

Providing Psychosocial Support to Children Living with HIV (CLHIV) during COVID-19

A Guide for Counsellors, Parents and Caregivers



This handout describes the needs and responses of children including children living with HIV (CLHIV) during COVID-19 pandemic. It provides useful ways to provide psychosocial care to children when they are stressed along with tips on engaging with them constructively. The handout also lists ways to manage parental stress.

COVID-19 has disrupted the lives of children like other segments of people. Confinement within four walls, closure of schools has created stressful conditions to which children are responding in

different ways. CLHIV in particular are also at risk of stress due to their health conditions. Lockdown and stay at home may also restrict their access to treatment, care and counselling services. In these difficult times, parents and counsellors must respond to children's reactions in a sensitive and supportive way. For this, they should be equipped and adequately informed to protect and extend psychosocial support (PSS) to children. PSS helps in improving psychological well-being and prevent and treat mental health conditions and problem of children.

COMMONLY SEEN RESPONSES AMONG CHILDREN

Children and young people may display emotions/ conditions like

Being more clingy, anxious, withdrawing, angry or agitated

Confused or uncertain



Isolated and lonely

Feeling of fear and grief over the impact of the virus on their families

PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE OF CHILDREN

In this stressful time, children particularly CLHIV need utmost care and attention from parents and caregivers. Parents can adopt following steps for creating positivity and reassurance among children.



KEEP IT ONE-TO-ONE



Allocate time each day for spending with children for reading a story, singing, drawing, talking about sports or cooking a favourite meal



Help them in homework



Exercise together



Engage children/encourage their participation in household chores



STAY POSITIVE

- Praise your child when they are behaving well
- Use positive words when telling your child what to do. Like 'Please put your clothes away' instead of 'Don't make a mess')
- Speak in a calm voice
- Get your child's attention by using their name
- Help your teen connect through social media and other safe distancing ways
- Listen and talk to children and create opportunities for talking to them
- Encourage them to share their concerns
- Stay in touch with your children's educational facility and teachers
- Be part of parent groups or community groups so that you can support each other with your homeschooling



CREATE A STRUCTURED DAILY ROUTINE

- Make a flexible yet consistent schedule for you and your children
- Include structured activities like making a timetable for children to follow
- Include free time
- Include exercise in each day to keep stress at bay
- Make handwashing and safe distance a fun learning, make a 20-second song for washing hands or a game to see how few times we can touch our faces with a reward for the least number of touches



MANAGING BAD BEHAVIOUR



Catch bad behavior early and redirect your kids' attention from a bad to a good behaviour, when they get restless, you can distract with something interesting or fun like a game



Use consequences help teach children responsibility for what they do and allow discipline that is controlled. This is more effective than hitting or shouting.



Once the consequence is over, give your child a chance to do something good, and praise them for it.



TALK ABOUT COVID-19 AND DISPEL MYTHS AND RUMOURS

Provide facts about COVID-19 and its impact on people's physical and mental health, social and economic well-being

Explain in simple words what is going on now and how to reduce their risk of being infected by the disease

Provide them with correct information through valid sources. Answer questions honestly, and say that you will find out more if you don't know the answer

Prepare about possible eventualities in a re-assuring way (e.g. a family member or a child may not feel well and may have to go to the hospital for care and treatment)

Tell them that they should spread correct information about COVID-19 among their friends and peers

Sensitise them about stigma and discrimination being faced by those affected by COVID-19 and vulnerable groups. Tell them it is wrong to discriminate against certain people and groups and in difficult times we all must come together to help everyone

Share stories with them about children, youth and other individuals who in their own ways are helping those in distress



ENSURE ONLINE SAFETY

- Protect children online - Discuss about safe use of internet and what they need to be aware of while using various platforms like video calls
- Help children learn how to keep personal information private from strangers
- Remind children what goes online stays online
- Establish rules together about how, when and where the internet can be used
- Spend time with children online, explore websites, social media, games and apps together



CREATING A PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT AND PREVENTING VIOLENCE IN SPACES WHERE AMONG CHILDREN

- Ensure children stay with their parents and families
- Avoid separating children and their caregivers to the extent possible. In case of separation (e.g. hospitalization) ensure regular contact (e.g. via phone) and re-assurance
- Misbehavior and bad conduct is normal among children in families, childcare institutions, temporary isolation facilities and NGO shelters, care givers and counselors must manage this behaviour constructively and not use violence



MANAGING PARENTAL STRESS

Likelihood of parental stress in confinement is high especially while dealing with children. Parents can manage stress and be constructive by

- staying positive
- creating a daily routine
- avoiding bad behaviour
- talking about COVID-19 honestly with children
- speaking with someone with whom you can talk and share your feeling.
- keeping calm
- avoiding social media that makes you feel panicked



For more information contact 1098

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