	You are good with numbers and think and communicate very logically
3. Body intelligence	You love and learn best using games and movement. You are good at sports or working in the field and just enjoy using and being in your body
4. Verbal intelligence	You are good at learning different languages, or are good at reading, speaking, writing and listening
5. Musical - dance intelligence	It is easy for you to learn and express yourself through songs, music or dance
6. Emotional intelligence	You are in touch with your own feelings, values and ideas, and are good at understanding what others are feeling
7. Social intelligence	You feel comfortable with other people and enjoy good relationships with friends, family members, teachers, or other community members
8. Naturalistic intelligence	You love the outdoors, animals and nature
9. Philosophical - spiritual intelligence	You have the ability to think about deeper questions, such as what is the purpose of life? why I am here? is there a higher power? etc.



Sharing Chores, Dealing with Stigma and Prioritising Self Care

MEET THE IVANOV FAMILY (MOSCOW, RUSSIA)

The Ivanov family live in Moscow, Russia. Dimitri is a single father who works from home looking after three children, Katina who is seven, Lada who is nine, and Leonid who is 12. All three children love music, dancing and singing. Katina loves playing with her dolls and toys but tends to leave them lying around after she has finished playing. Lada loves drawing and painting and also often leaves a big mess. Leonid is very tidy and gets upset when his younger sisters don't clean up or tidy up their own mess.

- Looking after children and other family members is difficult, but it's much easier when responsibilities are shared.
- Try to share household chores, childcare, and other tasks equally among family members.
- Make sure to include these responsibilities in your weekly schedule.
- Make cleaning into a game or a dance. Turn up the music and allow different family members to choose the music and dance steps that they like.

DEALING WITH STIGMA LINKED TO COVID-19

One day Dimitri finds the children upset and crying. He asks them what is wrong and is told that other children who they passed in the street, crossed to the other side and said, "*Beware the corona family - the mother in that family died of the virus, if you go near them you will get sick and die too.*"

Dimitri explains that they have as much chance of becoming infected with COVID-19 from those children, as those children have of becoming infected from them. Everyone needs to wear a face mask and practise social distancing and good hygiene. He explains that the children say things like that because they don't know and understand information about COVID-19. The box below lists some facts about stigma related to COVID-19. There are some things Dimitri and others can do at the end of the list if they find themselves in a similar situation.



Stigma

Stigma is holding negative attitudes (prejudice) against an identifiable group of people such as members of a particular nation, tribe or faith, or towards those who are poor or have an illness.

In relation to COVID-19, stigma is associated with a lack of knowledge about how COVID-19 spreads, a need to blame someone, fears about disease and death, and gossip that spreads rumours and myths.

No single person or group of people is more likely to spread COVID-19 than any other person or group. Stigma can lead to labelling, stereotyping, discrimination, violence, and other negative behaviours toward others.

Sometimes people feel too ashamed to seek treatment because of internalised stigma about having COVID-19 and therefore put themselves at increased risk.

Stigma (continued)

Certain groups of people experiencing stigma during the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- Particular racial and ethnic minority groups
- People who have tested positive for COVID-19, have recovered from being sick with COVID-19, or were released from COVID-19 quarantine
- Emergency responders or healthcare providers
- Other frontline workers, such as super-market cashiers, delivery drivers, or farm and food processing plant workers
- People who have underlying health conditions that cause a cough
- People living in group settings, such as people experiencing homelessness.

Stigma hurts everyone by creating more fear or anger towards ordinary people instead of focusing on the disease that is causing the problem.

Stigma can also make people more likely to hide symptoms or illness, keep them from seeking health care immediately, and prevent individuals from adopting healthy behaviours. This means that stigma can make it more difficult to control the spread of an outbreak.

Stigmatised individuals may experience isolation, depression, anxiety, or public embarrassment.

Stopping stigma is important in making all communities and community members safer and healthier.

Everyone can help stop stigma related to COVID-19 by knowing the facts and sharing them with others in their communities.

WHAT DIMITRI MIGHT DO:

- talk to faith leaders about the stigma related to COVID-19 that families are experiencing
- talk to his children's schools about the stigma his family is experiencing
- talk to local organisations about the stigma related to COVID-19 that families are experiencing
- ask the council to put up banners and posters with accurate information about COVID-19.

REACH OUT TO TEACHERS AND OTHER PARENTS FOR SUPPORT

- Dimitri is feeling isolated but then he remembers he is part of a WhatsApp group made up of other parents.
 - The group share tips for keeping children focused and engaged during the lockdown.
 - After spending some time on the group he decides to connect with all of his children's teachers.
 - The children also get a chance to say hello to the teachers – just to hear the teachers' voices is important.
- Relationships between students and their teachers and between the school and parents have been disrupted with the children not being in school, even though students are accessing lessons via the internet, radio or TV.
 - Your child's teacher has a good understanding of your children's academic strengths and weaknesses, so they may be able to help you come up with a more individualised learning plan.
 - Dimitri gets feedback about the homework the children have been submitting via email.

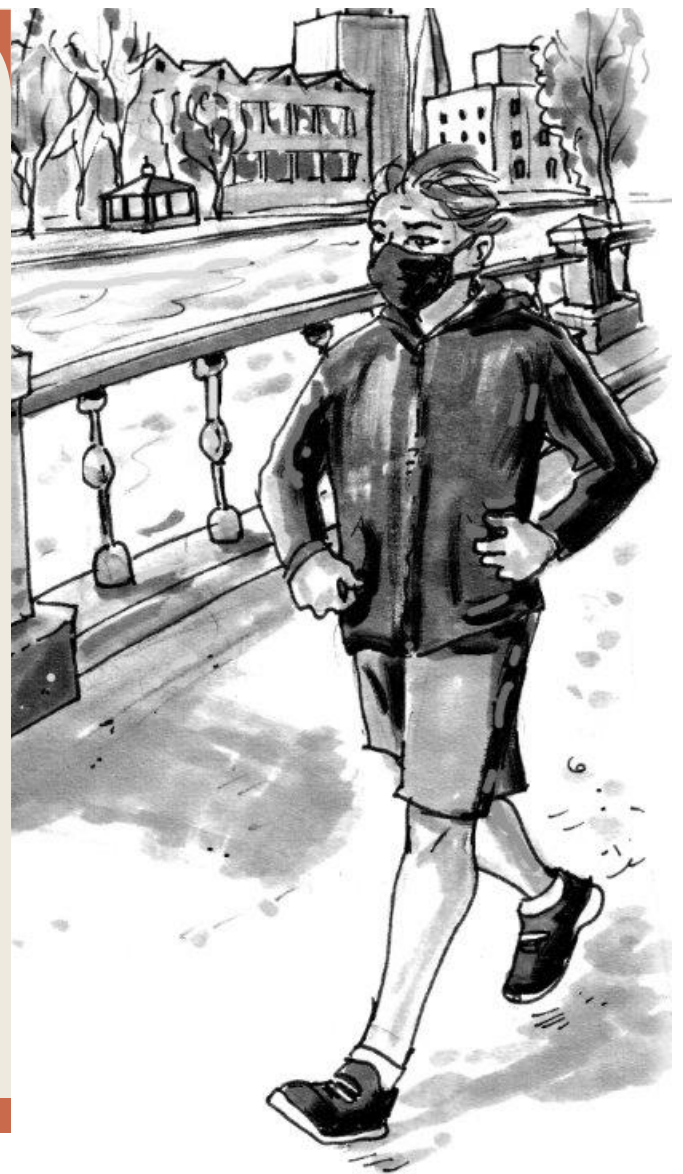


TAKE TIME OUT FOR YOURSELF AND SELF CARE

- Taking care of his own mental health during the lockdown has been very important for Dimitri.
- Whenever he can, he organises with a neighbour - a young person called Khristina who is 18 years old - to look after the children for an hour.
- This is Dimitri's time for self care. He puts on a face mask and goes for a run.
- Self care is important not only for the parent or caregiver but also helps those being cared for.
- Managing your own anxiety, anger, irritability and frustrations are important dimensions of self care.
- If, as a parent or caregiver you feel you need additional support, go for your own counselling or therapy, if possible.

Self care

- Prioritise your wellbeing. The lack of structure at the moment can make it easy to fall into coping mechanisms that can turn into bad habits, such as overeating, smoking or drinking too much, or abusing drugs. Dimitri has noticed he is taking more painkillers for headaches than usual. Added stress and uncertainty can also make it difficult to sleep at night.
- Try to prioritise your wellbeing as much as possible. This means eating healthy foods, getting some exercise, and sticking to a regular sleep schedule.
- Make a list of healthy and relaxing activities that YOU LIKE to do and make a plan for when to do which of the activities.
- Take some time each day to relax, day dream and do nothing!



More Ideas for Self Care

Stay socially close even when maintaining physical distance: Stay digitally connected by keeping in touch with friends, colleagues and family using email, Apps or social media. Watch the same films, read the same books and discuss in virtual meetings, have a virtual chat whilst drinking coffee or a cup of tea together.

Daily routine: First of all, plan and keep a daily routine and also create a wellbeing plan for the days and weeks.

Set goals and keep active: Setting goals and achieving them enhances the sense of control and competency. Goals must be realistic in the given circumstances and for staff and volunteers it could also be keeping up with paperwork even if not able to work in the field. For some it gives a sense of agency and satisfaction to make a to do list for the day and tick off tasks as they go along. Create a list of activities it would be nice to do, great to have done, books to read or write, music to listen to, food to cook and cakes to bake, paint water colours, knit, stitch and sew, learn a new language or skill, listen to podcasts, clean the house, get fresh air through windows, balcony or garden.

Plan time alone and time together if living with others: Create a list of things to do together, read books aloud to each other, play board games, listen to and discuss radio, tv and podcasts. Take turns caring for children. There are many online resources for activities to do at home with children.

Look for or inject humour into the situation if appropriate: Humour can be a strong remedy to hopelessness. Even smiling and laughing inwardly can provide relief from anxiety and frustration.

Maintain hope: Believe in something meaningful, whether family, faith, country or values.

Use stress management techniques: Physical relaxation techniques can reduce stress levels and are useful methods to manage pain and emotional turmoil. Most people are familiar with stress management techniques but not all use them in practice; however, this is the time to encourage the use of such techniques.

Accept feelings: Being in a stressful situation can cause a lot of different emotional reactions like anger, frustration, anxiety, regrets, second guessing yourself, self-blame etc. These feelings are normal reactions to an abnormal situation.

Tips to Protect your Children Online

MEET THE CHEN FAMILY (BEIJING, CHINA)

Meet Zang Whei and Ling Chen who live in a high-rise apartment on the 55th floor in Beijing with their son, Bohai, who is thirteen years old. There is no garden and only a small balcony and Bohai cannot ever play outside so he tends to get frustrated.

- It is almost the end of the day.
- Good communication is very important at this time, especially in crowded living conditions.
- Bohai is supported and rewarded for expressing his needs, joys and frustrations, clearly and regularly.





- This promotes peace, empathy and understanding in the home and prevents frustrations from being bottled up which then eventually explode in outbursts of violence, shouting and anger.
- As a reward for good behaviour and good communication, Bohai is allowed to play computer games, spend time online or watch TV. This is an example of positive discipline.
- However, Zang Whei and Ling monitor the websites Bohai visits as well as the kind of TV programmes that he watches.
- They are aware of some of the things they can do to protect him online (see the tips to protect your children below).
- Quite often, parents are tempted to say, "Put away your phone" or "Don't spend so much time on your phone or computer." But social media is the one way your children can feel connected during COVID-19. It enables them to keep in contact with their peers.
- Teenagers especially need to be able to communicate with their friends. Help your teenage son or daughter stay connected safely through social media and other safe distancing ways. This is something you can do together, too.

Tips to protect your children online

Some online risks include:

- Adults targeting children for sexual purposes on social media, gaming, and messaging platforms
- Harmful content such as behaviour demonstrating violence, misogyny (extreme prejudice against women), or xenophobia (extreme prejudice against people from other countries), inciting suicide and self-harm, providing misinformation, etc.
- Teenagers sharing personal information and sexual photos or videos of themselves
- Cyberbullying by peers and strangers

To protect your children online you can:

- Discuss online risks with your children in age-appropriate ways
- Set up parental controls on your computer
- Turn on SafeSearch on your computer internet browser
- Set up strict privacy settings on online apps and games
- Cover webcams when not in use

END THE DAY ON A GOOD NOTE

- End the day on a positive note.
- Reinforce good behaviours and celebrate successes of each child for the day.
- Check in with each family member about how they are feeling and if they are worried about anything, what they are thankful for, and what their hopes for tomorrow and the near future are.
- Set new goals and celebrate their completion.
- Begin to think about putting younger children to bed and what you will do for your own self care once all the children in bed.

Family harmony

- We are models for our children.
- How we talk and behave in front of others is a big influence on how they behave.
- Positive language, active listening and empathy help maintain a peaceful and happy family environment during these stressful times.
- The more we practise modelling peaceful, loving relationships for our children, the more secure and loved they will feel.
- Use positive language. It works!



Reflection and checklist – how is my household doing?

Now that you have had a glimpse into the lives of these six families around the world, take time every month or so to reflect on how your own family or household is doing during COVID-19 restrictions. Use the checklist here if you want – read each point and mark a tick or an X in one of the progress columns on the right. Or you could make a chart on a piece of cardboard and use sticky notes to monitor how you are doing as a family.

Keep in mind that all the tips in this guide grew out of COVID-19, but that they are good tips for any parent or caregiver at any time and in any place.

Remember that no family is perfect! We all have lots of struggles and lose our temper and make mistakes. But if we take time to reflect on how we are functioning, we can then take small steps to change. If we work together as a family we can keep trying to build a healthier, happier, more hopeful environment in which our children can thrive.

CHECKLIST: HOW IS MY HOUSEHOLD DOING?

Psychosocial wellbeing behaviour	Lots of room for improvement	A little room for improvement	Doing really well
Develop a daily and weekly schedule with the whole family, including the children			
Start the day on a positive note, emotional check in and promote empathy			
Spend one-on-one time with each of the children every day			
Keep calm, don't shout or hit, encourage and promote pro-social behaviours			
Be creative in home schooling lessons and encourage learning through play			
Support children in engaging with online/radio/TV lessons			
Protect children from online risks and exposure to inappropriate content on internet/radio/TV			
Share household tasks and chores and make these fun			
Praise family members regularly and work with the concept of multiple intelligence			
Practise and teach good anti-COVID-19 hygiene			
Support children who have experienced loss with the grieving process			
Support children who have experienced stigma			
Reach out to teachers and other parents for support			
Practise self care and take time for yourself as parents or caregivers			
Model peaceful and loving relationships			

SUPPORT CHILDREN TO MAKE THEIR OWN OR FAMILY COVID-19 HERO BOOKS

In the introduction we suggested that you support your children to make their own COVID-19 hero books.

A hero book is a self-made booklet in which a person writes about and draws their hopes and goals, as well as the obstacles that stand in the way of these goals, and how to overcome and have power over these obstacles.

Making a hero book with your children will help you understand their challenges and difficulties and it will also help you support their strengths and coping strategies.

You will need some art materials to make a hero book including pens, pencils, coloured pens or pencils, paper or a small exercise book.

To get started, this is what you might say to your children:

- “Now that you have heard how other children and families around the world are coping with COVID-19, maybe you want to make a story about your own life and family life in the time of COVID-19. What parts did you like the best?
- A hero is a person who has difficulties but who takes steps to overcome those difficulties. I think you are a hero because
- If you don't want to make your own hero book, we can make a family hero book and work on it together.

- What would your hero story or your family hero story be like?
- If you tell me that story, you can then write it down, or I can write it down.
- If you like, you can draw a picture or a few pictures.
- The first step is to introduce yourself and say where you live (the city and the country) and who is in your family or household.
- Another part of the book is about what you want to be when you grow up and what your goals are.
- Can you describe the difficulties you are having just now and what difficulties members of your own family are facing?
- What solutions (tricks and tactics) have you and your family found in dealing with these difficulties?
- Besides you, who are the other heroes in your family? Can you explain why? I can certainly tell you why you are a hero and we will include this information in your book.
- Once your hero book is finished, who would you like to show it to?”

List of resources

The scenarios presented in this guide about the six different families are illustrative and fictional, drawing primarily on the following material:

<https://pscentre.org> for a wide variety of psychosocial support resources and materials

The IFRC PS Centre Activity Cards are also recommended - see <https://pscentre.org/?resource=child-friendly-activity-cards>

<https://www.cpaor.net> for a wide variety of psychosocial support resources and materials

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org> for a wide variety of psychosocial support resources and materials

In particular the *My Hero is You, Storybook for Children on COVID-19* is recommended.

See <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-reference-group-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-emergency-settings/my-hero-you-storybook-children-covid-19>

<https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/tips-parenting-during-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak> for parenting tips during COVID-19

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/covid-19-parenting-tips> for parenting tips during COVID-19

<https://sacoronavirus.co.za/2020/05/20/advice-to-parents-supporting-your-children-through-the-covid-19-lockdown/> for advice to parents to support children through the COVID pandemic for parenting tips during COVID-19

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/parenting-family/parenting-during-coronavirus.htm> for parenting tips during COVID-19

<https://www.parents.com/health/all-about-coronavirus-a-concerned-parents-guide/> for information about the corona virus

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

for parenting and caregiver advice around how to support children and young people during the COVID_19

https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/young_children_can_learn_how_to_resolve_conflicts_with_adult_guidance_and_s for ways of resolving conflicts with adult guidance for young people

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/reducing-stigma.html> for parenting anti-stigma tips during COVID-19

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/2ba48ijt4kckt2i/AAAA-neAKfK216Rwc5-ZguX4a?dl=0&preview=Grief+and+loss+guidance+for+parents+during+COVID19.pdf> for parenting tips to support young people around loss and grief during COVID-19

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