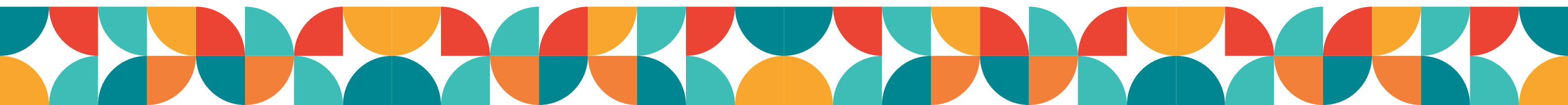


Key Messages for Extending Mental Health & Psychosocial Support to Children & Adolescents.



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DEVELOPED BY

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Preface



RAJESHWARI CHANDRASEKAR
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The pandemic and subsequent lockdown placed a great strain on those at the frontlines who were tasked with the primary responsibility of keeping things going. In homes, it was the women; in the streets, it was the sanitation workers. In the villages it was youth volunteers helping migrant families; in villages and wards, it was the Anganwadi and Asha workers; and also, those with the onus of protecting children, be it counsellors, social workers, staff in child care institutions. All of them had to keep reminding people not to fall prey to misinformation on the spread of COVID-19.

Even as primary messaging of wearing masks, maintaining social distancing and washing hands was repeated, those at the frontlines also had to cope with their own issues. For women, it was how to distribute work load in households where males were not accustomed to do so, for sanitation workers it was how to deal with the stigma of handling waste generated by COVID; for ASHA and Anganwadi workers it was how to conduct door-to-door surveys while maintaining safety norms and facing hostility from residents; for youth volunteers it was the need to step out to assist migrant families even as their own families pleaded with them not to. Throughout, the need to keep going was overlaid by their own fears over the virus. The stress and distress impacted the psycho-social well-being of front liners and those charged with care giving across the spectrum. But who will take care of the caregivers?

UNICEF and TISS, Mumbai's iCALL Field Action Programme partnered together to address the psychosocial needs of those at the frontlines through formulation of key messaging tailor-made to needs of specific groups such as women in families, ASHA and Anganwadi workers, Child Protection service providers, and youth volunteers. The messages are a timely reminder to acknowledge distress to be able to tackle it effectively and ask questions, to the self and to others. What can I do right now that will help me feel better? How do you hurt? How can I help? In the following pages, the key messages provided offer useful pointers on how to answer these questions.

Foreward



DR. APARNA JOSHI
Assistant Professor,
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The pandemic and the resultant series of unique experiences such as lockdown, physical distancing, disrupted education, fear of death and illness, uncertainty about the unknown disease, etc. have brought about physical, emotional and psychosocial difficulties for everyone, but more so, for those who had pre-existing vulnerabilities.

One such group is children and adolescents living in difficult circumstances such as poor socio-economic conditions, being children of daily wage earners or migrant labourers, being exposed to abuse (either as a victim or witness), family conflicts, experiencing illness of primary caregivers, and separation from caregivers due to their illness or their primary caregivers etc. As a result of these challenges, they are further prone to experience issues such as forced child labour, child marriage, child trafficking (Dept. of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, NIMHANS, 2020). Given this scenario, it became necessary to relook at the needs of stakeholders that work for the protection of their rights of children and adolescents and to strengthen their capacities so that they can meet the challenging demands of this new and complex situation. Similarly, the stakeholders i.e. families/primary caretakers, child protection functionaries, youth volunteers and community workers involved in promoting the psychosocial wellbeing of the masses, have also been experiencing the impact of the pandemic in their personal and professional lives. This necessitates the stakeholders to be equipped with resources to help them to look after their health and well-being while responding to concerns of children and adolescents. Each stakeholder operates in a dynamic setting with diverse needs and demands. Hence, the guidelines provided need to be shaped in a way that they can support themselves as well as others. Such as for parents/primary caregivers, managing the demands of their professional as well as their personal lives, for secondary caregivers, meeting the needs of institutionalised and non-institutionalised children and adolescents while protecting those in need, for community workers, working on the frontline without to break to maintain the hygiene in our communities. Youth volunteers although new to the system, have been dedicating their time and efforts towards providing support to those in need.

Hence, this document attempts to provide messages that could be used as a response to navigate oneself (target beneficiaries) and others when experiencing psychosocial concerns related to COVID-19. Thus, to take the objective ahead for stakeholders to have resources easy to access, UNICEF collaborated with iCALL to develop informative and evidence-based key messages for stakeholders. The topics covered mainly focus on ways to provide psychosocial support to children and adolescents, manage one's professional and personal challenges and self-care.

The initial phase of developing the document consisted of undertaking an in-depth review of existing literature to identify areas of concern and guidelines to respond to them. This was followed by interactions with key stakeholders which included UNICEF, Department of Women & Child Development, NGO partners who were working on the ground for relief work, youth advocacy, peer support & helpline-based support and lastly stakeholders within the alternative care systems such as counsellors & CCI staff members. Furthermore, the document was reviewed by 4 subject matter experts and their feedback was incorporated into messages created. Through this background work, the following target beneficiaries were identified.

- Children and Adolescents
- Primary Caregivers (Parents, Guardians)
- Caregivers of Child Care Institutions (e.g., CCI Staff, Caregivers in NGOs)
- Youth Volunteers
- Community workers (ASHA, AWW, and Sanitation workers)

These messages will aid the stakeholders in providing psychosocial support to children and adolescents in difficult situations during COVID-19 as well as themselves. Since each stakeholder has been working with diverse populations, the messages were adapted to context-specific realities. We hope that this resource serves to expand the conversation on mental health & psychosocial wellbeing, especially for children and adolescents in vulnerable positions and underserved regions.



Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has threatened decades of progress in the battle against poverty and income inequality and put millions of children at increased risk of psychosocial vulnerabilities. This pandemic has placed children & adolescents, frontline workers under immense pressure, putting their physical, mental, and social well-being at risk. Fast-spread Covid-19 outbreak has led to high morbidity and/or mortality which further contributes to widespread fear and panic, stigmatization, and social isolation of people treating for or recovering from the disease. India has been dealing with the social vulnerabilities and equity issues which have been accelerated by the lockdown, bringing to the fore inequalities, discrimination, and anxieties.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, providing care to others can lead to stress, anxiety, fear, and other strong emotions. How you cope with these emotions can impact your well-being, the care you provide to others while you do your job, and the well-being of those in the workplace you care about. It is important during this pandemic that you understand how stress looks, take measures to develop your resilience and cope with stress, and seek additional support when necessary. The pandemic has shown to impact children as well as caregivers equally.

The present document has been developed by iCALL Psychosocial helpline (a field action project), Tata Institute of Social Sciences in collaboration with UNICEF, Maharashtra. The objective of the key messages is to give simple, actionable inputs to recognize & respond to psychosocial distress emanating out of the pandemic amongst children, adolescents and associated stakeholders such as parents, guardians, child care institutions, essential workers (ASHA, sanitation workers, healthcare professionals).

About the Manual

In order to develop the following document, in a methodical & timely manner iCALL adopted a multi-fold process. The initial phase consisted of undertaking in-depth review of existing literature to identify concern areas and available response. This was followed by multiple discussions with key stakeholders which included UNICEF, Department of Women & Child Development, NGO partners who were working on ground for relief work, youth advocacy, peer support & helpline-based support and lastly stakeholders within the alternative care systems such as counsellors & CCI staff members. Through this background work, the following target beneficiaries were identified.

- Children and Adolescents
- Primary Caregivers (Parents, Guardians)
- Caregivers of Child Care Institutions (e.g., CCI Staff, Caregivers in NGOs)
- Youth Volunteers
- Community workers (ASHA, AWW, and Sanitation workers)

Key focus areas were identified which were relevant to each beneficiary group. Post identification of needs and challenges the messages were constructed based on different literature about COVID-19 and providing psychosocial assistance. The key messages which emerged were meant to act like easy-to-understand & actionable directives that helped address specific psychosocial issues within the stakeholders 'individual contexts. The messages address how stakeholders can perform their role in COVID-19 in extending mental health & psychosocial support, how they can address questions of psychosocial well-being amongst children and adolescents, and ways to respond to some unique challenges experienced. The messages were further analysed by experts in the field and suggested changes were incorporated to make them more effective.

The present document uses simple, easy to understand language with a hope that the reader is able to deepen their understanding of the issue & develop coping strategies to combat their distress & care for the psychosocial wellbeing of children and adolescents basis their roles. The key messages can be utilized as a combined resource or independent sections serving specific groups & issues. The key messages are not only to be read by target groups identified by anyone who aspires to deepen their understanding of psychosocial impact of the pandemic and build insights into methods of responding. We hope that through this resource serves to expand the conversation on mental health & psychosocial wellbeing, especially for vulnerable populations and in underserved regions.

Overview of the Messages

Sr.No.	CATEGORY OF STAKEHOLDER	MESSAGES CREATED
1.	Children & Adolescents	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Taking care of yourself (Children)2. Dealing with distress (Adolescents)3. Relational support
2.	Primary Caregivers / Parents	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Providing an emotional safety net2. Providing support to children and adolescents3. Managing well-being
3.	Caregivers of Child Care Institutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Addressing demands from job role2. Managing distress3. Managing suicidal ideation and self-harm (for others and self)
4.	Youth Volunteers	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Providing Psychosocial Support2. Addressing limitations experienced while providing support3. Managing well-being
5.	Community workers: ASHA, AWW and Sanitation workers	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Building support against discrimination and stigma (for all community members):2. Managing Well-being3. Preventing Burnout4. Managing feelings of lack of motivation

CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS



Children



The pandemic has introduced many changes in our daily lives, right from our everyday school to our playtime with friends. During these changes, feeling confused, overwhelmed or stressed is a very natural response. In such times, you can use different techniques that can help you to manage the intensity of these changes. You can use the following tips to take care of yourself in these times:

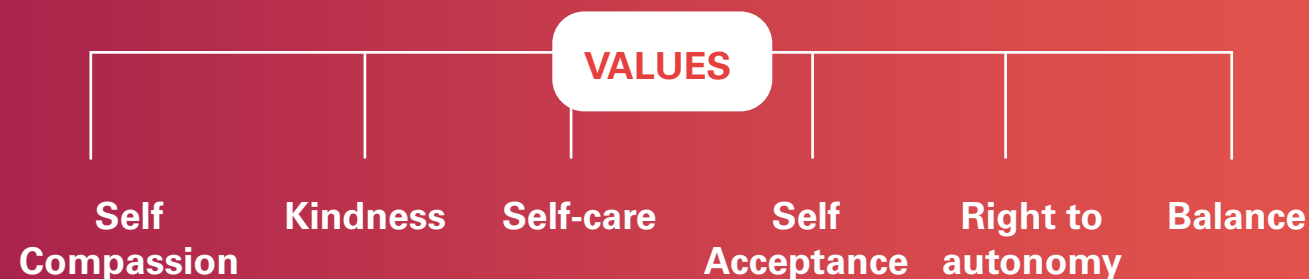
Taking care of yourself (Simple tips for managing distress):

- **Healthy body-Healthy mind:** Make sure to have regular meals on time. It is important to get adequate nutrition & sleep. Make sure to have 7-8 hours of sleep daily. Do simple exercises like stretching, yoga, etc. to keep yourself physically active.
- **Follow a routine:** Even when you don't have to go to school (or attend school only online), come up with a routine for yourself. Make sure you have playtime, study time, and time to eat, sleep.
- **Keep time available to do things that give you joy:** Plan your day with your parents/caregivers and keep pockets of time in a day when you can do something that you enjoy. Like painting, playing games, dancing, etc.
- **Talk to the people you love:** Although you can't meet your friends or other family members, you can talk to them on the phone. Tell them how your day was, what you are looking forward to? etc.
- **Learn something new:** Staying indoors can be a bit repetitive. Try to use this time to do something for yourself. E.g., learn to paint, learn to dance, learn to sing, learn new words, learn to read storybooks etc

- **Use your imagination:** If you miss going out, express what you miss about the outside world in pictures/drawings. Think about what you would've done if you were allowed to play outside, what do you like the most about nature? etc
- **If you feel overwhelmed, you can try doing the following to help yourself calm down. These are simple activities that can help you to relax and feel better:**
 - Squeeze and release: Hold a soft-ball or ball of handkerchief or lemon or imagine holding a lemon and squeeze/clench your fists to squeeze the juice out of it. Juice it out as much as you can and then release it. Squeeze it and release it again.
 - Stretch it like a cat: Just the way a cat stretches its body, stretch your arms in front of you and hold it for 10 seconds. Drop your hands slowly to their normal position.
 - Squeeze through: Imagine that you need to squeeze through a narrow space. To do that, you'll have to make itself smaller to squeeze through. Suck your stomach in by taking a deep breath, hold it for 4-5 seconds, and exhaling deeply. You've squeezed through the narrow space!
- **Take breaks from using screens too much:** Because of online school, it is possible that you may be spending a lot of time in front of technology. Try to take breaks every hour. Don't look at the screen too closely. After school, do something that doesn't need you to use screens.



Adolescents



COVID-19 has changed our everyday lives in many ways. During these times everyone is dealing with these changes in their own ways. One may experience distress as a response to the changes introduced. In such instances, you can make use of the following to deal with your distress, your thoughts and feelings:

Dealing with distress

- **Try to identify the source of your distress:** Think about what is making you feel stressed? Family? Staying indoors? Friends? Identifying the source will help you to find how to reduce the stress.
- **Set a routine** (time of self, dedicated time for small things for self): Having a routine for self helps in feeling a sense of order in these uncertain times. Create a routine for yourself where you have planned downtime, some time to focus on your academics, time to engage in a hobby or learn a new skill, social interactions, and engaging in physical activity such as stretching, yoga, jogging at a place, etc.
- **Watch your consumption:** Make sure to eat healthy meals regularly and get an adequate amount of sleep. You may also come across COVID-19 updates constantly on TV, social media, etc. Constantly watching the news can also add to the stress. Limit the amount of COVID related exposure to news. Avoid resorting to substances to cope.
- **Be in touch with your loved ones:** COVID-19 requires you to maintain physical distance. But you can still maintain social connectedness. Engage in interactions with your friends or family through virtual mediums such as play games online, if possible then plan virtual meetups such as weekly meetup sessions, chat or through a video call.

- **Reaching out when feeling unsafe:** There could be situations where you may experience any kind of interpersonal violence or abuse such as physical abuse (harm inflicted by the parent or caregiver), sexual abuse (through the sexual exploitation by someone who has a relationship of responsibility, power or trust), emotional abuse (parents or caregivers repeatedly reject the child or use threats to frighten and intimidate). In instances where you feel unsafe in the environment, you're in, contact with local police authorities or national helplines such as 103 or 1098.

How to deal with distressing thoughts?

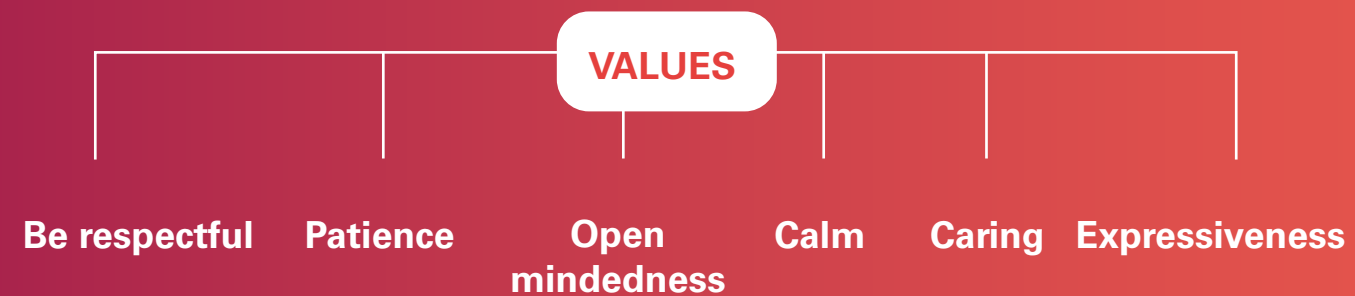
- **Identify what is within your control:** There are certain things that we have no control over. If we focus on something that's not within our control e.g., the government's decisions related to COVID-19 or how others behave with us that increases our stress even more. Instead, shift your focus on what you can do in this situation. E.g., How you can take care of yourself in COVID-19.
- **Watch on the way you talk to yourself:** Too much of negative thoughts have an impact on one's self-esteem and increases the stress even more. Find alternatives to the negative thoughts that are neutral, or positive. For e.g., "My life will never get better" can be changed to "I may feel hopeless now, but my life will probably get better if I work at it and get some help."
- **Avoid seeking perfection:** Expecting idealistic performance or high standards from self can also be a source of stress. Hence, learn to feel good about setting realistic expectations and doing a "good enough" job rather than demanding perfection from yourself and others

How to deal with distressing feelings?

- **Help yourself to calm down.** (Abdominal breathing and muscle relaxation techniques): There are several relaxation or breathing exercises that help in calming a person down. Such as taking three deep breaths, observing the colours, sounds, sensations around you, or taking a deep breath for three seconds-holding it for three seconds-exhaling slowly for three seconds etc. You can use some body-based techniques to calm down as well. For more information please refer to the section on it in the "Taking care of yourself" included in messages that address children's distress and you may follow the body-based relaxation techniques suggested there.
- **Talk about your feelings:** It is very natural to feel scared, lonely, or distressed about the present situation, your loved ones, or the future to come. Try talking to your friends or families about these thoughts. Discuss with them openly what you're feeling. In case these feelings persist, consider reaching out to professionals or helplines that offer support. **One such helpline is iCALL- 9152987821**

Relational Support

(Conflict management):



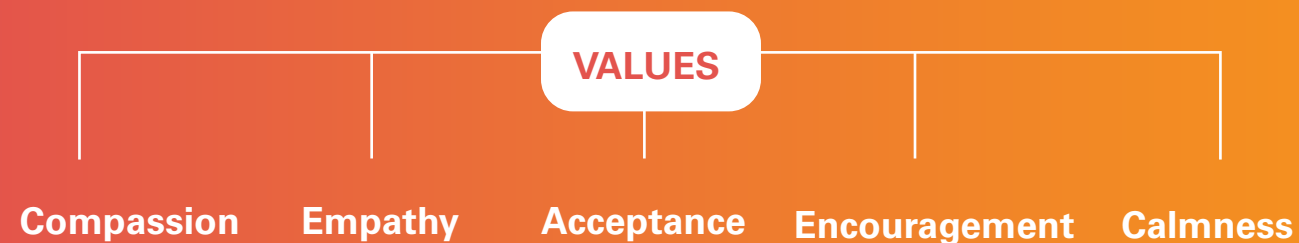
The pandemic has us confined with the same people for long durations, which can be difficult. Especially when everyone else is already adapting to the new normal. Hence, over a period of time small differences in opinions, misunderstandings can also result in an argument or conflict between family members, friends, significant others. Following are a few tips that can help in preventing these arguments and further strengthening relationships.

- **Hear what the other person has to say:** Listen to what they have to say. Avoid making suggestions to them or interrupt them.
- **Use "I" statements:** While responding, Try to use statements that reflect the focus on "I" (I think..., I felt...,) and not on "you" (you did..., you said....)
- **Express your opinion assertively:** Be assertive while expressing your opinion. That means to state feelings in a polite, firm, and not overly aggressive or passive manner. E.g., if someone yells at you instead of yelling back asserting what you felt like "I feel angry when you yell at me." "Please stop yelling."
- **Focus on the situation:** Figure out what's happening, not whose fault it is. Everyone in a conflict plays a role in keeping it going, no matter how large or small. Rather than try to assign blame, try to take the long view to understand what got to the position of having a conflict.
- **Actionable solutions:** Converse with each other about your needs and negotiate the boundaries to be created. Try to devise ways to overcome these arguments and misunderstandings e.g., designated time to watch tv, setting boundaries, taking a time-out etc.

PRIMARY CAREGIVERS OR PARENTS



Providing a physical and emotional safety net for children and adolescents:



During the pandemic, children and adolescents need additional care and support from the adults around them. Hence, providing an emotionally safe environment to them is very important. You can provide this environment by following the simple steps described below:

- A. **Acknowledge the distress experienced:** Don't dismiss their feelings of being distressed. Acknowledge the fact that your children are distressed, and it is indeed a very natural response to the present situation.
- B. **Provide additional care and support:** Children and adolescents need additional care and support in the pandemic. Be patient with them and understand what their specific needs are.
- C. **Create a safe environment for the child:** The environment that the children and adolescents are living in being violence-free is their right to safety. Make sure to provide a safe and violence-free environment to children and adolescents. Do not hit the child, physically punish or abuse the child, do not use abusive language towards the child. It is also equally important to not display abuse towards other family members such as spouses or elderly.
- D. **Ensure that the child's basic needs are met:** Ensure that, children's basic needs such as the need for safe space, nutrition, sleep, and engagement in different activities are met (for more details see the next message).
- E. **Provide emotional support:** Talk to children about what they think of this situation, try to understand their worldview. Give them age-appropriate information about COVID-19. Make sure to address their fears and anxiety by reassuring them to practice safety guidelines provided by the state officials.
- F. **Create a nurturing environment for the child:** Promote activities that will boost their self-worth, confidence, and individuality. You can engage your children in activities such as doing small activities such as helping with simple chores in the house, encourage them to learn a new dance or any other skill, and reinforce their behaviour by showing genuine appreciation. (Ross, 2013).

- G. **Act as a pillar of strength:** Children especially rely on the adults in their life during uncertain times. Model calmness in your behaviour when in front of the children. Avoid displaying your anxieties or your personal stress when interacting with children.
- H. **Initiate conversations:** It can sometimes be challenging to converse with children. Initiating a conversation can help children to express themselves openly. You may start the conversation by asking open ended questions such as "what would you like to do once the lockdown is lifted?" Or "What do you think about not having to go to school/College?" Or "how worrying is it for you to think about covid-19?". Be willing to accept their opinions and responses. Don't reject their opinions.
- I. **Managing your own distress:** If you are feeling distressed or are feeling overwhelmed, consider reaching out for support. You can contact a professional or reach out to helplines that offer emotional support. One of such helplines is iCALL 9152987821



Providing Support For Children And Adolescents:



Along with providing an emotionally safe environment, it is equally important to understand the needs of children and adolescents and provide appropriate psychosocial support to them. It can be challenging to know exactly how to offer this support. You can use the following tips to provide psychosocial support to children and adolescents:

CHILDREN



A. Communicating about COVID-19:

- Check the kind of information children are coming across and what children think is true. Accordingly, talk to them about COVID-19 and provide reassurance to reduce their fear or clarify their misconceptions about the pandemic, and instead give accurate information.

- Answer your children’s queries by taking cues from the child’s response. Answer questions honestly. Don’t dismiss their worries. Don’t make false promises. For instance, by saying, “What is there to worry?” or “nothing will happen”. Talk about how they can prevent themselves from falling ill, what will the family do if anyone falls ill? Help them to understand the importance of following the guidelines provided.
 - Make sure that children are not excessively exposed to pandemic related information/content. Avoid discussing COVID-19 related information or news that excessively focuses on negative incidents. Being exposed to these passive pieces of information can increase children’s anxiety.
 - Address fear and anxiety related to the pandemic: Avoid dismissing fears of Children and Adolescents as it is natural to be worried or anxious about the virus. Provide them with the space to talk, listen to their concerns, empathize with them, and reassure them. E.g., “I know you’re feeling anxious about catching coronavirus. It is okay to feel like this. But you know doing things like washing your hands, staying home will help us to take care of ourselves as well as others!”
 - Encourage children to tell you if they’re not feeling well, or if they are feeling worried about the virus. Explain to them that if they’re not well then you and other adults will be able to help them to feel better.
- B. **Identify signs of distress in children:** Children’s distress can be observed through their reactions, their physiological reactions and their emotional and behavioural reactions. You may find detailed information on how they respond to distress in the chart below:

Age Range (Years)	Common Regressive Reactions	Common Physiological Reactions	Common Emotional and Behavioral Reactions
1-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bedwetting in a child who before the disaster was toilet trained Thumb-sucking Greater fear (of darkness, animals, monsters, strangers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of appetite Overeating Indigestion and other digestive problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nervousness Anxiety about being away from parents or other Irritability and disobedience
5-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinginess with parents or other primary caregivers Crying or whimpering Requests to be fed or dressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headaches Complaints of visual or hearing problems Sleep problems and nightmares 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School phobia School withdrawal Irritability and disobedience
11-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competing with younger siblings for attention from parents or other primary caregivers Faliure to perform chores and fulfill normal responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headaches Complaints of vague aches and pains Overeating or loss of appetite Skin problems Sleep problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of interest in activities Poorer school performance Disruptive behavior Resistance of authority
14-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resumption of earlier behaviours and attitudes Decline in previous responsible behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headaches Sleep probems Digestive problems Vague physical complaints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase or decrease in physical activity Depression Isolation Antisocial behaviour

(SAMHSA, 2018)

- C. **Be accepting of Children's ways of coping:** Avoid criticism, mockery, or annoyance if children or adolescents go back to their old habits (e.g., thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, and baby-talk) as a response to stress. These habits provide some sort of comfort to the child but are not intentional. Do not react harshly to these signs of coping, e.g. saying "What you are doing is wrong, embarrassing. Instead talk to the child/adolescent about the behaviour in a non-judgmental way, e.g. "It is alright. It happens sometimes." "Do you want to talk about this?" Discuss if their anxiety can be minimized in other ways. Even if the behaviour doesn't change, be patient and ignore. Most regressive behaviours go away when the stress/anxiety subsides.
- D. **Help them cope:** If your children are feeling overwhelmed, ask them to take three deep breaths and make a list of the colours they can notice around them, the sounds they can hear whenever they feel this way. You can use the strategies to help them identify their stress and to calm down as well. Remember that each child is different, and some techniques may be more effective for some while some for others.
- **Create a worry box,** where children can write in their concerns or worries and put it in a box. You may dedicate a day to read out the worries and help them to feel better and relax using the breathing techniques explained earlier.
 - **Introduce worry time to your children.** Dedicate a time every day and tell children that they can worry about their concerns in this dedicated time. This will help them to express their concerns and will also help them to not excessively worry the whole day.
 - **Create a calm corner in your house.** It needs to be a small space where children can soothe themselves on their own with the help of toys, colours, etc.
 - **Create a happy box** that contains children's favourite things which bring them joy. Opening the happy box can help them to redirect their focus to things that bring joy to their life. Such as their favourite toys, pictures of their loved ones, colouring book, etc.

Apart from the techniques mentioned above, and breathing exercises, there are some body-based techniques that can help them to calm down. You may use the following dialogues to help them relax:

- **Squeeze and release:** Hold a soft-ball or ball of handkerchief or lemon or imagine holding a lemon and squeeze/clench your fists to squeeze the juice out of it. Juice it out as much as you can and then release it. Squeeze it and release it.
- **Stretch it like a cat:** Just the way a cat stretches its body, stretch your arms in front of you and hold it for 10 seconds. Drop your hands slowly to their normal position.
- **Squeeze through:** Imagine that you need to squeeze through a narrow space. To do that, you'll have to make itself smaller to squeeze through. Suck your stomach in by taking a deep breath, and exhaling deeply, hold it for 4-5 seconds. You've squeezed through the narrow space!

- E. **Maintain your composure and be tolerant of their behaviour:** Children often consider the adults around them to guide them in uncertain situations. It is panicking, expressing calmness, and taking preventive measures against COVID-19.
- F. **Create a routine for the household and the child:** Creating a set routine helps children to get a sense of familiarity. Plan their routine in such a way that they have time for learning, time for social interactions, family time, time for leisure, time for simple indoor exercises like instance, yoga, stretches, skipping, etc and adequate amount of sleep. Set time for meals and bedtime.
- For activities related to learning include elements related to language, numbers, objects, colours in simple activities like naming objects, identifying objects.
 - For activities related to leisure allow children to express themselves through creative mediums like drawing, singing or through movements like dancing, mirroring each other's actions, etc
 - For activities related to social interactions include simple activities such as playing antakshari or simple games for the first one to find a colour from a picture or surroundings, imitating animals, watching a movie with family etc. This is a good opportunity to reconnect with the family. If possible, let them talk with their peers and relatives over the phone occasionally
- H. **Understand children's growth:** It is possible that certain behaviours-such as being occupied with imaginary games, small anger outbursts or temper tantrums- that might be considered inappropriate are developmentally alright. Respect children's individuality as each of them has some unique areas of interests. - develop their talent, their individuality, their mental and cognitive and emotional development.
- I. **Respect Children's dignity:** Don't use violence as a means to discipline the child. Punishment limits a child's exploration of knowledge, creativity, and expression. Following are some ways to correct children's behaviour without punishing them. Set simple, realistic rules in the house and keep emphasizing on them.
- **Pause:** Give them time to reflect and think over their mistakes. You can do it by limiting their privileges e.g., reducing their TV watch time or taking away a toy for some time
 - **Help them see alternatives:** Children are likely to follow a behaviour that is mutually decided. Explain the situation to children and suggest different alternatives to the behaviour. With older children you can ask them to think of the potential alternative behaviour. "Can you think of a better way?" "What do you think would be more helpful?"
 - **Encourage positive behaviour:** In case of violation of rules, discipline and reinforce desired behaviour. Encourage children to do more of what is right. Show faith in them "I believe in you", "I'm sure that you can do it"
 - **Focus on their strengths:** Rather than focusing on what they have done wrong, identify what their strengths are and reinforce those areas of strength. This will also help children develop a positive self- image.

ADOLESCENT

- J. **Managing your own distress:** If you are feeling distressed or feeling overwhelmed, you can use various techniques that can help you to deal with your stress. (You can read more about it in the next message). You can also contact a professional or reach out to helplines that offer emotional support. **One of such helplines is iCALL 9152987821.**



A **Communicating about COVID-19:**

- Adolescents will be more vocal about their questions related to COVID-19. Provide accurate factual information about the present situation.
- Help them understand the importance of accessing information through reliable sources and to not follow unreliable sources shared on social media.
- Encourage them to access information through reliable sources such as the World Health Organization (WHO), or the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India and Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

- B. **Identify Adolescent's distress:** Observe changes in their emotions, behaviour or physical health. Sometimes these changes can be subtle. Such as in Physical signs in the form of headaches, sleep or appetite disturbances, or emotional and behavioural signs of distress such as Disruptive behaviour, ignoring health-promoting behaviour, isolating from peers and loved ones, loss of interest in activities, resisting authorities. You may find detailed information on how they respond to distress in the chart below:

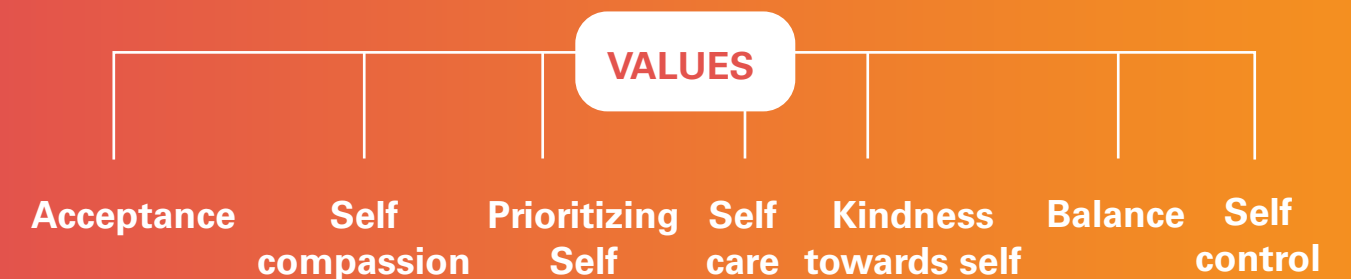
Age Range (Years)	Common Regressive Reactions	Common Physiological Reactions	Common Emotional and Behavioral Reactions
1-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bedwetting in a child who before the disaster was toilet trained Thumb-sucking Greater fear (of darkness, animals, monsters, strangers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of appetite Overeating Indigestion and other digestive problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nervousness Anxiety about being away from parents or other Irritability and disobedience
5-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinginess with parents or other primary caregivers Crying or whimpering Requests to be fed or dressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headaches Complaints of visual or hearing problems Sleep problems and nightmares 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School phobia School withdrawal Irritability and disobedience
11-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competing with younger siblings for attention from parents or other primary caregivers Failure to perform chores and fulfill normal responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headaches Complaints of vague aches and pains Overeating or loss of appetite Skin problems Sleep problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of interest in activities Poorer school performance Disruptive behavior Resistance of authority
14-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resumption of earlier behaviours and attitudes Decline in previous responsible behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headaches Sleep problems Digestive problems Vague physical complaints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase or decrease in physical activity Depression Isolation Antisocial behaviour

(SAMHSA, 2018)

- C. **Listening to their challenges:** Listen to their concerns without interrupting them, acknowledging their difficulties, clarifying their difficulties, reassuring them, and generating hope by suggesting different ways in which they were able to overcome a similar difficulty and provide support in resolving issues. You can initiate by asking "How are you feeling?" or "How can I help you?".
- D. **Encourage them to continue their pre-pandemic routine:** Following a routine helps in providing a sense of familiarity in life. Ensure that adolescents have an adequate amount of sleep and are eating healthily. Make sure that they have a bit of downtime, time to focus on their academics, time to spend with friends through virtual mediums, etc.
- E. **Manage their screen time:** Negotiate with adolescents to ensure the limited use of gadgets and to discuss the inclusion of healthy non-gadget activities as a part of the daily routine. Such as not using gadgets one hour before sleep, limiting the screen time, avoiding continuous use of gadgets for gaming, streaming, etc.
- F. **Give space and Privacy:** Avoid constantly monitoring their behaviour. If it is not possible to offer physical privacy you may provide privacy by giving them alone time, not monitoring their conversations with friends or siblings.

- E. **Manage their screen time:** Negotiate with adolescents to ensure the limited use of gadgets and to discuss the inclusion of healthy non-gadget activities as a part of the daily routine. Such as not using gadgets one hour before sleep, limiting the screen time, avoiding continuous use of gadgets for gaming, streaming, etc.
- F. **Give space and Privacy:** Avoid constantly monitoring their behaviour. If it is not possible to offer physical privacy you may provide privacy by giving them alone time, not monitoring their conversations with friends or siblings.
- G. **Help them cope:** It is important for adolescents to learn simple ways to cope with their feelings. Techniques such as breathing exercises, body-based relaxation techniques, use of methods to express their feelings can help them to manage their distress. You may refer to the earlier section that explores how to facilitate coping in children as well as section specifically for adolescents on how to cope.
- H. Seek professional help if the behavioural and/or emotional changes or there is a significant loss of sleep or appetite if there is physical aggression towards others if the adolescent expresses death wishes or suicidal ideas or hopelessness or attempts self-harm and in case of any use of alcohol or other substances. Encourage them to seek professional help from a psychologist, school counsellor or **contact professionals through helplines one such helpline is iCALL: 9152987821.**

Managing your own wellbeing as caregivers/guardians



While looking after children and adolescents is important, so is looking after your own self. Taking care of yourself/managing your well-being means to take care of your physical health, thoughts, emotions, other stressors such as job and your relationships. Following tips can help you to take care of yourself in these difficult times:

I. Taking care of your health

- A. Make sure to eat healthy meals regularly. Make it a point to consume healthy meals. Eat meals mindfully i.e. don't focus on other tasks related to work while eating.
- B. Integrate physical activity into your daily life. It could also be something that fits in your lifestyle.
- C. Make sure to get adequate sleep. Avoid exercising or using mobile/technology an hour before sleeping.
- D. Take time offs or rest adequately whenever you're sick or are feeling unwell.

II. Managing your thoughts:

- A. **Test your thoughts:** Try to assess the situation at hand. For e.g., If you feel fearful of the pandemic, ask yourself, are you taking the necessary precautions? Are your loved ones taking the required precautions? Have you or your loved ones been experiencing symptoms? Try to check if your thoughts align with reality or not.

- B. **Even when feeling afraid, check your control on the situation:** Being constantly exposed to news and information about COVID can increase our fear levels. Even at such times ask yourself, a. What is under my control? b. Am I unnecessarily worrying about the worst thing that can happen? c. When I have been stressed in the past, how have I managed? d. What are the things I can do to help myself and be positive?
- C. **Avoid if-then thinking:** There are various possibilities for contracting COVID-19. Thinking about all possible ways in which you or loved ones can get infected, can further add on to the anxiety. Instead, once you've identified what's within your control, it is best to focus on what you can do such as taking precautions for your safety and hygiene.
- D. **Take a breather:** Working in an environment with limited resources and demands, experiencing stress and anxiety is a natural response. Take a moment to identify what you are feeling and what we are doing.

III. Taking care of your Emotional and Psychological well-being:

- A. **Notice and label your emotions:** When feeling distressed try to understand what is making you feel this way. When you feel anxious, quietly say to yourself, "OK, I think I'm feeling anxious again because I'm worried about my family's health." Just putting a label on what we feel, helps reduce the distress associated to the concern and focus on what can be done to reduce the distress.
- B. **Accept the distress as a natural response:** When we experience distress our immediate reaction is to ignore it, reject it, or be afraid of it. Give yourself permission to be a human and accept that you are distressed. Don't judge yourself for feeling it. Be kind to yourself.
- C. **Be compassionate and kind to yourself:** The pandemic has also brought in the challenge of managing multiple roles. It can be quite distressing to handle both professional and personal life with demands from family members. Especially for women, as it is assumed for a woman to be responsible for household chores. Therefore, give importance to your own needs, and dedicate time for yourself where you do something solely for yourself.
- D. **Strengthen your social networks:** Spend time with those whose company you enjoy. While spending time with loved ones try to engage in activities or conversations unrelated to COVID-19.
- E. **Engage in activities unrelated to your work:** Seek opportunities to do things that are unrelated to your work. Try to make time for yourself to do something that brings you joy, comfort. That could mean watching a movie, or playing games or learning how to make tea/food, etc. It allows you to be in control of what you want to do and provides a sense of mastery.
- F. **Engage in relaxation activities:** Whenever you feel overwhelmed try to take some time out and focus on yourself. Doing this simple activity can help.
 - Sit in a comfortable position or lie down if preferred and close your eyes

- Notice your thoughts. Don't try to restrict your thoughts. Just notice the kind of thoughts you are having.
- Notice how you are feeling. Ask yourself how your day was. Notice how you are feeling
- Notice how your body feels. Are you feeling tired or exhausted? If yes, acknowledge by saying "yes, I am feeling tired"
- Take deep breaths. Focus on how the breath is inhaled through your nose and inhaled through your mouth.
- After taking a couple of deep breaths saying affirmative sentences like "It is okay. Whatever it is, I am okay"
- Notice how you feel now after the exercise. If you notice any difference at all.
- Whenever you are ready, open your eyes.

Professional life:

- A. **Take breaks while working:** Make sure to take breaks to recharge as working for an extended amount of time leads to stress and exhaustion. Taking a break helps in refocusing on work. It provides an opportunity to refresh and be more efficient at work.
- B. **Break down tasks:** Completing assigned tasks can be an overwhelming process. There might be concerns about where to begin, what to focus on, etc. Take responsibilities offered and break them down in smaller tasks. This helps in viewing the large tasks to be more approachable and doable.
- C. **Connect with your co-workers:** Interacting with co-workers and seeking support from your peers can help in understanding how they are managing their distress. It also strengthens peer relationships which can have positive effects on one's well-being.
- D. **Create boundaries between your work and personal life:** You can create boundaries by deciding not to work on certain tasks beyond designated work hours or dedicate time for yourself after work, engage in activities unrelated to your work, etc. Setting clear boundaries between work and personal life helps in reducing any spill over into your personal life.
- E. **Learn to say "No":** Saying No isn't selfish. It helps in providing clear boundaries and allows others to know what to expect from you. Prioritize the tasks assigned and assess if you can negotiate to delegate these tasks.

V. Managing Relationships:

- A. Be aware that social isolation, quarantine, and distancing can affect you and your family's mental well-being.
- B. **Share the load:** It can be challenging to handle demands at work as well as fulfil demands from personal life. Negotiate with your family to share the work that needs to be done. Such as assigning small tasks to your children or other family members.
- C. **Spend time with family:** Use this time to spend with family. Discuss about family members' concerns, highs and lows. This sharing will provide a space to resolve conflicts, share opinions authentically and to build relationships.
- D. **Avoid extreme reactions:** The harsh realities of COVID-19 and lockdown can add to the stress and can make us angry. Identifying the sources of anger can help in understanding how to deal with it.

Ask yourself "what is making me angry?", "When do I usually get upset?" and "How do I react when I am unhappy".

Identify if you have been looking after yourself, if you've been overworking, neglecting your health, sleep etc. which may be contributing to low frustration tolerance.

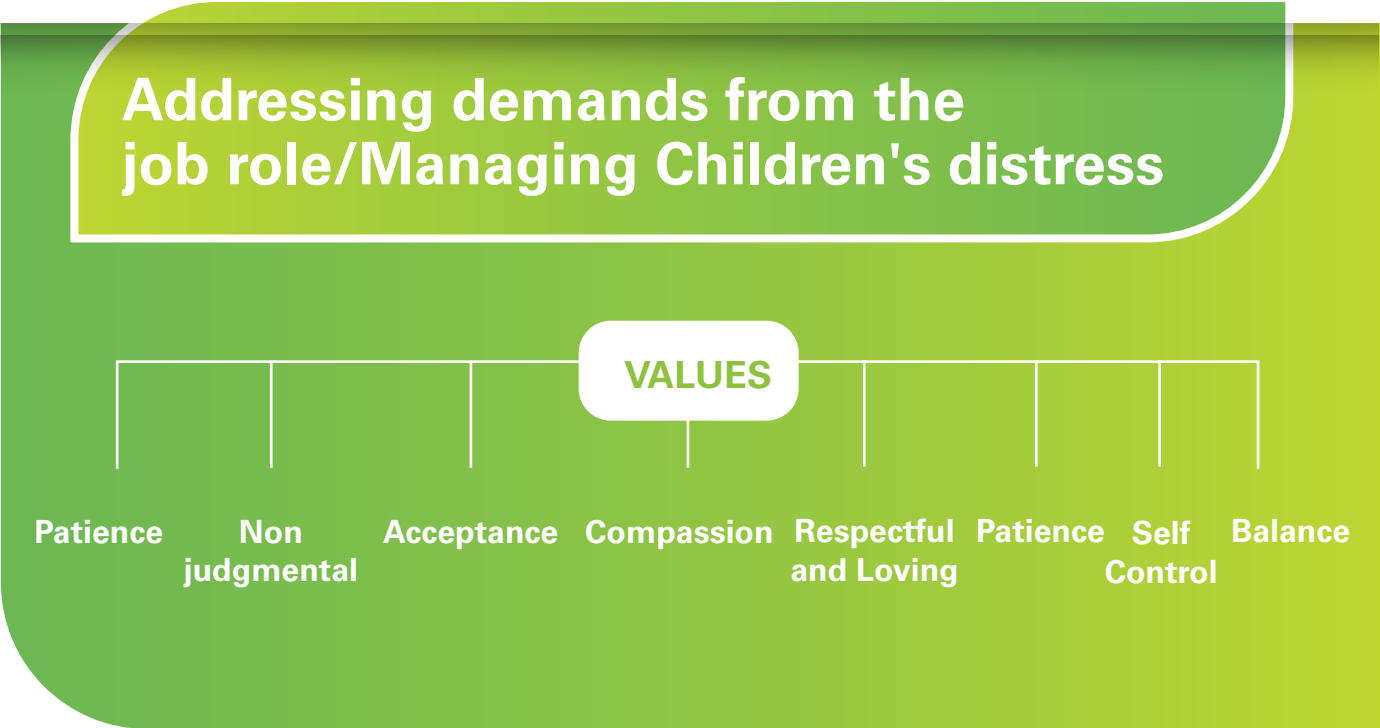
Try to follow tips from the Emotional and psychological well-being section.

- E. **If you're living in an environment where you are experiencing violence may use of the following may help:**
 - o Reaching out to supportive family and friends who can help in coping with stress as well as to meet practical needs (e.g. food, childcare, shelter).
 - o Create a safety plan for your own safety as well as your children's safety in case the violence worsens. You can keep the following details in mind while creating a safety plan:
 - a) Keep important documents, money, a few personal things accessible to take with you if you need to leave immediately.
 - b) Plan how you might leave the house and get help (e.g. transport, location). Contact numbers of neighbours, friends, and family whom you can call for or go to for help. Connect to authorities that may offer help to you in such situations
 - c) Keep contact details of organisations that help in violence against women such as hotlines such as 103, 181, 1091 or contact nearest one stop crisis centre, social workers, and child protection systems or nearest police station, and accessible shelters and support services. Contact these agencies as necessary. Be discreet so that the perpetrator won't have access to this information.

CAREGIVERS OF CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS



Children and adolescents that are a part of Child Care Institutions (CCI) often are those that have experienced high levels of distress, challenges and even trauma in some cases. It is of utmost importance to understand these children need additional love, support and care, especially in COVID-19. As a member of CCI, (or other members providing assistance to children and adolescents) it can be challenging to meet the needs of Children and Adolescents at such times with the limitations related to the job role. Following messages will help you to provide Children and Adolescents with the support they need:



Being a part of child care functionaries during COVID-19 posits some unique challenges. It can be difficult to navigate yourself through these challenges and provide support to children and adolescents needs. Following messages will help in understanding the different ways in which you can manage the different demands from your job role:

Tips for Caregivers to take care of Children and Adolescents:

- I. **Be welcoming:** It is important for you to make children feel comfortable and consider you as a trusted adult in their life. Be accepting of the fact that children may need your help or come to you at any given time or day. It is their right as children to seek help from you. e.g. "It is alright. I'm there for you." "Do you want to talk about this?" "Can you tell me more about this?"
- II. **Create space for discussion:** Approach children to create opportunities to understand how they are in the institution. Let them know that they can talk to you. If they do approach you, don't judge them for their concerns. Make them feel accepted and respect their opinions even if they are different than yours. Tell children to talk to their peers at the institution or about their feelings, concerns, etc.

- III. **Allow children to express their opinions freely:** Children may find it difficult to express their feelings through words. They may also be hesitating to admit that they are scared of the pandemic. Help them express their feelings openly. You can use various activities to help children express themselves.
 - Through creating art e.g., Assigning a colour to what they are feeling, drawing what they are feeling or what happened with them\
 - Through storytelling e.g., asking the child through a story how would the protagonist feel if they were to go through a similar situation? What do they think about the situation? Etc.
- IV. **Facilitate honest discussions:** Allow children to be honest with you even if they have made any mistakes. In instances where children make mistakes, instead of punishing them or yelling at them first, hear them out. After which, you may use strategies to correct them, but they need to know that they will still be heard. Some ways to correct their behaviour is:
 - **Emphasise on following rules:** Set simple, realistic rules in the institution and keep emphasising on them
 - **Pause:** Give them time to reflect and think over their mistakes. You can do it by limiting their privileges e.g., reducing their TV watch time or taking away a toy for some time
 - **Help them see alternatives:** Children are likely to follow a behaviour that is mutually decided. Explain the situation to children and suggest different alternatives to the behaviour. With older children you can ask them to think of the potential alternative behaviour. "Can you think of a better way?" "What do you think would be more helpful?"
 - **Encourage positive behaviour:** In case of violation of rules, discipline and reinforce desired behaviour. Encourage children to do more of what is right. Show faith in them "I believe in you", "I'm sure that you can do it"
 - You can even use this as an opportunity to **develop empathy** by asking 'how would you have responded if someone behaved the same way with you?' 'How would you like others to treat you?'
- V. **Be alert for significant changes in behaviour:** Caregivers should be alert to any significant changes in children's sleeping patterns, eating habits, and concentration levels. Watch for wide emotional swings or frequent physical complaints. If any of these actions do happen, they will likely lessen within a short time. If they continue, however, you should seek professional help and counselling for the child.
- VI. **Validate their feelings:** Children in institutions have often experienced some kind of challenges in their past. Let them know that it is alright to feel stressed, address their concerns by listening to them. Don't dismiss their concerns or interrupt them while speaking.
 - Listen to their concerns without interrupting them. Listen to what they have to say. Encourage them to speak more by asking "Can you tell me a bit more about...?" "hmm" "Oh really?"
 - Talk about their feelings. Let them know that it is okay to feel negative emotions sometimes. Validate their feelings by using statements such as "I understand what you're trying to say..." "Anyone else would also feel scared"



- Reassure children that they're safe as they are following all of the suggested guidelines. Let them know that if they ever feel sick the adults will take care of them to feel better.
- Encourage them to focus on their strengths and praise them frequently. Such as if they are being kind to others in the institute, helping others, being passionate about something that they like, etc.
- Provide comfort to children and adolescents by engaging in different activities. Allow them to do simple activities that they enjoy. E.g., drawing, dancing, playing games with peers, etc.

VIII. **Help them cope:** If children are feeling overwhelmed, ask them to take three deep breaths and notice the colours of objects around them, the sounds they can hear whenever they feel anxious or scared or sad emotions. You can use the strategies to help them identify their stress and to calm down as well. Remember that each child is different, and some techniques may be more effective for some while some for others.

- **Create a worry box,** where children can write in their concerns or worries and put it in a box. You may dedicate a day to read out the worries and help them to feel better and relax using the techniques explained in this point.
- **Introduce worry time to your children.** Dedicate a time every day and tell children that they can worry about their concerns in this dedicated time. This will help them to express their concerns and will also help them to not excessively worry the whole day.
- **Create a calm corner** in the CCI or institution. It needs to be a small space where children can soothe themselves on their own with the help of toys, colours, etc. You may paste posters of feelings in the corner or small encouraging messages that can help them calm down.
- **Create a happy box** that contains children's favourite things which bring them joy. Opening the happy box can help them to redirect their focus to things that bring joy to their life. Such as their favourite toys, pictures of their loved ones, colouring book, etc.

Apart from the techniques mentioned above, and breathing exercises, there are some body-based techniques that can help them to calm down. You may use the following dialogues to help them relax:

- **Squeeze and release:** Hold a soft-ball or ball of handkerchief or lemon or imagine holding a lemon and squeeze/clench your fists to squeeze the juice out of it. Juice it out as much as you can and then release it. Squeeze it and release it.
- **Stretch it like a cat:** Just the way a cat stretches its body, stretch your arms in front of you and hold it for 10 seconds. Drop your hands slowly to their normal position.
- **Squeeze through:** Imagine that you need to squeeze through a narrow space. To do that, you'll have to make itself smaller to squeeze through. Suck your stomach in by taking a deep breath, and exhaling deeply, hold it for 4-5 seconds. You've squeezed through the narrow space!

IX. **Keep children engaged:** Being engaged in various activities provides growth and learning to children. Allowing children to do various activities that keep them mentally engaged helps them to make use of their time in a positive way. Create opportunities for children to engage in group activities for more interaction and social support. The activities could be focused on academic learning, leisure, and social interaction.

- For activities related to learning include elements related to language, numbers, objects, colours in simple activities like naming objects, identifying objects.
- For activities related to leisure allow children to express themselves through creative mediums like drawing, singing or through movements like dancing, mirroring each other's actions, etc.
- For activities related to social interactions include simple activities such as playing antakshari or simple games such as the first one to find a colour from a picture or surroundings, imitating animals, watching a movie with their peers etc. If nossible allow them to connect with their peers and relatives over the phone or using other forms of technology as well.

X. **Bring the outside world inside:** Children living in institutions have been experiencing a lockdown within a lockdown. Not being able to go outside freely for 5-6 months can leave them feeling out of place or lost. Simple activities such as encouraging children to think about the time spent outside by drawing pictures, narrating stories of what they could do once or expressing what they like about nature in a play or a song, etc. can help them to feel a sense of connectedness with the external world.

XI. **Consider children's interests:** While arranging different activities for children, check with them if children actually want to participate in them. Consider their interests and what they wish to do as well. Forcing them to participate can further increase their distress. of emotions.

XII. **Provide a safe and enriching environment:** Ensure that the child is in a safe space devoid of any kind of abuse/violence. Observe their behavioural signs such as if the child is quieter than usual, visible bruises on their body, withdrawn from peers, suddenly crying or sensitive, etc. If you observe such signs, contact respective authorities and psychologists who can provide psychosocial assistance.

XIII. **Monitor their media exposure:** Media acts as a window to the world outside for children. Make sure that children and adolescents are not consumin excessive content related to COVID-19. Avoid extensive discussions of the news related to COVID-19 around Children and adolescents. Being a passive recipient of negative information can also increase their anxiety and fear.

XIV. **For protection officers:** Maintain regular communication with the caregivers to get the pulse of CCIs. Encourage staff to make referrals when needed.

Representing self when interacting with children:

- I. **Model calmness and reassure them:** Remain calm as children look up to adults when feeling overwhelmed. Reassure children how they can keep themselves safe. Give them age-appropriate information and talk about things that are helping people to stay safe in COVID-19.
- II. **Be accepting of Children's ways of coping/non-judgemental:** Avoid criticism, mockery, or annoyance if children or adolescents go back to their old habits (e.g., thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, and baby-talk) as a response to stress. These behaviours provide comfort to the child and are not intentional. Do not react harshly to these signs of coping. Don't label children or call them names for these behaviours.
- III. **Manage your anger:** It can be distressing to cater to the needs of children in limited resources. Violence is not the answer to discipline children. Corporal punishment is illegal and hence use of violence on children should be prohibited. If you feel overwhelmed or angry at the child, pause for 10 seconds, and take deep breaths before responding to the child. Instead of using violence to discipline the child, use healthy ways to discipline the children by reinforcing the desired behaviour. E.g., praise them for doing something good, reward them by giving them extra playtime or sleep time, letting them choose what TV show they want to watch that day, etc.
- IV. **Take care of your wellbeing:** It is natural to feel distressed with increasing responsibilities in professional as well as personal life. Taking care of self enables you to take care of others as well. You can read about how to manage your wellbeing in the next section.
- V. **Contact district-level authorities:** In instances where you think additional help is required such as in case of violence, abuse, etc coordinate with your supervisors and contact respective district authorities or Child Protection Officers or you may connect to helplines that offer psychosocial assistant, one such helpline is iCALL 9152987821.

Manage your distress



Navigating oneself through variety of changes in professional and personal lives during the pandemic can get tough at times. We often disregard our own needs in order to help others, but it is equally important to manage one's own well-being. Managing one's well-being could be looked at by taking care of one's health, thoughts, emotions, work and relationships. Following tips can help you to take care of yourself in these difficult times:

Simple ways to look after yourself:

Ways to take care of self during the day:

- I. Taking care of your health by eating healthy meals regularly and sleeping well.
- II. Be physically active by doing physical activity daily. Something as simple as light stretching, yoga, etc.
- III. Managing your thoughts by checking with yourself if your thoughts are aligned with reality.
- IV. When feeling afraid, check your control on the situation. Focus on what is within your control and not on what is beyond your control. E.g., focus on what precautions you can take for your safety and hygiene.
- V. Take a moment to accept that you're feeling anxious about the health of yourself and your loved ones or you're feeling distressed.
- VI. Spend time with those whose company you enjoy or engage in activities unrelated to your work. Be mindful and focus entirely on the activity that you are doing. That could mean watching a movie, or playing games or learning how to make tea/ favourite food for yourself, etc.
- VII. In personal life, negotiate with your family to share the load of work that needs to be done. Delegate small chores or activities to other family members.

- VIII. Reach out to family, friends and loved ones and connect with them even if it is virtually. Speaking to them can help you to feel positive and help you cope better.
- IX. There has been an increase in domestic violence in the pandemic. Individuals who are experiencing violence may use of the following may help:
- A. Reaching out to supportive family and friends who can help in coping with stress as well as to meet practical needs (e.g. food, child care, shelter).
 - B. Create a safety plan for your own safety as well as your children's safety in case the violence worsens. You can keep the following details in mind while creating a safety plan
 - Keep important documents, money, a few personal things accessible to take with you if you need to leave immediately.
 - Plan how you might leave the house and get help (e.g. transport, location). Contact numbers of neighbours, friends, and family whom you can call for or go to for help. Connect to authorities that may offer help to you in such situations
 - Keep contact details of organisations that help in violence against women such as hotlines such as 103, 181, 1091 or contact nearest one stop crisis centre, social workers, and child protection systems or nearest police station, and accessible shelters and support services. Contact these agencies as necessary. Be discreet so that the perpetrator won't have access to this information.

5 minutes to relaxation:

Whenever you feel overwhelmed try to take some time out and focus on yourself. Take a moment to identify what you are feeling and what we are doing. You can use techniques that will help in relieving distress. (Take 3 deep breaths, Try observing your surroundings and what you can see, feel, hear, smell and taste, boxed breathing, paced breathing). Doing the following activity can help:

- Sit in a comfortable position or lie down if preferred and close your eyes
- Notice your thoughts. Don't try to restrict your thoughts. Just notice the kind of thoughts you are having.
- Notice how you are feeling. Ask yourself how your day was. Notice how you are feeling
- Notice how the body feels. Are you feeling tired or exhausted? If yes, acknowledge by saying "yes I am feeling tired"
- Take deep breaths. Focus on how the breath is inhaled through your nose and exhaled through your mouth.
- Notice how you feel now after the exercise. If you notice any difference at all.
- Whenever you are ready, open your eyes.

Dealing with work related stress:

Being a secondary caregiver/Caregiver of Child Care Institutions demands you to help or wanting to help those in need or suffering. This also means that one can experience stress as a result of wanting to help others. This stress is called "Compassion Fatigue". This can be seen in professional settings in the following ways:

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling the responsibility to help beyond one's capacity
- A decrease in compassion/empathy
- Emotionally being drained
- Feeling tired due to caring for others
- Being overly involved with work
- Burnout
- How to mitigate this:
 - Even if it may not be possible to take long breaks, try to keep spaces of time where you can take small breaks
 - During those breaks do something unrelated to work like speak with your colleagues, listen to a song etc.
 - Seek help from colleagues or supervisors and discuss how they deal with compassion fatigue.
 - Create boundaries between your work and personal life. Decide not to work on additional paperwork or respond to emails once back home. Take some time to dedicate for yourself after work and follow other suggested tips to feel better.
 - If there are exceeding demands in your work role, discuss with your supervisors and assess if the additional tasks could be delegated.
 - Engage in different ways to look after your health, thoughts and emotional well-being (see point 1, 2 and 3).
 - Consider seeking professional help. You may reach out to mental health professionals or helplines such is iCALL at 9152987821 that can offer psychological assistance.

Managing suicidal ideation and self-harm:

The pandemic has impacted different spheres of people’s lives. Their social spheres, healthy, economic spheres, and their psychological sphere. The way it impacts psychological well-being can result in the feeling of hopelessness, helplessness, worthlessness, feeling overwhelmed with emotional pain. It can seem like there is no other way out of the problems and the problems seem unfixable. In such times thoughts related to ending life emerge. Children and Adolescents may not explicitly verbalize these thoughts. Instead, you can observe them in the following manner:

- Giving away their belongings
- Being preoccupied with death or ending things in drawings, writing or conversations or any other forms of expression
- Use of statements related to dying or what will happen if they die “You won’t miss me when I die”
- Sitting alone in the institute
- Not talking to family members or peers
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Exhibiting aggressive or hostile behaviour
- Engaging in risk-taking behaviour
- Engaging in non-suicidal self-harm (e.g. cutting, banging, self-starvation)
- A change in personality e.g., from being upbeat to quiet
- Agitation, restlessness, distress or panicky behaviour
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Jokingly talking about suicide

Children may reflect suicidal tendencies through their behaviour or emotional expressions. It is to be noted that is a coping mechanism to battle their distress. Some of the signs listed above are more explicit (e.g. talking about suicide) while others are implicit (e.g. risk-taking behaviour) and may require additional inquiry. You can address these signs in the following ways:

- Observe changes in their behaviour and mood:** Be observant of the kind of changes children experience. Try to understand their reason behind the changes in their behaviour.
- Do not dismiss their concerns or their desire to seek help:** Understand that they are not doing this for attention, but they are in genuine need of help. Be accepting of their feelings. Be non-judgmental about their coping strategies. “I can understand that you’re in a lot of pain right now”
- Learn about the warning signs:** Asking questions related to suicide may help them to open up and indicates to them that you are willing to talk about the topic. You can ask questions like “How do you hurt?”, “How can I help?” “Sometimes when people have experienced ____ or feel as you do, they think of suicide. Are you thinking of hurting yourself?”.

Listen to their experiences, reasoning, and validate their emotional pain. You may use sentences like “It must be difficult to experience...” or “I understand it must be really painful/ difficult to deal with this incident. Can you tell me some more about your feelings?”

- Provide them with emotional support:** Children and adolescents will be hesitant to open up and express the about such concerns and the distress experienced. Hence, it is important to tell them you care about them. While offering support, maintain confidentiality. While providing emotional support, consider the following:

Offering emotional support in crisis situations

Be willing to listen

Allow expressions of feelings

Accept their feelings and their worldview

Be non-judgmental

Don’t debate whether suicide is right or wrong, whether feelings are good or bad

Don’t minimize their problems

Don’t advise them on how they need to live their lives

Don’t lecture on the value of life

- Don’t offer sympathy or pity to them:** E.g., "Oh no! I feel so bad for you." Don’t debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or lecture on the value of life. “People who commit suicide are cowards and want to just escape” or “Committing suicide is a sin, why are you thinking like this?” or “Don’t worry everything will be alright”
- Establish a contract:** with the child that they won’t take any drastic step without talking to you first.
- Maintain confidentiality** and assure them that their privacy will be respected. Communicate that the information will only be disclosed to those responsible for their safety (e.g., medical officer, superintendent, counsellor).
- If possible, **don’t leave them alone.** Identify a safe adult that they trust. Reach out to the safe adult and inform them about the child’s vulnerability. Guide the adult on how they can support the child. Ensure that you discuss what information is to be shared with the safe person in collaboration with the child. If possible, suggest them to live with their peers or family, others from the institution.

- i. **Create a safe environment around them:** Distance the child from any triggers/ harmful material that they may have procured. Ask them to identify elements which make them feel safe. Talk with them to develop some ideas for others who might be able to help as well.
- j. **Build a safety net:** Identify people, places & experiences that prove a sense of safety and stability. Some of the exercises that can help with this include taking a bath, holding ice-cubes, noticing different colours around you, colouring etc.
- k. Follow up with them, keep checking in about their safety until they feel stable and a referral is facilitated. **A referral could be made by contacting a psychologist or a helpline. One such helpline is iCALL 9152987821.**

Helping Self (When having suicidal ideation):

When one is in difficult circumstances, it is natural to feel discouraged, dejected, etc. When these negative emotions persist, one may feel overwhelmed by them. In such instances when one’s coping mechanisms are inadequate; thoughts of hurting self may occur. Suicidal thoughts are a sign of extreme emotional turmoil and low resources to cope with the same. Such instances can be responded in the following ways:

• **Reduce the pain**

Talk to someone: Connect to your social structures. Reach out to a friend, or a family member, try not to separate yourself from those who care about you and want to help you. Call helplines that provide psychosocial support one such helpline is iCALL 9152987821, a professional, go somewhere you’ll feel safe.

- **Self-Soothing:** Do something that will help you feel better, right away. Perhaps collect items into an emergency bag or box that you can turn to such as pictures of significant others, something that you like to wear, a card/letter that made you very happy, etc. Make use of all five senses to find things that will soothe you.

Vision	Focus your attention on looking at someting nice, nature, a painting, watching a favourite programmer or movie
Hearing	Listen to a favourite peice of music, sounds of nature, sing
Smell	Really notice smells - favourite soap, food, essential oil
Taste	Use sensation of taste to focus your attention. Eat mindfully - savouring each moment
Touch	Wear soft comforting socks, stroke a pet, give yourself a hand message

- A useful reminder, using the 5 senses:

5	5 things I can see
4	4 things I can hear
3	3 things I can touch
2	2 things I can smell or taste
1	1 breath. Then continue to just notice your breathing, and the sensations of breathing in your body - in your nose, throat, abdomen.

- When you are emotionally distressed or overwhelmed, don’t consume substances such as alcohol and other drugs. It may seem to help, but it can further increase the pain and distress experienced.
- **Ask yourself the following questions:**
 - What has helped me feel better in the past?
 - What can I do right now that will help me feel better?
 - What gives my life meaning? What are my goals, dreams, or life values? E.g. Family, friends, pets, helping others, faith, spirituality, community life, connecting with nature.
- **Remind yourself that you can make it through these difficult times:**
 - I’ve coped this far, I can get through the next ... (day, hour, 10 minutes)
 - What you are feeling is temporary - this will pass.
 - Distressing emotions are distorting my thinking - these thoughts are the voice of depression. They are not facts. I don’t have to act on them.

Identify a safety plan:

Identify what helps you to calm down/soothe yourself, what can you tell yourself (remind yourself) to feel calmer, who will you call/connect with when you feel like this. Include phone numbers of suicide prevention hotlines, mental health professionals, and trusted friends and family members you can call during an emergency. Save these numbers on your phone.

SAFTEY PLAN

I will cope, calm & soothe myself by:

I will tell myself:

I will call:

I will go to:

- **Reach out to a mental health professional or helpline if you find the following:**

You are talking about suicide or wishing to die.

You start making plans for how to commit suicide.

You feel that you have no reason to live.

You start making plans for putting your affairs in order, saying goodbye, or giving your possessions away.

You feel guilt, shame, or unbearable pain, and it seems like there is no way out.

You are frequently using drugs or alcohol.

You are engaging in risky behaviours with no worry about the outcome

- **Increase coping resources (For future)**

Put your safety plan into action: Keep your safety plan accessible. You may also note it down on your phone to have it with you at all times.

Take one step at a time: Set out to get through the next day, the next week, or month, perhaps the next hour or even less. Tell yourself: "I've got through so far; I can get through the next hour".

- **Try distracting yourself:** Do something else and focus your attention fully on what you're doing. E.g., Watch television, seek out a supportive discussion forum on the internet, walk, run, listen to music, and do something creative.
- **Talk to someone:** Connect to your social structures. Reach out to a friend, or a family member, try not to separate yourself from those who care about you and want to help you. **Call helplines that provide psychosocial support one such helpline is iCALL 9152987821, a professional, go somewhere you'll feel safe.**

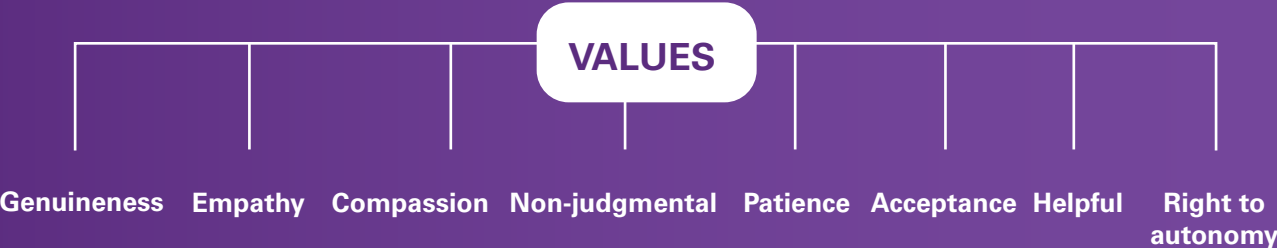
YOUTH VOLUNTEERS



Along with other stakeholders, youth volunteers have been providing endless support to the community members. As a youth volunteer, meeting the demands of different community members or providing support to different members can be overwhelming. The messages in this section focus on different ways in which a youth volunteer can provide psychosocial support to those in need.

Providing Psychosocial Support:

COVID-19 has raised a number of fears and anxieties in various sections of society. Offering psychosocial support to others during such times would be very helpful. As a youth volunteer, when interacting with other people in the community or with children, you can give them psychosocial support as follows:



Developing a helping relationship:

While developing a relationship with people, consider the following tips:

- **Developing a helping relationship:** While developing a relationship with people, consider the following tips:
- **Be respectful:** Each individual is different from one another. Be respectful of their differences. They have different personalities, potential, reactions, and different ways of expressing their feelings. E.g., if the person you're interacting with is feeling scared, one may express it by crying, another may express it by clinging to someone, etc.
- **Provide confidentiality:** Make sure that everything that is discussed with you is kept private. It is only used for documentation or when additional help is needed. Don't discuss their problems with others openly unless needed for further guidance.

- **Provide accurate information:** If the person you're speaking to asks you some practical questions about COVID-19, answer them honestly based on factual information. Don't overwhelm them with big data or numbers. Explain to them the situation of COVID-19 & present them ways in which everyone can remain safe.
- **Establish a trusting relationship:** Convey genuineness and express your concern through the tone of your voice by sounding warm and welcoming, focus on non-verbal gestures such as looking attentive, leaning towards them, sitting straight so that they can trust you and be open with you. The following points explain how to provide emotional support:
 - **Listen to their concerns actively:** It's important to make them feel heard. Focus on what the person in front of you has to say and not what you want to say. While listening, avoid engaging in other tasks. In face to face interactions, keep an open posture, show them that you're listening by nodding your head or saying phrases like "hmm" "I'm listening" "uh-huh" "oh really?" Avoid being distracted or looking at other things. Focus your attention on the one you're speaking to.
 - **Make them feel comfortable:** While interacting, speak to them in a warm voice that emotes concern and focus on them while they are speaking. You can show it through culturally appropriate body language e.g., nodding your head, leaning forward, maintaining eye contact, sitting straight instead of slouching, etc.
 - **Talk about their feelings:** Understand their point of view and try to see their concern as if you were in their shoes. Accept their feelings. Convey that you have understood them and validate their feelings. You can use sentences such as: "It's very natural to feel..." "I can understand what you're trying to say..."
 - **Ask questions:** While talking to them ask questions to understand the situation at hand more in detail. You can ask questions that are open-ended to understand their perspective e.g., "What do you like about staying at home?" or "Tell me about your day" or close-ended questions for getting factual knowledge like "Did you play today?" "Where is your school?"
 - **Discuss previously tried solutions & generate newer ones:** Ask them about the strategies they have implemented to address the concern areas so far. Discuss what has worked and what hasn't in the past. Explore how they can do more of what has helped them. Mutually explore additional strategies that you may be able to think e.g. Day mapping, prioritizing, building support systems etc.
 - **Summarize:** At the end of every meeting, summarize by discussing: What was the issue/concern addressed in the meeting + what you did in this meeting+ what will you do in the next meeting. It helps children to review what was discussed in the session and brings back their focus on what strategies were learned during the session.

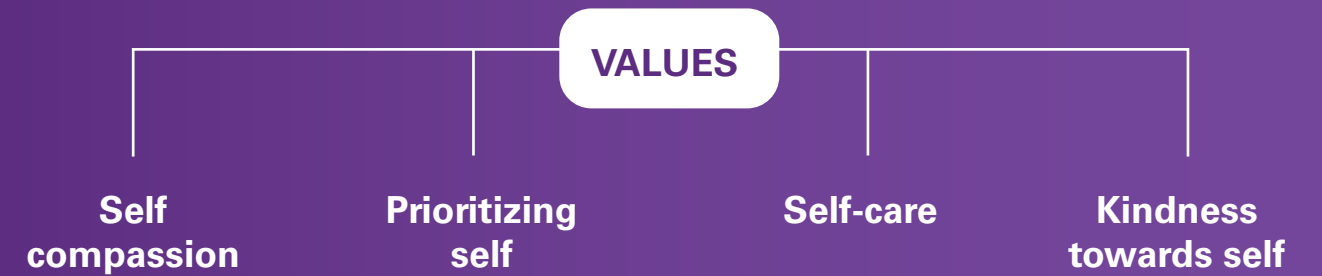
- **Referral:** In cases where you think the child requires additional help from a doctor, psychologist, protection authorities make referrals to them or speak to your supervisor about the same. You can make referrals in the following instances:
 - Prolonged existence of emotional challenges
 - Threat to safety for self or others around
 - Significant changes in emotional and behavioural states
 - Display of emotional or behavioural functioning that disrupts daily

Addressing limitations experienced while providing support:

As a Volunteer, you wish to help children and adolescents, other community members as much possible from your end. There are certain limitations to the extent to which you can provide support. You may use the following tips to combat stress stemming from these limitations:

- **Do not feel pressured to give them a solution:** As a youth volunteer, there will be situations wherein you want to provide help to those in need in order to reduce their distress and you may feel pressured to so. Remind yourself that you are providing support to those in need which will eventually help them to be able to work towards solutions to their concerns.
- **Focus on what you can contribute to help:** Try to identify what is within your control and what is not. Shift your focus on what you can do in such situations such as what kind of help you can provide in this situation for those in need. Emphasize on the techniques to reduce the intensity of their stress or challenges. E.g. Emotional support, understand their concerns, etc.
- **Discuss it with your supervisors:** If you find yourself struggling in providing help to a child or a community member, consider reaching out to your supervisors and discuss how you can provide help.
- **Manage your distress:** Working for those in need, demands you to be empathetic. There could be instances where you feel distressed, in such cases integrate different activities in your routine that will help you to manage your wellbeing. You can read more about it in the next section.
- **Make adequate referrals:** In instances where you feel like additional help is needed from different stakeholders to respond to cases of violence, abuse, etc coordinate with your supervisors and contact respective authorities. Refer to the previous message for additional information.

Managing your Well-being as a Youth Volunteer



While working passionately for others, taking a break for your own self will be helpful in managing everyday demands. Taking care of yourself/ managing your well-being means to take care of your physical health, thoughts, emotions, other stressors such as job and your relationships. Following tips can help you to take care of yourself in these difficult times:

Taking care of your health:

- Make sure to eat healthy meals regularly and sleep well.
- Integrate physical activity into your daily life. Something as simple as light stretching, yoga, etc.

Managing your thoughts:

- There is an influx of false information that we come across on a daily basis which can create anxiety. Avoid consuming too much content related to COVID-19. Verify if the information provided is by the state government, or by verified sources such as MoHFW, WHO, CDC.
- When anxious we may think of all possible outcomes that one may come across. Thinking about these various negative possibilities can further increase your distress. Instead, check with yourself if your thoughts match reality.
- Even when feeling afraid, check your control on the situation i.e. identify what is within your control and what is beyond your control. Focus on things that are within your control such as focus on what precautions you can take for your safety and hygiene.

Taking care of your Emotional and Psychological well-being:

- As important as it is to help others, it is also important to take care of yourself. **Give importance to your own needs**, and whenever possible give time for yourself.
- **Take a moment to accept the distress you're experiencing** it such as feeling anxious about the health of yourself and your loved ones or you're feeling distressed. Don't dismiss the distress you experienced.
- When feeling demotivated **remind yourself of the reasons you choose this role**. Make sure to celebrate small victories.
- **Spend time with those whose company you enjoy or engage in activities unrelated to your work**. Be mindful and focus entirely on the activity that you are doing. That could mean watching a movie, or playing games or learning how to make tea/ favourite food for yourself, etc.
- **Help yourself to calm down**. (Abdominal breathing and muscle relaxation techniques): There are several relaxations or breathing exercises that help in calming a person down. Such as taking three deep breaths, observing the colours, sounds, sensations around you, or taking a deep breath for three seconds-hold it for three seconds- exhale slowly for three seconds, etc.
- **Express your feelings**. Be open about what you're feeling. If you feel stressed, are worried about something, etc express your emotions. You could talk about it to your friends, family, or if you don't feel comfortable talking to them, you can write them down in a journal/diary.
- If these negative feelings persist, consider reaching out to a professional or helplines that offer psychological support. **One is such helplines is iCALL 9152987821**.

COMMUNITY WORKERS

(Consists of ASHA, AWW and Sanitation Workers)



Community workers have been on the frontline since the beginning of the pandemic. They all are experiencing some unique challenges as a response to COVID-19. The following messages can act as psychosocial tips to deal with these unique challenges and stressors. Listed below are some of these challenges & ways of responding to them

Building support against discrimination and stigma

(for all community members):

What is stigma and discrimination?

In the context of COVID-19, social stigma refers to a negative association between a person and group of people who share certain characteristics related to a coronavirus. It has been reported that individuals who have contracted or are presumptive of COVID-19, as well as frontline workers, have been experiencing discriminatory behaviour from the community members.

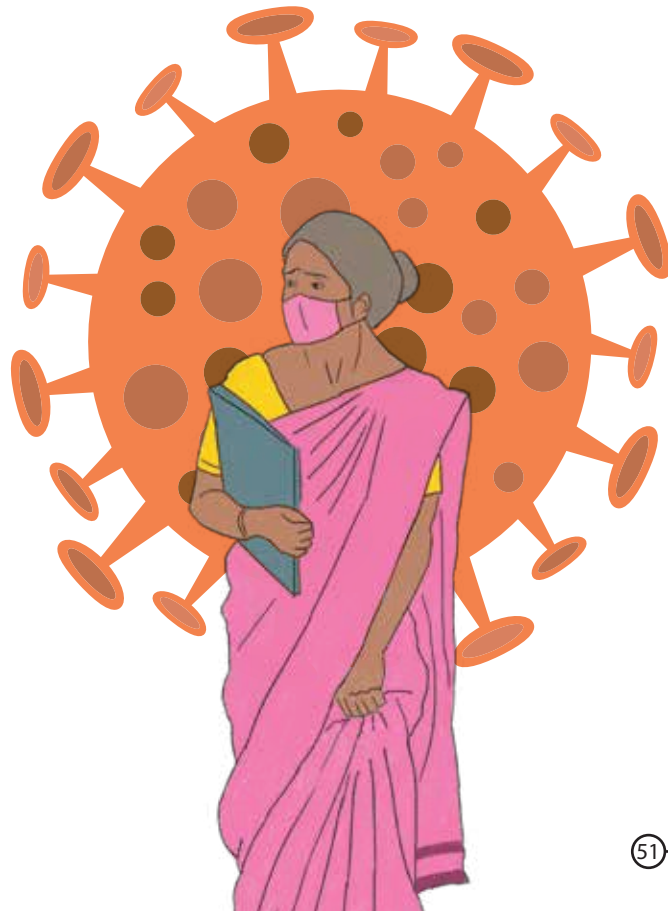
Impact of social stigma:

- 1. It can drive people to hide the illness to avoid being discriminated
- 2. Prevents people from seeking health care immediately or getting tested
- 3. Leads to violation of safety measures provided by authorities
- 4. It hampers the psychosocial well-being of individuals who have contracted or are presumptive of COVID-19 and frontline workers.

The core reasons why stigma persists:

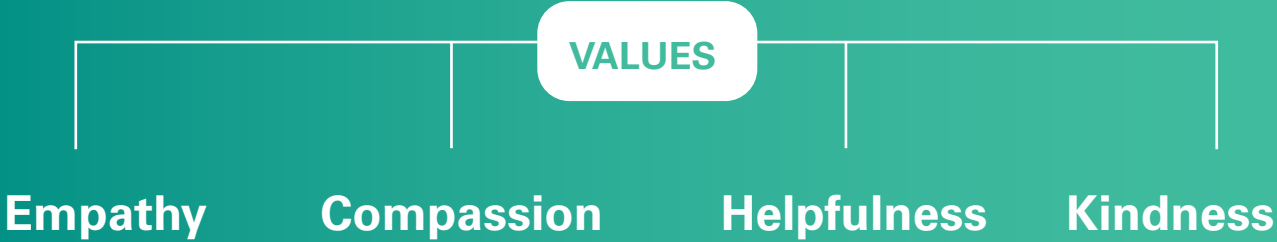
- 1. Limited access to accurate information about the disease.
- 2. Fear and anxiety of something unknown to them

To combat the stigma, people need information support and emotional support.



Addressing Stigma and Discrimination that others are experiencing

(for ASHA and AWW):



- I. **Identify the existing stigma within the community:** How COVID-19 is discussed, certain words (i.e. suspect case, isolation), and language used may have a negative meaning for people and fuel stigmatizing attitudes. Don't use language such as COVID-19 patients, COVID-19 case, or labelling a specific group, community etc. Use of this language can perpetuate existing negative stereotypes or assumptions, it strengthens false associations between the disease and other factors, creates widespread fear, or dehumanizes those who have contracted the disease. Make a note of such instances observed in the community.
- II. **Equip people with accurate information:** Stigma often increases because of insufficient knowledge about how COVID-19 is transmitted, how to prevent infection, and how it is treated. As a response to this, collect and spread accurate information about COVID-19 for people's awareness.
- III. **Be considerate of their feelings while correcting their misconceptions:** Community members' fears and anxieties especially increase because of the inaccurate information about COVID-19. While correcting their misconceptions it is also important to acknowledge that people's feelings and their fears are very real.
 - **Listen** to their concern without interruptions. Make space for them to express what they have to say even if it may not align with what you believe. Don't dismiss it even if you don't agree with it.
 - **Validating** their fears and anxiety as a natural response to the pandemic. You could use sentences such as "It is natural for you to be feeling unsafe/scared..." "I can understand that you are scared and wish to be safe". Validate their feelings and encourage them to talk about these feelings.

- Lastly, **reassure** them with accurate information followed by clarification of their misconceptions. . E.g., “I can understand that you are concerned about contracting the disease. It is a very natural response that anyone would think of. In fact, the virus doesn’t spread if you’re associated with a religious group or know someone contracted with covid-19. It actually spreads if we don’t wear masks, don’t wash hands. Therefore, it’s important for us to take care of these precautions”.

IV. **Promote measures for recovery:** There are simple preventive measures-as washing hands, using masks, practicing physical distancing-everyone can take, to keep themselves, their loved ones, and the vulnerable safe. Promote the importance of early screening and treatment for people in need of additional medical attention. One way of promoting importance is by sharing examples of community members that benefitted by seeking early medical assistance in COVID-19. E.g., “I know a lot of people are scared of being tested. Because they think the results will be positive if they get tested but there are many people who have actually recovered because they got tested as soon as they observed the symptoms. And now they’re corona free! / They have recovered! If someone has the infection, it will be good to know of it early – then steps can be taken to monitor oneself. Taking early treatment rather than late will help you and also will protect others”

V. **Provide a helping hand to others:** It may be the case that you are not experiencing discrimination but you witness a colleague experiencing discrimination or harassment at work, make sure to show your support to your colleagues and encourage them to discuss it with their supervisors.

Dealing with Stigma and Discrimination that you face (ASHA, AWW, Sanitation Workers):

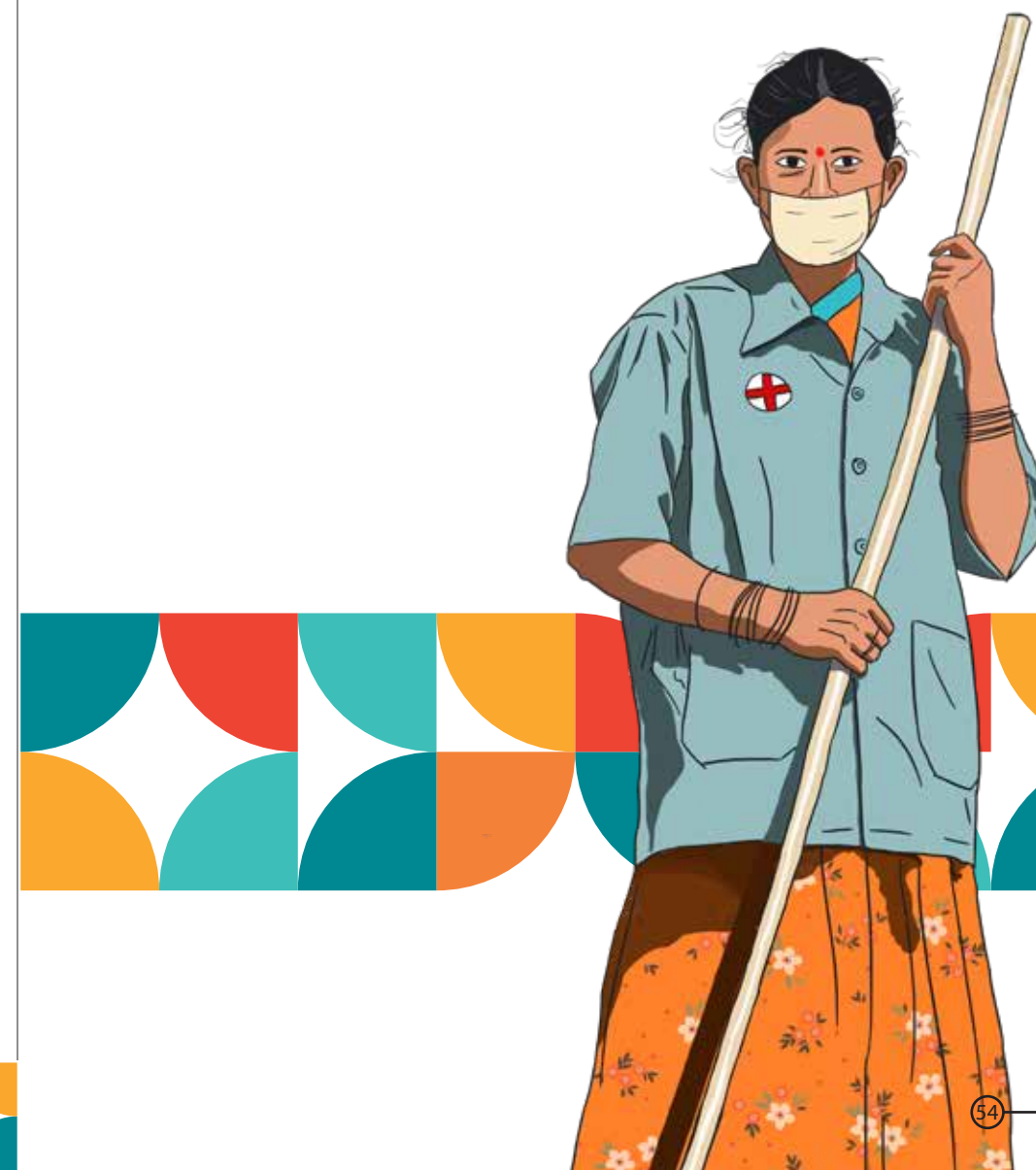
- Help yourself calm down:** Being the target of discrimination can stir up a lot of strong emotions including anger, sadness, and embarrassment. Such experiences often trigger a physiological response which can increase your blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing rate. Try to check in with your body. Slow your breathing or use other relaxation exercises such as taking three deep breaths or taking a deep breath for three seconds-holding it for three seconds-exhaling for three seconds to calm your body’s stress response.
- Don’t internalize negative opinions:** Stigma and discrimination can cause a person to believe other’s negative opinions even if they are false. You can reject messages that are disempowering. Avoid internalizing these negative opinions. Remind yourself about the things you have been able to accomplish in the past as an ASHA, AWW or Sanitation worker and how you’ve been able to help so many people. Following are the ways you can do that:
 - Acknowledge your contributions:** The work you have been doing has a huge impact on the society and those around you. Acknowledge your efforts and contributions that you’ve done so far.
 - Focus on your strengths:** Focusing on your core values, beliefs and perceived strengths can help to feel better, and may even buffer the negative effects of bias. Overcoming these hardships can also help in being more resilient and better able to face future challenges.

c. **Seek social support:** Connect with your significant others and express your feelings. Their support can help you to disregard the false-negative opinions of community members. Seek advice from your colleagues and discuss these issues with them, understand how they deal with these negative opinions.

d. **Identify and seek additional resources (authorities):** There could be a variety of challenges that you may experience while working. Such as issues related to work or lack of cooperation from the community, etc. Familiarise yourself with the kind of assistance you can seek from authorities in instances where you experience discrimination. Such as, seek support from your supervisors or bodies that can advocate on behalf of you.

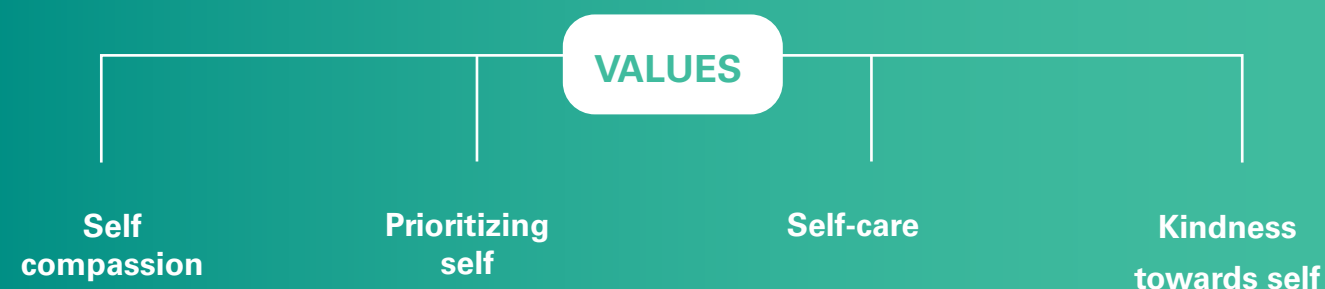
III. **While being kind to others, be kind to yourself:** It must be quite challenging to manage the demands from your work and personal life. Your contributions made to society are commendable. While caring for others it’s equally important to take care of oneself.

IV. If any of the negative emotions persist continuously for several days, despite your trying to get out of it, talk about it with someone you trust or someone who is supportive towards you such as spouse, family, and friends. If the feelings worsen, call a helpline or reach out to a professional. **One such helpline is iCALL at 9152987821**



Managing Well-being

(ASHA and AWW)



Taking care of yourself/ managing your well-being means to take care of your physical health, thoughts, emotions, other stressors such as job and your relationships. Following tips can help you to take care of yourself in these difficult times:

Taking care of your health:

- Make sure to eat healthy meals regularly. Make it a point to consume healthy meals. Eat meals mindfully i.e. don't focus on other tasks related to work while eating.
- Integrate physical activity into your daily life. It could also be something that fits in your lifestyle. E.g., Simple stretching, yoga, etc.
- Make sure to get adequate sleep. Don't exercise or use mobile/technology an hour before sleeping.
- Make sure that you have maintained the suggested safety measures after coming back home such as washing your hands once back home, having a bath, keeping your used clothes separate.
- Listen to your body and take time off or rest adequately whenever sick.

Managing your thoughts:

- Test your thoughts:** Try to assess the situation at hand. For e.g., If you feel fearful of the pandemic, ask yourself, are you taking the necessary precautions? Are your loved ones taking the required precautions? Have you

or your loved ones been experiencing symptoms? What is the likelihood that your thoughts may be true? Sometimes when we are feeling scared, we tend to overestimate the likelihood of a negative event.

- Even when feeling afraid, check your control on the situation:** Being constantly exposed to news and information about COVID can increase our fear levels. Even at such times ask yourself, a. What is under my control? b. Am I unnecessarily worrying about the worst thing that can happen? c. When I have been stressed in the past, how have I managed? d. What are the things I can do to help myself and be positive?
- Avoid if-then thinking:** There are various possibilities for contracting COVID-19. Thinking about all of the possible ways in which you or loved ones can get infected further add on to the anxiety. Instead, it is best to focus on what precautions you can take for your safety and hygiene. A 'what -now' thinking helps us be in action and deal with what is required in the present rather than worry about an imagined distressing future.
- Take a breather:** Working in an environment with limited resources and demands, experiencing stress and anxiety is a natural response. Take a brief moment to identify what you are feeling and what we are doing. You can use techniques that will help in relieving distress. (Take 3 deep breaths, observe your surroundings and focus on what you can see, hear or take a deep breath for three seconds-holding it for three seconds-exhaling for three seconds).

Taking care of your Emotional and Psychological well-being:

- Be compassionate and kind to yourself:** The kind of work that you're doing on a daily basis in the pandemic can be traumatizing. Therefore, give importance to your own needs, and whenever possible give time for yourself.
- Acknowledge the distress experienced:** Take a moment to accept that you're feeling anxious about the health of yourself and your loved ones or you're feeling distressed. Especially since you as ASHA, AWW are managing both demands from the job, demands from personal life. Such as having to adhere to gender norms such as taking care of family, looking after children, managing household chores, etc can be distressing. Don't dismiss the distress experienced.
- Use of breathing exercises to reduce the distress experienced:** Breathing exercises or observing one's surroundings helps in reducing stress and helps in bringing one away from negative emotions. Avoid dismissing these thoughts. Fear of contracting COVID-19 yourself or being a carrier is a very natural response when you are working in a community setting.
- Strengthen your social networks:** Spend time with those whose company you enjoy. While spending time with loved ones consciously engage in activities or conversations unrelated to COVID-19.
- Engage in activities unrelated to your work:** Seek opportunities to do things that are unrelated to your work. Try to take out time for yourself to do something that brings you joy, comfort. That could mean watching a movie, playing your favourite song as you cook or playing games or learning how to

make tea/food, etc. It allows you to be in control of what you want to do and provides a sense of mastery.

- f. **Reflect on your day:** Allocate time to think about how your day has been, if possible, journal your experiences, notice how you felt throughout the day. Were there some key moments that made you feel specifically upset, etc. Self-reflection helps in being aware of one's emotions.

Professional life:

- a. **Take breaks while working:** Make sure to take breaks to recharge as working for an extended amount of time leads to stress and exhaustion. Taking a break helps in refocusing on work. It provides an opportunity to refresh and be more efficient at work.
- b. **Break down tasks:** Completing assigned tasks can be an overwhelming process. There might be concerns about where to begin, what to focus on, etc. Take responsibilities offered and break them down in smaller tasks. This helps in viewing the large tasks to be more approachable and doable.
- c. **Connect with your co-workers:** Interacting with co-workers and having support from your peers helps in understanding how they are managing their distress. It also strengthens peer relationships which have positive effects on one's well-being.
- d. **Create boundaries between your work and personal life:** You can create boundaries by deciding not to work on surveys or additional paperwork once back home, or dedicate time for yourself after work, engage in activities unrelated to your work, etc. Setting clear boundaries between work and personal life helps in reducing the stress in both your personal and professional lives.
- e. **Learn to say "No":** Saying No isn't selfish. It helps in providing clear boundaries and allows others to know what to expect from you. Prioritize the tasks assigned and assess if you can negotiate to delegate these tasks.

Managing Relationships:

- A. Be aware that social isolation, quarantine, and distancing can affect you and your family's mental well-being.
- B. **Share the load:** It can be challenging to handle demands at work as well as fulfil demands from personal life. Negotiate with your family to share the work that needs to be done. Such as assigning small tasks to your children or other family members.
- C. **Spend time with loved ones:** Use this time to spend with your loved ones. Discuss their concerns, highs and lows. This sharing will provide a space to resolve conflicts, share opinions authentically and to build relationships.

- D. **Avoid extreme reactions:** The harsh realities of COVID-19 and lockdown can add to the stress and can make us angry. Identifying the sources of anger can help in understanding how to deal with it.

- Ask yourself "what is making me angry?", "When do I usually get upset?" and "How do I react when I am unhappy".
- Identify if you have been looking after yourself, if you've been overworking, neglecting your health, sleep etc. which may be contributing to low frustration tolerance.
- Try to follow tips from the Emotional and psychological well-being section.

- E. **If you're living in an environment where you are experiencing violence may use of the following may help:**

- Reaching out to supportive family and friends who can help in coping with stress as well as to meet practical needs (e.g. food, childcare, shelter).
- Create a safety plan for your own safety as well as your children's safety in case the violence worsens. You can keep the following details in mind while creating a safety plan:
 - a) Keep important documents, money, a few personal things accessible to take with you if you need to leave immediately.
 - b) Plan how you might leave the house and get help (e.g. transport, location). Contact numbers of neighbours, friends, and family whom you can call for or go to for help. Connect to authorities that may offer help to you in such situations
 - c) Keep contact details of organisations that help in violence against women such as hotlines such as 103, 181, 1091 or contact nearest one stop crisis centre, social workers, and child protection systems or nearest police station, and accessible shelters and support services. Contact these agencies as necessary. Be discreet so that the perpetrator won't have access to this information.



Taking care of yourself

(Sanitation Workers)

VALUES

Self-compassion

Prioritizing Self

Self-care

Kindness
towards self

Managing one's well-being could be looked at by taking care of one's health, thoughts, emotions, work and relationships. Following tips can help you to take care of yourself in these difficult times:

Taking care of your health:

- Make sure to eat healthy meals regularly and sleep well.
- Don't consume substances like alcohol and other drugs. Intake of substances can be detrimental to your health. In case you need help to curb use of substances, consider reaching out to community organizations that can help you.
- Make sure that you have maintained the suggested safety measures after coming back home such as washing your hands once back home, having a bath, keeping your used clothes separate.
- Something as simple as light stretching, yoga, etc.

Managing your thoughts:

- When anxious we may think of sometimes when we are feeling scared, we tend to overestimate the likelihood of a negative event. Ask yourself "What is the likelihood that your thoughts may be true?" Try to check if your thoughts align with reality or not.

- Even when feeling afraid, check your control on the situation; what is within your control and what is beyond your control.
- Redshift your focus on what is within your control such as the precautions you can take about safety and hygiene.

Taking care of your Emotional and Psychological well-being:

- **Give importance to your own needs**, and whenever possible give time for yourself.
- **Take a moment to accept that you're feeling anxious** about the health of yourself and your loved ones or you're feeling distressed.
- **Engage in relaxation activities:** Whenever you feel overwhelmed, take some time out and focus solely on yourself. Doing this simple activity can help.
 - Sit in a comfortable position or lie down if preferred and close your eyes
 - Notice your thoughts. Don't try to restrict your thoughts. Just notice the kind of thoughts you are having.
 - Notice how you are feeling. Ask yourself how your day was. Notice how you are feeling
 - Notice how the body feels. Are you feeling tired or exhausted? If yes, acknowledge by saying "yes I am feeling tired"
 - Take deep breaths. Focus on how the breath is inhaled through your nose and exhaled through your mouth.
 - After taking a couple of deep breaths saying affirmative sentences like "It is okay. Whatever it is, I am okay"
 - Notice how you feel now after the exercise. If you notice any difference at all.
 - Whenever you are ready, open your eyes.
- **Find appropriate ways to express feelings.** When distressed, find ways in which you can help yourself to express them. Avoid acting out or using violence as a way to express your distress or anger
 - If you had an angry outburst /violent expression, apologise to your child / family member, and focus on your feelings that caused the outburst.
 - Notice what you are feeling or what is on your mind
 - Name what is it that you e.g., "I am noticing that I am angry/feelings of anger"
 - Once your feelings are noticed, use the relaxation techniques introduced in the point above and in managing emotional distress such as Deep breaths and observe what you see, touch, hear, smell and taste.
 - Repeat this process when you feel overwhelmed with emotions.

Managing your relationships:

- A. Be aware that social isolation, quarantine, and distancing can affect you and your family's mental well-being.
- B. **Share the load:** It can be challenging to handle demands at work as well as fulfil demands from personal life. Negotiate with your family to share the work that needs to be done. Such as assigning small tasks to your children or other family members.
- C. **Spend time with loved ones:** Use this time to spend with your loved ones. Discuss their concerns, highs and lows. This sharing will provide a space to resolve conflicts, share opinions authentically and to build relationships.
- D. **Avoid extreme reactions:** The harsh realities of COVID-19 and lockdown can add to the stress and can make us angry. Identifying the sources of anger can help in understanding how to deal with it.
 - Ask yourself “what is making me angry?”, “When do I usually get upset?” and “How do I react when I am unhappy”.
 - Identify if you have been looking after yourself, if you've been overworking, neglecting your health, sleep etc. which may be contributing to low frustration tolerance.
 - Try to follow tips from the Emotional and psychological well-being section.
- E. **If you're living in an environment where you are experiencing violence may use of the following may help:**
 - Reaching out to supportive family and friends who can help in coping with stress as well as to meet practical needs (e.g. food, childcare, shelter).
 - Create a safety plan for your own safety as well as your children's safety in case the violence worsens. You can keep the following details in mind while creating a safety plan:
 - a) Keep important documents, money, a few personal things accessible to take with you if you need to leave immediately.
 - b) Plan how you might leave the house and get help (e.g. transport, location). Contact numbers of neighbours, friends, and family whom you can call for or go to for help. Connect to authorities that may offer help to you in such situations
 - c) Keep contact details of organisations that help in violence against women such as hotlines such as 103, 181, 1091 or contact nearest one stop crisis centre, social workers, and child protection systems or nearest police station, and accessible shelters and support services. Contact these agencies as necessary. Be discreet so that the perpetrator won't have access to this information.

Combating burnout at work

(ASHA, AWW and Sanitation Workers):

During the pandemic, community workers experienced a series of challenges on professional as well as personal front. Given the pressure from various factors, motivation could be difficult in such instances. It is natural to get burned out or feel unmotivated. Following messages can be helpful in preventing burnout and dealing with being unmotivated:

Preventing burnout

- I. **Identify the signs of burnout:** Working in distressing environments can have an impact on how we feel as well. Watch out for signs of burnout such as feeling tired or exhausted more than usual, feeling stressed, experiencing headaches, stomach-aches, drop in productivity, sense of hopelessness, etc.
- II. **Know your limits:** It is natural to feel overwhelmed and unable to cope when under an increased workload. Consider what actions you can take to relieve some of your burdens at work or home. You may discuss these with your supervisor or family members.
- III. **Break down your tasks:** Often when there is an influx of responsibilities like looking after the house, going to work, challenges at work, etc we lose focus on what needs to be done. Take responsibilities offered and break them down in smaller tasks. Appreciate yourself upon completing those tasks.
- IV. **Take breaks:** Taking small breaks helps in reducing the pressure, helps to focus and it helps to be more efficient at work.
- V. **Learn to say "No":** An increased level of responsibility and pressure can harm your well-being. Learn to say No to some responsibilities that someone else can take over. You may fear that others will be burdened for it. But it is important to identify your pace for yourself to work efficiently.
- VI. **Seek positive interactions:** Talk to someone close to you about these concerns and issues. We often acknowledge our challenges and difficulties when interacting with those close to us and connecting with loved ones always helps.
- VII. **Accept the changes in lifestyle:** The pandemic has drastically changed our personal and professional lives. Be accepting of the change and engage in behaviour that you think makes you feel positive.
- VIII. **Look after yourself:** Engage in simple activities that bring you joy. Something as simple as having tea in the morning or meditation. Performing small activities can also be helpful. The key is consistency. You may choose different activities each time but taking that time out for self is the important part here.

X. **Take care of yourself:** The pressures and distress of COVID-19 can take a severe toll on your mental health as well as your physical health. The effects of this pressure can translate into disturbances in sleep, loss of appetite, loss of interest, etc. Make sure to have a healthy lifestyle in this situation.

XI. If any of these emotions persist continuously for several days, despite your trying to get out of it, talk about it with someone, spouse, family, and friends. If the feelings worsen, call a helpline or reach out to a professional.

One of such helplines is iCALL at 9152987821



Managing feelings of lack of motivation

(ASHA, AWW and Sanitation Workers):

- I. **Be compassionate and kind to yourself:** The nature of this pandemic is such that it has increased the number of responsibilities both in professional and personal life. Be compassionate to yourself and your needs in such difficult times. You may not be able to fulfil all duties and obligations at work and at home and that may be ok. Prioritize and focus only on what seems necessary to be done.
- II. **Don't blame yourself for feeling demotivated:** While working with so many constraints, it is natural for one's motivation to be affected. There are many factors outside your control that are contributing to this feeling of being demotivated. Not blaming yourself will help you to reduce the helplessness experienced.
- III. **Acknowledge your contributions:** Try to think of the work you've been able to do so far. How people have benefitted because of your work. Acknowledge the importance of the role you play in society and celebrate small victories whenever you can. Remind yourself of what motivated you to choose this profession & continue with it.
- IV. **Focus on the end goal:** Try to remind yourself of the reasons for which you chose to be ASHA, AWW or Sanitation worker and the reasons that drive you to continue working as ASHA, AWW or Sanitation Worker. Focus on these reasons and use them to motivate yourself.
- V. **Use positive affirmations:** Give yourself some credit for being able to work even when you are feeling demotivated. Appreciate your own efforts and your own self. E.g. my contributions have helped many individuals. The work I am doing brings positive change in lives of others. My work has an impact on society's well-being.
- VI. **Reach out to others for help:** Some of the challenges that others are experiencing is something you may be experiencing as well. Acknowledge these concerns and express compassion to your own self. There may not be any quick fixes to any of these challenges. Seek safe spaces where you can share these concerns. In family settings, negotiate for help from your members, in case they resist, seek additional resources. At work settings, discuss with your supervisors to delegate some tasks to others.

Glossary

Resilience: Humans innately have the ability to bounce back from adversities experienced. Facilitate this quality in children by giving them small tasks that they can easily accomplish which will help in nurturing a positive self-perception. In future if they're stuck at something, they can look over these past accomplishments and try again. While doing this, being compassionate towards self and strengthening social networks has also shown to help children be more resilient.

Burn out: Being burned out means feeling empty and mentally exhausted. This can also hamper one's efficiency and their motivation hence one may find it difficult to manage their tasks. Experiencing excessive stress and feeling like you're drowning in responsibilities can make a person to feel like all of their resources are dried up resulting in feeling of burnout.

Suicide ideation: When a person's distress experienced exceeds their capacity to cope, it can result in a sense of helplessness and hopelessness. In such instances, some may express suicidal ideations i.e. passive thoughts about wanting to be dead or active thoughts about killing oneself. If you find yourself having such thoughts, contact a professional counsellor or helplines that can offer you psychological support, one such helpline is, iCALL 9152987821.

Empathy: Empathy means to step in someone else's shoes and to look at their worldview without losing the as if quality.

Self-Compassion: Self-compassion requires one to be warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate, rather than ignoring our pain or ourselves with self-criticism.

Self-care: Self-care is to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health. Although it's a simple concept in theory, it's something we very often overlook. It helps in reducing our everyday stress. Self-care isn't something that is done out of force or compulsion.



