How to help children and adolescents cope with COVID-19

Region II Preparedness Webinar | May 21st, 2020
FEMA Mission: Helping people before, during, and after disasters.

I. BUILD A CULTURE OF PREPAREDNESS

1.1 Incentivize investments that reduce risk, including pre-disaster mitigation, and reduce disaster costs at all levels
1.2 Close the insurance gap
1.3 Help people prepare for disasters
1.4 Better learn from past disasters, improve continuously, and innovate

II. READY THE NATION FOR CATASTROPHIC DISASTERS

2.1 Organize the "BEST" (Build, Empower, Sustain, and Train) scalable and capable incident workforce
2.2 Enhance intergovernmental coordination through FEMA Integration Teams
2.3 Posture FEMA and the whole community to provide life-saving and life-sustaining commodities, equipment, and personnel from all available sources
2.4 Improve continuity and resilient communications capabilities

III. REDUCE THE COMPLEXITY OF FEMA

3.1 Streamline the disaster survivor and grantee experience
3.2 Mature the National Disaster Recovery Framework
3.3 Develop innovative systems and business processes that enable FEMA’s employees to rapidly and effectively deliver the agency’s mission
3.4 Strengthen grants management, increase transparency, and improve data analytics

FEMA Vision: A prepared and resilient Nation.
How to help children and adolescents cope with COVID 19
Objectives

- List factors that affect emotional reactions in emergency situations.
- Present the most common reactions children exhibit when facing an emergency situation.
- Best practices on how to talk to your children about COVID-19
Objective

- Describe the psychological impact of quarantine.

- Offer strategies to prevent and manage the emotional effects of being quarantined at home.

- Present activities that can help children express their emotions and promote positive coping.
When facing an emergency:

An emergency represents an unforeseen situation that requires special attention that needs to be resolved as soon as possible.

- It has the potential to physically and emotionally harm those who face it.

- Children need to know what to expect and how they can cooperate to prepare and stay safe during an emergency.
Factors that affect emotional reactions

• Being directly affected by the situation
• Previous traumatic or stressful events
• Death of a family member, friend or pet
• Being separated from their caregivers
Factors that affect the emotional reaction:

- The manner in which parents/care takers/important figures react to the situation.
- Exposure to media coverage
- Continuous stress due to changes in family routine or housing situation
Before talking to children, the adult should be well prepared (informed), and understand the data to give the accurate information.

Children and adolescents will use the adult as a frame of reference to understand the world and the emergency.
Best practices for talking to your children about COVID-19

• Filter information from the media before talking to your children

• Use developmentally appropriate language

• Allow for questions

• Limit news time and choose an hour of the day to listen
Best practices for talking to your children about COVID-19

What they can do to protect themselves

• Avoid contact with people who are sick
• Wash hands thoroughly and frequently
• Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth especially if you haven't washed your hands before
• Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are often touched
Psychological impact of being quarantined
Emotional and behavioral reactions

- Fear/Anxiety/Worry
- Changes in Sleep Pattern
- Changes in Eating Pattern
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Difficulty Making Decisions
- Anger

- Looking distracted
- Excessive Attachment
- Crying or irritability
- Impairment of pre-existing health conditions
- Using alcohol or tobacco (teens)
## Immediate Emotional Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General fear of infection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frustration / Anguish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confusion over lack of information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crying, night terrors or nightmares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress (environmental or personal)</td>
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</tbody>
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![Image of a child sitting on steps looking sad]
Long Term Impact

- Risk of developing post-traumatic stress
- Physical health issues
- Mental health complications
Strategies to prevent the psychological impact of social isolation
Strategies for Caregivers

• Practice patience
• Take a breath
• Give immediate comfort
• Slow your speech
• Lower volume of speech
• Allow time for child to adjust to new routine
Helping Children and Adolescents feel safe

- Ask the question “What can I do to help you feel safe right now?”

- Make a plan to use this resource to help the child feel safe in the future.

- Sensory resources like music, aroma and warmth (blanket) are other ways to help youth feel secure.
Helping children and adolescents feel safe

Empowerment

• Practicing good hygiene. Helping them understand when they wash their hands and bodies they have some control.

• Allowing them to have a sense of control, by giving them choices in their daily routine. Some examples are:
  • Choosing what to wear
  • Choosing what to eat for a snack
  • Choosing when to have a break from school work
Strategies for Children / Adolescents

• Staying connected with meaningful people
• Set routines
• Have everyday goals
• Limit "news" information

• Humor
• Physical activity
• Support the elderly
• Strive to maintain high morale
• Encourage positive attitude
Activities for families

• Cooking as a Family
• Sing/ Dancing
• Doing household chores together. Children helping according to their age
• Use coloring books
• Do informational activities together
Impact of School Closures on Children and Adolescents
The impact of school closures

• Prolonged closure of educational services and mandatory staying in households can have negative consequences on youth.

  • In Mental Health
  • In Physical Health
Impact of school closures

For children with mental health needs:

• Lack of access to resources they had previously in school
• Probability of a relapse in symptoms
Activities

- Design a school agenda to follow daily that includes the time to be devoted to school subjects
- Active / Physical games
- Crafts
- Art Activities
- Schedule 30-50 min meaningful parent/child interaction
When to get additional support

- When they threaten to hurt others or themselves
- Do not respond to others
- Show no emotional responses with little physical movements
- Appear detached from surroundings and fail to engage emotionally (dissociating)
- Continues to seem confused or disoriented
- Showing signs of a mental disability that was not evident prior to the incident
- Hearing voices that are not real or seeing things/people in ways that are not playful/joking
Important information to remember...

- Children need to know what to expect and how they can cooperate to prepare and stay safe during an emergency.

- Their emotional reactions are influenced by previous experiences and the reactions that adults exhibit.

- It is important for a child to feel a sense of safety.
Important information to remember...

When talking with children about COVID-19, the adult should be calm and give space for the youth to ask questions, as well as to express their feelings.

When dealing with children's emotions, let them know that they are expected reactions within the conditions of which they are living.

Encourage suggested activities to help children and adolescents express their emotions and promote positive coping.
In Italy, Cristiana, her children, and their neighbors work together to create a rainbow of clothes outside their windows.

Creating rainbows in different forms can be a great way to encourage kids to think positively - and we all need some color in our lives.

• Take a moment today to bring a little joy to someone special.
Additional Resources

Craft and Painting Videos
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCLzelF-TsY
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6EgAWhlky0
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMaRRRSYWo0

Virtual Museum

Anxiety Management / Relaxation / Physical Activity
- https://www.gonoodle.com/for-families/
Additional Resources

**Books to help explain COVID 19**


https://660919d3-b85b-43c3-a3ad_3de6a9d37099.usrfiles.com/ugd/64c685_ef31d8e608fd4b528eae3132b67a445e.pdf

**Activities**


References


SAMHSA-(2020) Talking With Children: TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS, PARENTS, AND TEACHERS DURING INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAKS

The Lancet, Child and Adolescent Health, (4-4-20) Mental health effects of school closures during COVID-19
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How to Avoid COVID-19 Cyber Threats
Wednesday May 27th, 2020 from 12 PM-1 PM ET
Register for the webinar using this link:
https://icpd.adobeconnect.com/avoidcyberthreatscovid19/event/registration.html

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Thursday May 28th, 2020 from 10 AM – 11 AM ET
Register for the webinar using this link:
https://icpd.adobeconnect.com/sbaprograms/event/registration.html
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Thursday, June 04, 2020 from 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM ET
Registration link: https://icpd.adobeconnect.com/r2cipaar/event/registration.html

Thursday, June 05, 2020 from 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM ET
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