

Coping with Covid-19

SUPPORTING ADOLESCENTS, PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS TO STAY HEALTHY AND PROTECTED DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Guide for the provision of support sessions for adolescents, parents and caregivers during COVID-19

Welcome to the guide for **Coping with COVID-19** sessions for adolescents, parents and caregivers!

This guide contains key considerations for implementation and contextualisation of the package as well as the sessions for adolescents and parents/caregivers. In the online [folder](#), the following additional resources can be accessed for contextualisation:

- Resources for the facilitator
- Handouts for participants
- M&E tools

Why support sessions for adolescents, parents and caregivers?

As families and communities globally are grappling with the COVID-19 crisis, there is an imminent need to provide support to at-risk adolescents and their parents or caregivers to prevent the risk of COVID-19 infection. At-risk groups of adolescents will need additional support to stay healthy and safe during the crisis while their parents and caregivers may have their own difficulties in dealing with the social and economic effects of the crisis.

Support sessions can help adolescents gain coping skills to promote their own health and protection and that of their peers. In crisis settings, a stable family environment is a major protective factor for children and adolescents. Parenting sessions can provide parents and caregivers with a better understanding of the impact of the crisis on adolescents, promote self-care practices and positive parenting skills. Working with adolescents and caregivers at the same time, can help to reinforce life-saving information and practices in the family.

What does the Coping with COVID-19 package aim to do?

The Coping with COVID-19 package contains support sessions for adolescents aged 10 to 19 and their parents/caregivers that address the impacts of the COVID-19 virus on adolescent protection and health, including mental health and psychosocial well-being and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

The objectives of the sessions are:

- To provide accurate information to adolescents (10–19 years) and caregivers on how to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus and stay healthy.
- To support adolescents and parents to prevent and mitigate the psychosocial and protection impacts of the COVID-19 virus.

The support sessions are 30 to 45 minutes long and can be implemented as part of preparedness and response programming on COVID-19. These sessions can replace regular life skills and parenting



sessions during the COVID-19 response and can be used in projects that have been adapted for continuation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The package has been designed for face to face groups, but can be adapted for radio programmes, telephone, SMS, social media (Facebook live) or group chat services (i.e. WhatsApp) where restrictions are in place for group gatherings.

Who benefits from these sessions?

The sessions can be provided to at-risk¹ adolescents ages 10 to 19 years and their caregivers that are currently enrolled in Plan International's programmes, including but not limited to life skills and parenting programmes, education, child protection, SRHR and youth economic empowerment programmes.

When working with groups, it is recommended to work with age-specific groups (10 to 14 years and 15 to 19 years) so that information and messages can be tailored to appropriate ages. In some sessions, age-specific instructions and activities for younger and older adolescents are provided.

Who will deliver these sessions?

The sessions can be delivered by Plan International or partner staff, case workers or trained community facilitators. Where possible, it is important that adolescents and caregivers know the staff members who facilitate the sessions. Where possible, involve community (health) workers and/or case workers who can provide follow-up support at the local level.

When the sessions are used for remote delivery including radio programmes, telephone, SMS, social media or group chat services (i.e. WhatsApp) or through third parties, a trained Plan International or partner staff should always be involved to assure programme quality.

¹ Definition and selection criteria of "at-risk" adolescents should be developed in context. Criteria could include: adolescents from communities that might face stigma or discrimination, who face higher risks to getting infected or who live in vulnerable environments (e.g. crowded camps or settlements), adolescents at-risk of protection concerns, adolescents who receive case management services or families that lost income due to the economic situation.

Key considerations for implementation

Safety and relevance: To decide whether or not to implement the **Coping with COVID-19** sessions, it is important first to establish:

- **Can the sessions be implemented safely?**

The principle of “do no harm” should inform all decision-making. If there is no way to implement the sessions (online or offline) without putting participants, communities or staff at risk, do not move forward.

- **Is it a necessary and/or appropriate intervention?**

The specific needs of adolescents, parents and caregivers in context, as well as existing capacity and services, must inform the decision about implementing the sessions.

Group size: The sessions can be used face to face with small groups up to 15 people. If delivered online, groups should be no more than 10 people. Group size should always be adapted to meet local guidelines on group-based activities and recommended group size. They can also be used for individual or family-based support through child protection case management.

Group composition: Work with existing groups or, when creating new groups, consult with adolescents, parents and caregivers on whether to create same-sex groups or mixed groups. In general, consider the following:

- **Adolescent groups:** For all adolescents it is important to learn about the realities and experiences of their peers of the other sex. When working with same-sex groups, consider the needs and safe inclusion of LGBTQI+ adolescents. When working with mixed groups, the facilitator can decide to do specific activities and games with same-sex groups as needed.
- **Parenting groups:** for the parenting sessions, consider whether women and men are best engaged in same-sex or mixed groups. It is also possible to do some sessions with mixed groups, and others in same-sex groups. Where possible, try to ensure that both fathers/male caregivers and mothers/female caregivers benefit from the sessions. Create same-sex groups if in the local context, women may be able to express themselves more freely and develop the skills needed for personal protection, empowerment and equal parenting practices with their male partners.

Handwashing facilities

Ensure functioning handwashing facilities where sessions are organised so that participants can wash their hands before, during and after the session. Provide running water and soap and (paper) towels or disinfectant for participants and facilitators. Also consider other hygiene aspects: regular cleaning/disinfection of the space, including latrines and session materials.

Materials

The sessions do not require many materials. When working face to face with groups, ensure the availability of:

- Flipcharts and markers.
- Copies of handouts and/or awareness materials for participants to take home after the session.
- Other materials as relevant, e.g. MHM kits, hygiene kits, contraceptives, etc.

Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC): When implementing sessions, put in place IPC measures to guarantee the safety of participants and staff. The following guidelines must be followed:

- Wash/sanitize their hands before, during and after every session if delivered face to face.
- Explain social distancing through considerate communication – this means explaining why social distancing is important to protect both child and family, as well as staff during COVID-19.
- No handshaking or other physical contact – always explain to the participants why these are necessary measures to take. For this reason, only activities, games and exercises are selected that can be done while maintaining a safe distance.
- Promote social distancing – maintain appropriate distance between participants (follow National guidance as shared by the Plan International Country Office and/or Ministry of Health or relevant authority). As much as possible, conduct sessions in a ventilated, large and safe space.
- If facilitators feel or suspect any of the COVID-19 symptoms themselves (fever, dry persistent cough, difficult breathing) they should not leave their home, inform their supervisor, and cancel the session.
- Facilitators should inform participants to not come to the session if they experience symptoms.

Capacity building

All facilitators should receive the following training/orientation:

- Orientation on the session content and key messages
- Plan International’s Children and Young People Safeguarding policy and Code of Conduct
- Facilitation and Communication skills
- Updated information on COVID-19
- Local CP, GBV, Health including MHPSS and SRHR services and referral pathways
- Desirable: Psychological First Aid (PFA)
- Guidelines for use of social media and virtual sessions (if applicable)

Monitoring and evaluation

The following M&E tools can be used to support the implementation of the package:

- **Facilitator checklist:** The checklist helps the facilitator prepare and implement the sessions in line with safety guidelines. Specific checks for “remote” delivery are included.
- **Session Evaluation:** The facilitator conducts a group discussion with participants at the end of the sessions (or more frequently) to collect feedback and suggestions from participants on what to keep doing, what to stop doing and what to improve in future sessions.

Key considerations for contextualisation

Prior to implementation, review and adapt the sessions where needed to ensure content is relevant, safe and appropriate for the adolescents and caregivers in context. Consider the following steps to contextualise the content of the package:

1. Contextualise information and communication materials related to COVID-19: Review and adapt context-specific content related to the gender and age-specific psychosocial, protection and health impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. Integrate context-specific and reliable information and/or awareness materials on COVID-19 regulations from authorities. **It is important to regularly check health advisories and update information about COVID-19 as the situation evolves!**

Consider the following information:

- Handwashing
- Keeping a safe distance from other people
- Respiratory hygiene practices
- Risk mitigation measures applicable in context, including but not limited to times/hours of the day to go out, if and when to wear a mask, if and when to wear gloves, if and how to disinfect groceries and surfaces at home, etc.
- What to do when feeling sick or having symptoms
- Where to get basic information and health advice

2. Prepare updated service directories and referral pathways for protection, health including mental health and SRHR, economic assistance and other relevant services, key contacts of case workers and other relevant service providers. Services are likely to be disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic due to increased burden on the health sector and restrictions on movement. It is therefore very important to review service availability and referral pathways prior to implementing this package.

3. Language and terminology: Consider the mother-tongue language of participants and/or preferred local language. Review key terms and agree on appropriate translation. For example, the term “adolescents” is replaced by the more common term “young people” throughout this package without changing the target group (adolescents aged 10 to 19). Agree with facilitators what terminology they feel comfortable using.

4. Sensitive topics: Adapt themes and information that might be sensitive, taboo, or trigger emotional responses, particularly related to GBV or SRHR. Where possible and appropriate, invite case workers and/or health workers to join specific sessions to provide information about their services.

5. Activities and games: Review the proposed opening and closing games and exercises and adapt where needed to ensure they are appropriate in context. It is possible to add other, local games and

exercisers to the sessions. Make sure that participants can maintain a safe distance in between them at all times.

6. Literacy and ability: Consider the literacy levels and abilities of participants and adapt activities and handouts as required. Use audio-visual materials, illustrations, or other aids to deliver the session.

Adapting the sessions for remote delivery

The sessions can be adapted for “remote” programming” through radio programmes, telephone, SMS, social media or group chat services (i.e. WhatsApp).

Key considerations when adapting for remote delivery are the following²:

- Context is key – consider connectivity, device access, data access, digital skills, literacy. Aim to build on existing technology use. Remember the digital (gender) divide and co-design sessions with end users to the extent possible. For support on how to map and assess the availability of potential remote platforms for the delivery of some types of information and awareness, referrals and psychosocial support, see this [Remote Service Mapping Guideline](#) from the global Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility.
- Build on existing local technology platforms and usage patterns, go low tech and use what we know works and marginalised groups have access to in the local context.
- Privacy, security and safeguarding is important (be wary of any tracking/tracing apps)
- When creating groups on social media, ensure that they are restricted to participants that have given their permission to be included and agree to the conditions of participation (can be via SMS) and includes at least two moderators (Plan or partner staff) who have been trained on facilitating such groups.
- Consider supporting participants with phone credits where possible and necessary.

Responding to violence disclosures

A participant may make a disclosure of violence during the session. Facilitators should be equipped with the skills and knowledge to respond in an age appropriate manner. Facilitators are **not** case workers and therefore should not be dealing with protection cases. If a disclosure is made, their role is to ensure that the situation is handled in a way that does not cause further harm or stigmatisation to the participant who discloses.

In a situation of disclosure during the session, facilitators should do the following:

- Thank the participant for sharing in a non-blaming and compassionate way (e.g. “I’m glad that you told me”, “You are very brave for sharing this”, “This is not your fault”)
- Remind all participants that this is a safe space and that what has been shared should remain confidential.

² More detailed guidance on remote programming and service-delivery will be available separately.

- Change the topic from specific to general. For example, when an adolescent says that they have been beaten by their mother, say: “Some young people experience violence in the family”. Follow-up by saying: “If young people experience a similar issue, they can talk to a caseworker, and anyone can approach me after the session for more information”.
- If the participant is visibly upset, the (co-) facilitator can take the participant aside, to comfort them and see what they need and if they want to continue with the session.
- Never ignore what the participant has said, or change the conversation abruptly. Follow up with the participant at the end of the session in a discrete way.
- Do not ask them to repeat their disclosure but explain that there is someone (a case worker) available for them to talk to. If the participant agrees, facilitate the referral process by introducing them to the case worker.

Session 1: Avoiding the risk of COVID-19 infection

ADOLESCENT SESSION

DURATION

- 45 minutes

OBJECTIVES

- Know how to avoid the risk of Covid-19
- Know how to take care of our health and protect others

MATERIALS

- Handwashing station with running water, soap and (paper) towel to dry or disinfectant
- Flipchart and pen for group agreement
- **Resource A: How to Avoid COVID-19**
- Optionally: soap and/or other hygiene products for each participant

PREPARATION

- Arrange the space so that it is clean and so participants can sit with appropriate distance in between them.
- Make sure running water and soap is available during the session.
- Contextualise information in the session and Resource A as necessary.
- Print copies of Resource A.

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

- **Be open and listen:** Allow participants to talk freely. Ask them open questions and find out how much they already know.
- **Be honest:** Always answer questions truthfully. Adapt information to the age of adolescents and how much they can understand.
- **Be supportive:** Participants may be scared or confused. Give them space to share how they are feeling and let them know how you are there for them.
- **It is OK not to know all the answers:** It is OK to say “We don’t know, but we are working on it” or “We don’t know, but we think...”.
- **Address stigma:** Emphasise that Covid-19 has nothing to do with the way someone looks or their sexuality, nor with specific groups of people and where they are from.
- **End on a good note:** Check in with the group, remind them that they can take care of themselves and others. Close the session with something fun!

Steps to follow

1. Welcome

Time: 5 minutes

1. Hand washing: Have everyone first wash their hands with water and soap before entering the session. Welcome the group to the session.

2. Name game: Ask all participants to introduce themselves and share one thing about themselves (e.g. ask them to mention something they like doing, their favourite food or their favourite sport).

3. Group agreement: Before starting the group, explain that it is important to create a safe space for the group session. Ask participants what rules they find important in order to feel comfortable and respected? Agree on each rule before noting it down. Ensure the following rules are covered:

- Respect each other by listening and paying attention to whoever is speaking.
- Feel free to step out of an exercise and share only what you feel comfortable sharing.
- Accept and respect people with other views or opinions.
- What is shared in the group, stays in the group.
- Always feel free to ask the facilitator questions before, during or after the session.

2. Group Talk: Understanding COVID-19

Time: 10 minutes

1. Explain that in this session we will talk about the coronavirus disease known as COVID-19: what it is, what we can do to stay healthy and how we can protect others.

2. Ask participants if they have heard of “COVID-19” and if so, let them share what they already know about it. Ask participants if there are things they would like to understand better about the virus.

In the conversation, address any myths and misconceptions. Highlight the following messages³:

- **Covid-19 is a new coronavirus that has spread to many countries in the world.**
- **Most people who get Covid-19 have a fever, dry cough and tiredness. Many people also experience shortness of breath.**
- **The majority of people who get it (80 per cent) recover without needing any treatment.**

³ Adapted from: WHO (2020) “Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) advice for the public”: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>; UNICEF (2020) “Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): What Parents should know: <https://www.unicef.org/stories/novel-coronavirus-outbreak-what-parents-should-know#how-can-avoid-risk-infection>

- **Some people become seriously ill and may develop difficulty breathing. This is more likely to happen to older people or those who have other medical problems.**
 - **People who feel sick with fever, cough and/or difficulty with breathing should contact a doctor and self-isolate in line with local guidelines. Emphasise that participants should stay home when they feel sick or have symptoms and notify the facilitator.**
3. Optional: share local visual materials and/or a child-/adolescent-friendly video that explains how the virus spreads and what the symptoms are.

3. Group Talk: How to avoid the risk of infection and transmission

Time: 15 minutes

1. Ask participants what they already know about how to avoid infection.
2. **Use Resource 1.1: Four ways to avoid the spread of COVID-19** to discuss four important ways to avoid the risk of infection. Show the pictures one by one and ask the group to explain what advice belongs to each picture.
3. In pairs, participants discuss which of these precautions they are currently applying, and which ones are more difficult for them to apply. After five minutes, the pairs share their thoughts in plenary. probe to check if participants have access to running water, soap or disinfectant, and other precautions to avoid the risk of COVID-19.
4. Add any other locally applicable advisory related to the prevention of COVID-19, for example:
 - keeping a safe distance from other people (also known as “social / physical distancing”).
 - risk mitigation measures applicable in context for specific activities (e.g. going to market, grocery shopping, going to school or work, accessing services) including but not limited to times/hours of the day to go out, wearing a mask, if and when to wear gloves, how and when to disinfect groceries and surfaces at home.
5. Optional: add a short energizer of choice

4. Activity: Handwashing

Time: 10 minutes

1. Ask the group if anyone knows what is the best way to wash hands properly? Let one participant demonstrate this for the group using water and soap.

2. Demonstrate the recommended 20 seconds of handwashing using the following steps (optionally sing a local song to the handwashing, as applicable):⁴

Step 1: Wet hands with running water.

Step 2: Apply enough soap to cover wet hands.

Step 3: Scrub all surfaces of the hands carefully – including the back of hands, between fingers and under nails, and the wrists – this should take up at least 20 seconds.

Step 4: Rinse thoroughly with running water.

Step 5: Dry hands with clean cloth or single-use towels.

3. Time for practice!

Option 1: Provide running water, soap and (paper) towels for all participants. Let participants wash their hands following the five steps, while maintaining safe distancing.

Option 2: Everyone stands in a wide circle at a safe distance from each other. The group does the movements together (while singing the song).

Praise the group for their practice and answer any of their questions.

Optional: Show a video with small experiments that illustrate the key messages of this session:

- [video](#) of handwashing techniques using paint that demonstrates why it is important to follow these five steps to wash hands properly.
- [video](#) of a small experiment that demonstrates how soap works to remove germs.
- [video](#) made by youth from Zimbabwe on COVID-19 coronavirus is (English)

5. Closing

Time: 5 minutes

1. Closing exercise: Name and movement: Everyone stands in a wide circle at a safe distance from one another. Participants introduce themselves through a movement. Demonstrate this by saying “My name is...(name)” and making a movement (e.g. kicking a football). The group repeats: “Hello (name)” and the movement. Go around the circle until everyone has introduced themselves.

2. Home practice: Provide a copy of the session handout to all participants to take home. Ask the group to practice the handwashing techniques at home and share the information about how to avoid infection and transmission with their family members and friends when they see them.

Optionally: provide soap and/or other hygiene products to all participants.

3. Q&A: Answer any final questions or reflections from the group before closing the session.

⁴ Adapted from: UNICEF (2020) “Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): What Parents should know: <https://www.unicef.org/stories/novel-coronavirus-outbreak-what-parents-should-know#how-can-avoid-risk-infection>

Session 2: Supporting ourselves and one another

ADOLESCENT SESSION

DURATION

- 45 minutes

OBJECTIVES

- Consider how the situation affects our well-being
- Know what we can do to feel good and manage stress

MATERIALS

- Handwashing station with running water, soap and (paper) towel to dry or disinfectant

PREPARATION

- Arrange the space so that it is clean and so participants can sit at a safe distance from each other.
- Contextualise information as necessary.

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

- **Be open and listen:** Allow participants to talk freely. Ask them open questions and listen to their concerns.
- **Be supportive:** Participants may be scared or confused. Give them space to share how they are feeling and let them know that you are there for them.
- **Be aware of stressors:** Participants might feel stressed or worried about themselves or their family members or express fear about being unable to access health care.
- **Address stigma:** Emphasise that Covid-19 has nothing to do with the way someone looks or their sexuality, nor with specific groups of people and where they are from.
- **End on a good note:** Check in with the group, remind them that they can take care of themselves and others. Close the session with something fun!

Steps to follow

1. Welcome

Time: 5 minutes

1. Hand washing: Have everyone first wash their hands with water and soap before entering the session. Welcome the group to the session.

2. Opening exercise – Lotus flower: All participants sit in a wide circle with straight legs pointing to the middle. Each person should be 1.5 metres apart from each other. Ask the group to imagine that together they form a “lotus flower”. Give the following instructions:

- *The lotus flower sleeps at night: bend forward with your face towards your knees and relax for a few seconds with your eyes closed.*

- *The lotus flower wakes up in the morning: slowly lift up your head, raise your arms up above your head as you come back to sit up straight.*

Invite participants to close their eyes and experience how they feel right now. On the count of three ask everyone to show how they feel right now: like an open flower or a closed flower?

3. Recap: Ask participants what they remember from last session. Do they remember what they can do to stay protected from the COVID-19 virus? Ask participants if they have practiced handwashing or shared information on how to avoid the risk of COVID-19 infection or transmission? How did it go? Check if they have any questions and remind the group of the group agreement, before continuing.

2. Group Talk: Supporting ourselves

Time: 10 minutes

1. Ask the group what they think is worrying people right now in the context of COVID-19. Be open and listen to their concerns. Acknowledge what participants share. Ask if other group members recognise these concerns.

In the conversation, address any concerns related to COVID-19 by sharing the following messages:

- **It is normal to feel worried or stressed in this situation. You are not alone. Anxiety is a normal reaction to a very abnormal situation.**
- **Your parents or family members may also be worried: some of them may lose work or income as a result of the situation.**
- **Make sure you get your information from reliable data sources** (facilitator to provide one or two local and reliable information sources - Unicef and WHO can also be mentioned).
- **It is important to remember that many of the symptoms can be treated. Illness due to COVID-19 is generally mild for children and young people like you.**
- **There are many things we can do to keep ourselves and others safe: frequently wash our hands, don't touch our faces, cough in our elbow or a tissue, and keep a safe distance from other people.**
- **If you are worried that you might be experiencing symptoms, it is important to speak to your parents or other family members about it so they can take precautions.**

2. Ask the group what young people might do when they feel worried or stressed. Write down the ideas of participants on a flipchart. Ask participants if they think girls and boys (and where appropriate: LGBTQI adolescents) react differently to stress?

3. Highlight that there are many ways to respond to stress and that some activities are helpful, while others are unhealthy or harmful. Ask participants to categorise the identified reactions (like the table below). Encourage participants to release tension or stress in a way that is helpful and healthy for themselves and others.

Positive ways of coping with stress

Talk to a friend
 Spend time with family
 Sing or listen to music to calm down
 Exercise or play a game
 Write down thoughts
 Go for a walk if possible and safe to do so
 Sleeping
 Make jokes
 Think of something joyful
 Even crying can bring relief at times
 Helping others while still taking safety measures
 Limiting reading the news and social media
 Completing our school work or follow classes

Negative ways of coping with stress

Drinking a lot of alcohol
 Smoking a lot
 Arguing and fighting with others
 Using verbal, physical or sexual violence
 Self-harming

4. Highlight that we can do these positive activities on a daily basis, whenever we feel worried or stressed. Ask the group which activities they like doing most.

3. Activity: Relaxation exercises

Time: 10 minutes

1. Tell the group that there are short exercises they can do to release tension and relax. Select the (age-appropriate) exercises to practise together, while maintaining distance between participants.

Adolescents 10–14

1) BREATHING

Say:

- **Imagine that there is a big field with fresh grass and flowers that smell very nice...**
(inhale deeply through the nose)
- **Now imagine you have to blow out a candle...**
(exhale slowly through the mouth)

Repeat a few times with the group.

Adolescents 15–19

1) BREATHING EXERCISE

Participants place one hand on their stomach and one on their chest. Say:

- **Breathe in deep and slowly through your nose. Let the air drop into your belly, filling all of your stomach with air. Feel your belly expand.** *(inhale slowly)*
- **Hold your breath for a few seconds.**
- **Breathe out deeply and slowly through your mouth, empty the lungs and stomach completely of all the air.** *(exhale slowly)*
- **Hold your breath for a few seconds.**

2) MUSCLE RELAXATION

Say:

- **Imagine we are making fruit juice. We reach up to the tree tops to pick the fruits** (*stretch arms up with fingers spread*)
- **Now we squeeze the fruits to make the juice** (*bend over and contract all muscles*)
- **And now we drink our juice** (*sit down and relax muscles*)
- **And now we take some rest** (*lie down and relax*)

2) TAKE A PAUSE

Step 1. Sit down

Participants sit down with at least 1.5 metres in between them. They can close their eyes.

Step 2. Think, feel, body

- **Ask yourself: “What am I thinking now?” Notice your thoughts. Notice if they are positive or negative.**
- **Notice how you feel; do you feel happy or not?**
- **Notice how your body feels. Notice any tension or pain.**

Step 3. Focus on your breath

- **Listen to your breath as it goes in and out.**
- **You may think to yourself: “It’s okay. Whatever it is, I am okay.”**
- **Just listen to your breath for a while.**

Step 4. Reflect

- **Think to yourself: “How do I feel now?”**
- **When you are ready, open your eyes.**

2. Ask the participants if any of the relaxation activities were helpful for them? Where and when can they practice these?

3. Highlight that if participants keep feeling bad, they can talk to a parent or family member, trusted adult or NGO worker about it. Mention locally available services and referral pathways:

- Local (NGO) staff/social workers/trusted people who are available to support or advise.
- Locally available services and referral pathways for Child Protection and Gender-based Violence (if applicable) and explain how protection concerns can be reported.
- Available services and safety focal points for health including mental health and sexual and reproductive health.
- Local telephone or online helplines for children, young people and adults needing support (if applicable)

4. Closing

Time: 5 minutes

1. Closing exercise – Reflection of our day: Ask the participants to take a minute to think about their day and identify one positive or fun thing they did. Let everyone share and praise participants.

2. Home practice: Provide a copy of the session handout to all participants to take home. Suggest participants to think about activities they can do to take care of themselves at home.

3. Q&A: Answer any final questions or reflections from the group before closing the session.

Session 3: Staying safe

ADOLESCENT SESSION

DURATION

- 45 minutes

OBJECTIVES

- Understand the protection risks during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Make a safety plan

MATERIALS

- Handwashing station with running water, soap and (paper) towel to dry or disinfectant

PREPARATION

- Arrange the space so that it is clean and so participants can sit at a safe distance.
- Contextualise information as necessary.
- Decide whether to include the group talk on online safety (if relevant in context).

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

- **Be open and listen:** Allow participants to talk freely. Ask them open questions and listen to their concerns. Do not force anyone to participate in the discussions or activities.
- **Be supportive:** Participants may be scared or confused. Give them space to share how they are feeling and let them know how you are there for them.
- **Be aware of stressors or protection risks:** Participants might experience violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Do not ask participants to disclose details about their personal situation. Be ready to respond to a disclosure of violence.
- **Address stigma:** Emphasise that COVID-19 has nothing to do with the way someone looks or their sexuality, nor with specific groups of people and where they are from.
- **End on a good note:** Check in with the group, remind them that they can take care of themselves and others. Close the session with something fun!

Steps to follow

1. Welcome

Time: 5 minutes

1. Hand washing: Have everyone first wash their hands with water and soap before entering the session. Welcome the group to the session.

2. Opening exercise – Crazy Chicken: Shake your right hand up in the air eight times, while counting: “1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8”. Repeat this with your left hand, then right leg, then left leg, and finally, shake your hips. Do it again four times, then two times, and then one time!

3. Recap: Ask participants what they remember from the last session. Did they manage to do some activities to support themselves? Did they try out one of the relaxation exercises? Check if they have any questions and remind the group of the group agreement, before continuing.

2. Group Talk: Changes in our Families and Communities

Time: 10 minutes

1. Ask the group what are some things that have changed or might change in their communities due to COVID-19. Ask them to think about both good and bad changes. These can be related to school, work or changes in the community. Acknowledge what participants share. Ask if others recognise these changes.

In the conversation, highlight the following messages as issues come up:

- **In this situation many things may change: schools close, people may lose their jobs, and you may not see friends as often as you do normally.**
- **Good things may happen: families spend more time together, people help each other, and feel more connected with their communities.**
- **Bad things may be that people are overwhelmed by the situation or that our parents and caregivers may be more distracted or less patient with us.**
- **Fear and stigma can make a difficult situation worse. People may blame others for spreading the virus, and use verbal or physical abuse. It is important to stay informed and to be kind and supportive to each other.**
- **Words matter, and using language that blames others can drive people away from getting tested and taking the actions they need to protect themselves and others.**

2. Ask the group what the main changes are in their families. Are there differences for girls and boys, women and men? If appropriate, ask if LGBTQI adolescents are treated differently. Be open and listen to what participants have to say. Acknowledge what participants share and ask if others recognise these changes.

In the conversation, highlight the following messages as issues come up:

- **Some people might develop bad behaviours: they may drink alcohol or smoke more.**
- **We see that violence against children and women is increasing during the social isolation or lockdowns. Men can also be victims of violence or abuse, but it happens more often to children and women.**
- **A young person is never to blame for the abuse or violence that happens to them.**
- **If abuse or violence happens to a young person, it is important to tell a person whom they trust that something has happened and that they might help to stop it.**

3. Group Talk: Online safety (Optional)

Time: 10 minutes

1. Ask the group if they are spending more time online and if so, how they spend their time. Ask what they see as the main advantages or disadvantages of being online during this time.

In the conversation, highlight the following messages as issues come up:

- **Being online can be helpful in staying connected with friends and family, and understanding more about the situation.**
- **There's a lot of "fake news" about COVID-19 being spread across the internet, so stay alert! Select one or two reliable sources for your news, to avoid false information.**
(facilitators to provide reliable news or information sources in context)
- **Online criminals are actively looking for people to exploit or abuse during the crisis. Do not trust people who offer a cure for the virus or other remedies.**
- **Never give away your own or others' login details, passwords or personal details.**
- **Never send (sexy) photos of yourself or others to people you do not know.**
- **Do not engage in bullying others online; this can have serious and life-long consequences for your peers. For example, people can develop serious emotional and social problems.**
- **If you are bullied online, report it to someone you trust. It can also help to report it to the social media where it is occurring, keep the evidence and block the sender.**
- **Take a break: try other activities like reading, exercising or playing games offline.**

4. Activity: Safety planning

Time: 15 minutes

1. Tell the group that when we have concerns over our safety, wellbeing or health it can be helpful to think of people or places that can help us to stay safe.

2. Explain that there are also services available locally for young people who experience violence, abuse, mental distress or other concerns. Mention locally available services and referral pathways, including:

- Local (NGO) staff/social workers/trusted people who are available to support or advise.
- Locally available services and referral pathways for Child Protection and Gender-based Violence (if applicable) and explain how protection concerns can be reported.
- Available services and safety focal points for health including mental health and sexual and reproductive health.
- Local telephone or online helplines for children, young people and adults needing support (if applicable)

3. Explain that it can be helpful to make a safety plan that includes a list of people or places that can help them to stay safe. Ask participants to individually think of potential risks for their health or safety. Emphasise that they do not need to share this, as it might contain confidential or sensitive information. If they have questions, they can come to the facilitator.

For each situation that they identify, they think of:

- **WHAT can we do to stay safe?**
- **WHERE can we go to – i.e. what is a safe place to go to?**
- **WHO could we talk to in case something bad happens to them?**

| Who or what is the risk? | WHAT can we do or say to stay safe? | WHERE can I go to, to stay safe? | WHO are people that I can talk to or who can help me stay safe? |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| | | | |

5. Closing

Time: 5 minutes

1. Closing exercise – Head, Hand, Heart Reflection: Ask participants to briefly reflect on their experience in this session. Invite everyone to share their thoughts about:

Hand: What happened in the session? What did you notice?

Head: What have you learned in this session?

Heart: What did you feel during the session? How do you feel now?

2. Home practice: Provide a copy of the session handout to all participants to take home. Ask the participants to share their reflections from this session with one of their siblings or a friend.

3. Q&A: Answer any final questions or reflections from the group before closing the session.

Session 4: Staying healthy

ADOLESCENT SESSION

DURATION

- 45 minutes

OBJECTIVES

- Know where and how to access information and supplies related to SRHR including MHM and contraceptives.
- Know where and how to access available SRHR services.

MATERIALS

- Handwashing station with running water, soap and (paper) towel to dry or disinfectant
- Optionally: MHM products for all participants
- Flipcharts and markers
- Optional: Resources B-F (as relevant)

PREPARATION

- Arrange the space so that it is clean and so participants can keep the recommended distance in between them.
- Be aware of all health service points and referral pathways for health / SRH services.
- Prepare a map of the community on a big flip chart.
- Identify information needs and prepare the relevant resources and handouts.

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

- **Sensitive topics:** In this session, potentially sensitive topics will be discussed. Decide if and how to define and talk about the terms related to SRHR. Remember that this information is important for all adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 years.
- **Be open and listen:** Allow participants to talk freely. Ask them open questions and listen to their concerns. Do not force anyone to participate in the discussions.
- **Be supportive:** Participants may be scared or confused. Give them space to share how they are feeling and let them know that you are there for them.
- **Be aware of stressors:** Participants might feel stressed or worried about themselves or their family members, express fear about being unable to access health care or about the consequences of the situation.
- **Address stigma:** Emphasise that COVID-19 has nothing to do with the way someone looks or their sexuality, nor with specific groups of people and where they are from.
- **End on a good note:** Check in with the group, remind them that they can take care of themselves and others. Close the session with something fun!

Steps to follow

1. Welcome

Time: 5 minutes

- 1. Hand washing:** Have everyone first wash their hands with water and soap before entering the session. Welcome the group to the session.
- 2. Opening exercise – Listening to sounds:** Start with a short meditation. Ask all participants to close their eyes and just listen. Let them listen for one minute and ask them to open their eyes. What sounds did they hear?
- 3. Recap:** Ask participants what they remember from last session. Did they discuss it with others? Let participants share their experiences. Check if they have any questions and remind the group of the group agreement, before continuing.

2. Group Talk: Our health and bodies

Time: 15 minutes

1. Start with a story - select the story that is appropriate to the age group. Adapt the stories to the local context as needed.

Adolescents 10–14

Story: Mara and Joyce are two 13-year old girls. One day, all shops are closed in their neighbourhood due to COVID-19. The girls have recently gotten their first periods. They are worried that they cannot get soap and sanitary pads anymore, and they don't know what to do.

Adolescents 15–19

Story: John is 18-years old and is married to Sara. Due to the COVID-19 situation, most shops are closed. John and his wife regularly have sex but they do not use condoms. One day, Sara is worried that she might be pregnant, but she doesn't know what to do.

2. Facilitate a discussion about the stories, by asking the following questions:
 - What is this story about?
 - What information do these young people need?
 - What materials do they need?
 - If this would happen to a friend, what would you advise?
3. Facilitate a discussion about the SRHR in the community. When working with mixed groups, divide the group into same-sex groups for this discussion. Emphasise that it is a safe space and that all that

is shared in the group should not be shared outside. Nobody has to share personal stories or feelings if they do not feel comfortable to do so, and that it is important that this is a safe space for everyone.

Select the questions that are appropriate for the group:

| Adolescents 10–14 | Adolescents 15–19 |
|--|--|
| <p>MHM: How can girls and women manage their menstruation in a healthy and safe way? Where can they access supplies? What are challenges? Who can they talk to?</p> | <p>MHM: How can girls and women manage their menstruation in a healthy and safe way? Where can they access supplies? What are challenges?</p> |
| <p><i>Optional if MHM kits are distributed during the session:</i> Show the content of our MHM kits to the group and explain how the items are used.</p> | <p>Contraceptives: Where can young people get access to contraceptives? What kind of contraceptives are used most? Who do they talk to?</p> |
| <p>Health/SRHR: Where do young people get information about their health and body? Who do they talk to?</p> | <p>Health/SRHR: Where do young people get information about their health and body? Who do they talk to? Who can they talk with about issues like safe sex, reproductive health, pregnancy, etc?</p> |
| <p>What other information might young people need to stay healthy?</p> | <p>What other information might young people need to stay healthy?</p> |

In the conversation, highlight the following messages:

- **The changes happening around us due to COVID-19 can be quite stressful, and it is important that we stay healthy! We can do this by protecting ourselves and others from the virus, getting enough sleep, eating well and taking care of ourselves.**
- **Wash your full body with soap and water every day.**
- **Do not forget to wash your private parts every day – only use water, no soap, for this area.**
- **For girls and women, it is important to have sanitary products and information to manage their periods. Try to find people you can talk to about your concerns.**
- **For young people who have sex, it is important that they know how to do this safely so that they stay healthy and so they can avoid unwanted pregnancies.**
- **Being capable of getting pregnant or making someone pregnant, does not mean that young people are physically or emotionally ready to have children.**
- **If you have any questions or concerns about your health, you can talk to a trusted adult. Maybe this is a parent, teacher, NGO worker or an older sibling. You can always talk to us.**

Optional: refer or show local resources, for example SRHR information in local languages, websites, hot-line, radio programme or leaflets.

4. Close with key messages on sexual violence:

- **In situations of confinement or lockdowns, some young people, particularly girls and young women, may experience unwanted sex. This is called sexual violence.**

- **You have the right to decide for yourself whether you want to participate in a particular sexual activity.**
- **You have the right to say “no” to unwanted touches or sexual activities.**
- **If something uncomfortable has happened, you may not want to discuss it with anyone. However, it can be useful to talk to someone you trust. You are not alone, and together you may be able to find a solution or get support.**
- **You may also talk to a case worker/NGO worker who is trained to help in such situations and is there to listen to you** (facilitator to provide contact details of a case worker).

Optional: extend the session to talk about specific topics, supported by the following resources:

- Resource B: Menstruation
- Resource C: Contraception
- Resource D: Condom use
- Resource E: STIs
- Resource F: Pregnancy

3. Activity: Accessing vital SRH services

Time: 20 minutes

1. Explain that in this activity, we will look at the available health services in our community. Draw a map of the community on a big flip chart. Mark out a couple of landmarks on the map (for example schools, church/mosque, the place the session is being held, markets).
2. Ask the group to mark on the map the health services that are available for young people – pharmacies, youth centres and safe spaces, clinics, hospitals – and include the different SRHR services that are provided, for example, MHM supplies, HIV testing, SRHR advice, free condoms, counselling, peer support groups, health services etc.
3. Facilitate a plenary discussion by asking the following questions for each service provider marked on the map:
 - **What service is or services are provided?**
 - **Who provides the service(s)?**
 - **Do you know if the service is affected by the Covid-19 crisis? If so, how?**
 - **Who can access these services? Who cannot access these services? Do you have any concerns about these services? Why? Probe for potential barriers to accessing services (inability to cover the costs/fees, perceived lack of confidentiality and restrictions, stigma, lack of parental consent, insensitive attitudes of providers, etc.).**
 - **Who can young people ask for help if they have a question or a problem related to accessing health information, supplies or services?**

In the conversation, highlight the following messages:

- **The current pandemic may affect the availability of services locally. However, it is important that you seek health care and advice when you need it.**
- **Talk to a trusted adult about your worries and concerns, or to us at Plan International!**

4. Add any remaining SHR services to the map. Explain for each service provider where and how young people can access information, materials and/or services - including:

- Available services and focal points for health including sexual and reproductive health.
- Local (NGO) staff/social workers/trusted people who are available to support or advise on SRH.
- Locally available services and referral pathways for Child Protection and Gender-based Violence (if appropriate) and explain how protection concerns can be reported.

4. Closing

Time: 5 minutes

1. **Closing exercise – Local song:** Ask participants if they know a local song that they like to sing to close the session together.
2. **Home practice:** Give participants relevant handouts and/or materials to take home. Ask the group to share what they have learned from the session with their friends, siblings or other family members.
3. **Q&A:** Answer any final questions or reflections from the group before closing the session.

Session 1: Talking about COVID-19 with young people

PARENTING SESSION

DURATION

- 45 minutes

OBJECTIVES

- Know how to avoid the risk of Covid-19 infection.
- Know how to take care of our health and protect our children.

MATERIALS

- Handwashing station with running water, soap and (paper) towel to dry or disinfectant.
- **Resource A: How to Avoid COVID-19**
- Optional: soap and/or other hygiene products for each participant

PREPARATION

- Arrange the space so that it is clean and participants can sit at a safe distance from each other.
- Contextualise information in the session and Resource A as necessary.
- Print copies of Resource A.

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

- **Be open and listen:** Allow participants to talk freely. Ask them open questions and find out how much they already know.
- **Be honest:** Always answer questions truthfully. Consider that adults may also need information.
- **Be supportive:** Participants may be scared or confused. Give them space to share how they are feeling and let them know that you are there for them.
- **It is OK not to know all the answers:** It is OK to say “We don’t know, but we are working on it” or “We don’t know, but we think...”.
- **Address stigma:** Emphasise that COVID-19 has nothing to do with the way someone looks or their sexuality, nor with specific groups of people and where they are from.
- **End on a good note:** Check in with the group, remind them that they can take care of themselves and others. Close the session with something fun!

Steps to follow

1. Welcome

Time: 5 minutes

1. **Hand washing:** Have everyone first wash their hands with water and soap before entering the session. Welcome the group to the session.

2. Opening exercise – Name game: Ask all participants to introduce themselves and share one thing about themselves (e.g. ask them to mention something they like doing, their favourite food or their favourite sport).

3. Group agreement: Before starting the group, explain that it is important to create a safe space for the group session. Ask participants what rules they find important in order to feel comfortable and respected? Agree on each rule before noting it down. Ensure the following rules are covered:

- Respect each other by listening and paying attention to whoever is speaking.
- Feel free to step out of an exercise and share only what you feel comfortable sharing.
- Accept and respect people with other views or opinions.
- What is shared in the group, stays in the group.
- Always feel free to ask the facilitator questions before, during or after the session.

2. Group Talk: Understanding COVID-19

Time: 15 minutes

1. Explain that in this session we will talk about the coronavirus disease known as COVID-19: what it is and what we can do to stay healthy and protect others. We will also discuss how we talk about it with our children.

2. Ask participants if they have heard of “COVID-19” and if so, let them share what they know about it. Ask participants what has changed in their daily life due to the COVID-19 situation. Can they go to work? Are schools closed? What else has changed?

3. Ask participants if there are things they would like to understand better about the virus.

In the conversation, highlight the following messages:⁵

- **Covid-19 is a new coronavirus that has spread to many countries in the world.**
- **Most people who get Covid-19 have a fever, dry cough and tiredness. Many people also experience shortness of breath.**
- **The majority of people who get it (80 per cent) recover without needing any treatment.**
- **Some people become seriously ill and develop difficulty with breathing. Some people die. This is more likely to happen to older people or those who have other medical problems.**
- **People who feel sick with fever, cough and difficulty breathing should contact a doctor and self-isolate in line with local guidelines. Emphasise that participants should stay home when they feel sick or have symptoms and notify the facilitator.**

⁵ Adapted from: WHO (2020) “Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) advice for the public”: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>; UNICEF (2020) “Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): What Parents should know: <https://www.unicef.org/stories/novel-coronavirus-outbreak-what-parents-should-know#how-can-avoid-risk-infection>

4. Use Resource A: How To Avoid COVID-19 to discuss four important ways to avoid the risk of infection. Go through the pictures one by one and let the group guess what each image means. Then explain the advice that belongs to each picture.

3. Activity: Handwashing

Time: 5 minutes

1. Ask the group if anyone knows what is the best way to wash hands properly?
2. First, demonstrate 20 seconds of handwashing using the following steps:⁶
 - Step 1:** Wet hands with running water.
 - Step 2:** Apply enough soap to cover wet hands.
 - Step 3:** Scrub all surfaces of the hands carefully - including the back of hands, between fingers and under nails and wrists – this should take up at least 20 seconds.
 - Step 4:** Rinse thoroughly with running water.
 - Step 5:** Dry hands with clean cloth or single-use towels.
3. Provide running water, soap and (paper) towels for all participants. Let participants wash their hands following the five steps, while maintaining safe distancing.
4. Praise the group for their practice and answer any of their questions.

4. Group Talk: How to talk about COVID-19 with teens

Time: 15 minutes

Ask participants if they talk with their children about COVID-19. Let participants share what they tell their children, what questions they get asked and the challenges they face.

In the conversation, provide some tips on how to talk about COVID-19 with teenagers:⁷

- **Be open and listen: Allow teens to talk freely and ask any questions they have.**
- **Be honest: Always answer questions truthfully. If you do not know the answer, it is fine to say “I don’t know”.**
- **Be supportive: Children and young people may be worried. Give them space to share how they are feeling and let them know you are there for them.**

⁶ Adapted from: UNICEF (2020) “Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): What Parents should know: <https://www.unicef.org/stories/novel-coronavirus-outbreak-what-parents-should-know#how-can-avoid-risk-infection>

⁷ Adapted from Parenting for Lifelong Health (2020) “Parenting for Lifelong Health: Covid-19 resources” <https://www.covid19parenting.com>

- **Prevent stigma:** Explain that COVID-19 has nothing to do with the way someone looks, where they are from or what language they speak. Tell your child that we can be compassionate to people who are sick and those who are caring for them.
- **End on a good note:** In these difficult times, regularly check in with your child. Remind them that you care and that they can talk to you anytime. Do something fun together!

5. Closing

Time: 5 minutes

- 1. Closing exercise – Song:** Ask participants if they know a local song that they like to sing together to close the session. Highlight that this is also an activity that can be fun to do with their children.
- 2. Home practice:** Provide a copy of the session handout to all participants to take home. Ask the group to practice handwashing techniques and the information about preventing infection and transmission of COVID-19 with all their children and family members at home.
Optionally: provide soap and/or other hygiene products to all participants.
- 3. Q&A:** Answer any final questions or reflections from the group before closing the session.

Session 2: Supporting ourselves and our adolescents

PARENTING SESSION

DURATION

- 45 minutes

OBJECTIVES

- Understand how the COVID-19 pandemic can affect our own well-being and that of our children
- Know how to support ourselves and our children

MATERIALS

- Handwashing station with running water, soap and (paper) towel to dry or disinfectant

PREPARATION

- Arrange the space so that it is clean and participants can sit with 1,5 metres (two arms-length) distance in between them.
- Contextualise information as necessary

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

- **Be open and listen:** Allow participants to talk freely. Ask them open questions and find out how much they already know.
- **Be supportive:** Participants may be scared or confused. Give them space to share how they are feeling and let them know that you are there for them. Do not judge.
- **Be aware of stressors:** Participants might feel stressed or worried about themselves or their family members, express fear about being unable to access health care or about the consequences of the situation.
- **Address stigma:** Emphasise that COVID-19 has nothing to do with the way someone looks or their sexuality, nor with specific groups of people and where they are from.
- **End on a good note:** Check in with the group, remind them that they can take care of themselves and others. Close the session with something fun!

Steps to follow

1. Welcome

Time: 5 minutes

1. Hand washing: Have everyone first wash their hands with water and soap before entering the session. Welcome the group to the session.

2. Opening exercise – Lotus flower: All participants sit in a wide circle with straight legs pointing to the middle. Everyone should be 1.5 metres apart from each other. Ask the group to imagine that together they form a “lotus flower”. Give the following instructions:

- *The lotus flower sleeps at night: bend forward with your face towards your knees and relax for a few seconds with your eyes closed.*

- *The lotus flower wakes up in the morning: slowly lift up your head, raise your arms up above your head as you come back to sit up straight.*

Invite participants to close their eyes and experience how they feel right now. On the count of three ask everyone to show how they feel now: do they feel like an open flower or a closed flower?

3. Recap: Ask the group if they have any reflections from last week's session. Did they talk to their children about COVID-19? How did this go? Check if there are any remaining questions.

2. Activity: Taking care of ourselves

Time: 10 minutes

1. Tell the group that in stressful situations, parents and caregivers are often so focused on taking care of their families that they do not take time to take care of themselves. Ask the group if they recognize this. Be open and listen. Acknowledge what participants share and praise all parents and caregivers for the tremendous job they do in taking care of their families!

2. Explain that it is important that when taking care of others, we also take care of ourselves! Ask the group what they do to support themselves.

In the conversation, share the following tips:

- **It is okay to take time for yourself. Allow yourself time to be alone or take care of yourself. Also allow your partner to take time for themselves.**
- **Ask for support to loved ones. If your usual support system is not in place, try to find out who else can help out.**
- **Maintain good routines of eating and sleeping as they help to stay healthy.**
- **Do activities that give you joy – this can be exercising, singing, dancing, praying or being with a friend.**

3. Explain that when the stress becomes just too much, there are also things we can do to calm ourselves down. For example, it can help to give yourself a 10-second pause. Just breathe in and breathe out five times. Invite participants to practise “taking a pause” together:

Step 1. Sit down

Participants sit down with at least 1.5 metres in between them. They can close their eyes.

Step 2. Think, Feel, Body

- Ask yourself: “What am I thinking now?” Notice your thoughts. Notice if they are positive or negative.
- Notice how you feel: do you feel happy or not.
- Notice how your body feels. Notice any tension.

Step 3. Focus on your breath

- Listen to your breath as it goes in and out.

- You may think to yourself: it's okay. Whatever it is, I am okay.
- Just listen to your breath for a while.

Step 4. Reflecting

- Think to yourself: "how do I feel now?"
- When you are ready, open your eyes.

4. Ask participants how they experienced this exercise. Emphasise that we all need a break sometimes. Remind participants to always make time for themselves, to do something fun or relaxing that they like to do. You deserve it!

3. Group Talk: Spending Time Together

Time: 15 minutes

1. Ask the group how they think the COVID-19 pandemic affects their children.

In the conversation, highlight the following:

- **It is normal for young people and adults to feel worried or stressed in this situation. Tell you children that they are not alone. Anxiety is a normal reaction to a very abnormal situation.**
- **Young people might want to follow the news. Make sure they get their information from reliable data sources** (facilitator to provide one or two local and reliable information sources - Unicef and WHO can also be mentioned).
- **It is important for young people to know they have control over a situation. Tell them that there are many things they can do to keep themselves and others safe: frequent handwashing, not touching their face, coughing in their elbow or in a tissue, and keeping a safe distance from other people.**
- **It is important for young people to be connected to their friends. Encourage them to do this in a safe place and while maintaining a safe distance.**
- **Encourage young people to express their feelings. Every person has their own way to do this: some may want to talk, others prefer to play, write or sing. Encourage them to do something positive that does not harm themselves or others.**
- **During uncertain times, it is important for all children, also the older ones, to spend some time with their caregivers.**

2. Ask participants when and how they spend time with their children. How do they experience this time together? Let everyone share something.

3. Tell the group that in a crisis situation it is important to make strong relationships with our children, including the older ones. One way to do this is through **spending time together**.

Provide the following tips:

- **Spending time together is free and fun. It makes a child or young person feel loved and secure, and shows them that they are important.**
- **Spend time together for just 20 minutes, or for longer – it's up to us. It can be at the same time each day so children or young people can look forward to it.**
- **Ask your child what they would like to do: choosing builds their self-confidence. If they choose to do something that is not possible (due to COVID-19 or physical distancing) this is a chance to talk with them about this.**
- **Ideas for spending time with young people: talk about something they are interested in (sports, food, music, school); go for a walk together – outdoors or around the home where possible; sing, pray, cook together or exercise together.**

4. Participants pair up to discuss what activities they can do when they spend time with their children. Make sure that participants can maintain a safe distance from each other.

Optional: In pairs or in plenary, give participants time to share songs, games or exercises that they play with their children with each other. Make sure participants can maintain a safe distance from each other.

4. Group Talk: Structure up

Time: 10 minutes

1. Ask the group how their daily routines have changed since the COVID-19 crisis.
2. Explain that for many of us, COVID-19 has changed our daily work, school and home routines. This is hard for children, teenagers and parents. Making new routines can help. Ask parents if and how they have created new routines.

In the conversation, provide the following tips to create a flexible but consistent daily routine:⁸

- **Make a schedule for you and your children that has time for structured activities as well as free time. This can help children feel more secure and better behaved.**
- **Young people can help plan the routine for the day – like making a school timetable. They will follow this better if they help to make it.**
- **Include specific time for household chores: make sure that young people maintain enough time for learning and/or work and free time.**
- **Make sure that domestic work is distributed evenly between girls and boys.**

⁸ Adapted from Parenting for Lifelong Health (2020) "Parenting for Lifelong Health: Covid-19 resources" <https://www.covid19parenting.com>

- **Include exercise, games or songs each day – this helps deal with stress and helps entertain young people who have lots of energy at home.**
- **Include regular practice of handwashing in the daily schedule so that it becomes a routine.**

5. Closing

Time: 5 minutes

1. Closing exercise – Head, Hand, Heart Reflection: Ask participants to briefly reflect on their experience in this session. Invite everyone to share their thoughts about:

- **Hand:** What happened in the session? What did you notice?
- **Head:** What have you learned in this session?
- **Heart:** What did you feel during the session? How do you feel now?

2. Home practice: Provide a copy of the session handout to all participants to take home. Ask the group to set up a daily routine with their children at home, and to spend some time with their children. Next session we will see how it went.

3. Q&A: Answer any final questions or reflections from the group before closing the session.

Session 3: Parenting in stressful times

PARENTING SESSION

DURATION

- 45 minutes

OBJECTIVES

- Understand the importance of positive instructions and praise.
- Manage difficult behaviour in a non-violence way

MATERIALS

- Handwashing station with running water, soap and (paper) towel to dry or disinfectant.

PREPARATION

- Arrange the space so that it is clean and so participants can at a safe distance from each other.
- Contextualise information as necessary.

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

- **Be open and listen:** Allow participants to talk freely. Ask them open questions and listen to their concerns.
- **Be supportive:** Participants may be scared or confused. Give them space to share how they are feeling and let them know that you are there for them.
- **Be aware of stressors:** Participants might feel stressed or worried about themselves or their family members, express fear about being unable to access health care or about the consequences of the situation
- **Address stigma:** Emphasise that COVID-19 has nothing to do with the way someone looks or their sexuality, nor with specific groups of people and where they are from.
- **End on a good note:** Check in with the group, remind them that they can take care of themselves and others. Close the session with something fun!

Steps to follow

1. Welcome

Time: 5 minutes

1. Hand washing: Have everyone first wash their hands with water and soap before entering the session. Welcome the group to the session.

2. Opening exercise – Hands up if...: Tell the group that you will read some statements out loud. If participants agree with the statement they can raise their hand. If they disagree, they do not raise their hand. Say:

- Hands up if you have children.
- Hands up if you like eating bananas.
- Hands up if you like cooking food.

- Hands up if raising children brings you joy.
- Hands up if raising children is sometimes hard.
- Hands up if we can be proud of ourselves as parents!!

3. Recap: Ask the group what they remember from last week's session. Did they spend time with their children at home? What did they do? How did it go? Did they manage to set up a daily routine with their children? Did they also take a break to do something fun or relaxing for themselves? Let participants share and listen.

2. Group Talk: Keeping it Positive

Time: 15 minutes

1. Explain that in this situation due to the many changes, children are likely to show difficult behaviour as they spend more time at home and when they are tired, hungry, afraid or bored. Ask the group if they also see changes in the behaviour of their adolescents. Be open and listen to participants.
2. Continue the conversation by asking how parents and caregivers solve difficult behaviours. Praise parents for sharing their experiences and ideas!
3. Explain that it's hard to feel positive sometimes. When our children are driving us crazy we often say negative things to them. But children and teens are much more likely to do what we ask if we give them positive instructions and praise them for what they do right. Ask parents if they have examples they can share.

In the conversation, provide the following tips:⁹

- **Say the behaviour that you want to see, using positive words; like “please put your clothes away” or “please help me with the dishes” (instead of: “don’t make a mess” or “don’t be lazy”).**
- **Give teens a simple job with responsibilities and make sure they are able to do it.**
- **Speak in a calm voice and call your child’s name if they do not listen. Shouting will just make you and your child feel stressed and angry.**
- **Praise your child when they are behaving well: always tell them when they did something well. This way, they learn that this is a good thing that they can do again!**
- **Adolescents will want to stay connected with friends. Help them to connect in a safe way.**

4. Time to practise: Participants pair up to practice giving positive instructions and praising to each other. Make sure the people in pairs stay a safe distance apart from each other.

⁹ Adapted from Parenting for Lifelong Health (2020) “Parenting for Lifelong Health: Covid-19 resources” <https://www.covid19parenting.com>

They each choose a situation that has happened in their family and re-play it by giving a positive instruction to their teen or praising them for something they did well. The other parent in the pair plays the role of the teenager. After this, they swap roles.

3. Activity: Dealing with difficult behaviour

Time: 20 minutes

1. Tell the group that there are a few things we can do to deal with “difficult behaviour” – refer back to some of the examples that were shared by the group during the group talk (previous activity).

Provide guidance for the appropriate age group:¹⁰

For younger children (up to about 12 years):

Strategy 1: Redirect difficult behaviour

- Catch difficult behaviour early and redirect adolescents’ attention from a difficult to a good behaviour.
- Stop it before it starts! When they start to get restless, you can distract them with something interesting or fun – “Come on, let’s play a game together”.

Strategy 2: Use consequences

- Consequences help to teach children responsibility for what they do. They also allow discipline that is controlled. This is more effective than hitting or shouting.
- Give children a choice about whether to follow your instructions before giving them the consequence. For example, say “if you do not clear up your clothes, I will take away your toy until you do it”.
- Make sure the consequence is realistic. For example, taking away their toy for one week is hard to enforce. Taking it away for one hour is more realistic.
- Once the consequence is over, give your child a chance to do something good, and praise them for it.

For older adolescents (about 12 years and older)

Strategy: Make agreements

- Calmly explain to older adolescents how you feel and why it is important to do what you ask them to do at this time. For example, say “I know this situation is hard for everyone

¹⁰ Adapted from: Parenting for Lifelong Health (2020) “Parenting for Lifelong Health: Covid-19 resources” <https://www.covid19parenting.com>

including for you. I am also tired and really need your help with cleaning up the room. So please can you help me with maintaining the order here?"

- Listen to what your child says they want from you (e.g. free time to play).
- Together, come to an agreement (e.g. first cleaning up and then free time). Agree also on a consequence when they do not stick to the agreement (e.g. no free time).
- Do not forget to praise your adolescent when they keep to the agreement.

2. Time for practice! Participants pair up to discuss in what situations they need to manage bad behaviour and what strategy they would use in each case. Make sure that even in pairs, people maintain a safe distance from each other.

3. Reflection: Ask the group to reflect on who usually deals with difficult behaviour: the female or male caregiver? Why? Close the discussion by highlighting the importance of equally dividing parenting tasks, including dealing with difficult behaviour.

4. Closing

Time: 5 minutes

1. Closing exercise – Circle of praise: Participants stand in a wide circle, maintaining sufficient distance. They look at their left neighbours on their left and praise them for something that they did well this session. Then they turn to their other neighbour, and praise them for something that they did well in this session. End with a big round of applause!

2. Home practice: Provide a copy of the session handout to all participants to take home. Ask the group to apply some of these parenting techniques: “praising”, “managing difficult behaviour” and taking a pause” at home this week.

3. Q&A: Answer any final questions or reflections from the group before closing the session.

Session 4: Protecting young people from violence

PARENTING SESSION

DURATION

- 45 minutes

OBJECTIVES

- Understand how COVID-19 can increase protection risks.
- Know how to protect young people from violence and abuse.

MATERIALS

- Handwashing station with running water, soap and (paper) towel to dry or disinfectant.

PREPARATION

- Arrange the space so that it is clean and so participants can sit at a safe distance from each other.
- Contextualise information as necessary.

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

- **Be open and listen:** Allow participants to talk freely. Ask them open questions and listen to their concerns.
- **Be supportive:** Participants may be scared or confused. Give them space to share how they are feeling and let them know that you are there for them.
- **Be aware of stressors and protection risks:** Participants and/or their children may experience violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation. Do not ask participants to disclose details about their personal situation. Be ready to respond to a disclosure of violence.
- **Address stigma:** Emphasise that COVID-19 has nothing to do with the way someone looks or their sexuality, nor with specific groups of people and where they are from.
- **End on a good note:** Check in with the group, remind them that they can take care of themselves and others. Close the session with something fun!

Steps to follow

1. Welcome

Time: 5 minutes

1. Hand washing: Have everyone first wash their hands with water and soap before entering the session. Welcome the group to the session.

2. Opening exercise – Listening to sounds: Start with a short meditation. Ask all participants to close their eyes and just listen. Let them listen for one minute and ask them to open their eyes. What sounds did they hear?

3. Recap: Ask participants what they remember from last week's session. Did they apply some of the techniques to "praise", "manage difficult behaviour" or "take a pause"? Let participants share and listen.

2. Group Talk: Safety risks for adolescents

Time: 10 minutes

1. Explain that in this session we will discuss how we can keep our teenagers safe, during the COVID-19 crisis situation.
2. Ask participants what safety risks they see in their community that may affect adolescents. Probe for risks that exist in the local context such as school drop-out, child labour, child marriage, physical and sexual violence, teenage pregnancy or trafficking. Explore who is particularly affected by these different risks: girls, boys or perhaps other groups of young people?

In the conversation, highlight the following messages (as relevant and appropriate):

- **In stressful times, young people may experience violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation in their family or community.**
- **During isolation, in the confinement of their homes, young people may experience physical or sexual abuse by someone in their family.**
- **While boys and men can also be victims of (domestic) violence, the vast majority of survivors of violence are girls and women.**
- **In cases of intimate partner violence, the abuser may use the COVID-19 virus as a scare tactic to keep their partner away from their social contacts or kids or use it as an excuse to abuse them.**
- **Abusers may also withhold necessary items such as soap, water, sanitiser or health care, or limit their access to a phone or internet connection.**

3. Activity: Protection from violence

Time: 15 minutes

1. In pairs, participants discuss for five minutes what they can do to keep themselves and their children safe from violence. Make sure participants maintain a safe distance from each other.
2. In plenary, ask participants to share their findings.

In the conversation, highlight the following messages:

- **Some people might develop bad behaviours: they may drink alcohol or smoke more.**

- **It is important to use non-violent ways of handling disagreements in the family; between children and adults, but also between adults.**
- **Create a good relationship with your adolescents, so that they feel comfortable about discussing violence that they may be experiencing.**

Also highlight key messages on sexual and gender-based violence risks during COVID-19:

- **We see that violence against girls and women is increasing during social isolation and lockdowns. Men can also be victims of violence, but it happens more to children and women.**
- **Some girls and young women may experience unwanted sex. This is sexual violence.**
- **A young person is never to blame for the abuse or violence that happens to them.**
- **You have the right to decide for yourself whether you want to participate in a particular sexual activity. You have the right to say “no” to unwanted touches or sexual activities.**
- **If something uncomfortable has happened, you may not want to discuss it with anyone. However, it can be useful to talk to someone you trust. You are not alone, and together you may be able to find a solution or get support.**
- **Think about someone you trust, for example a family member, a friend or another adult. They might be the ones you turn to if something uncomfortable happens.**
- **You may also talk to a social worker/NGO worker who is trained to help in such situations and is there to listen to you**

3. Explain that there are various services available locally for young people and adults who experience violence, abuse, mental distress or other concerns. Mention locally available services and referral pathways, including:

- Local (NGO) staff/social workers/trusted people who are available to support or advise.
- Locally available services and referral pathways for Child Protection and Gender-based Violence (if applicable) and explain how protection concerns can be reported.
- Available services and safety focal points for health including sexual and reproductive health.
- Local telephone or online helplines for children, young people and adults needing support (if applicable)

4. Tell the group that if they have concerns over their own safety or health or that of their children, it can be helpful to make a safety plan and identify people or places that can help them to stay safe.

Ask participants to individually think of potential risks. They do not have to share their safety plan as this is confidential. If they have questions, they can come to the facilitator.

For each situation that they identify, ask:

- **WHAT can we do to stay safe?**
- **WHERE can we go to – i.e. what is a safe place to go to?**
- **WHO could we talk to in case something bad happens?**

| Who or what is the risk? | WHAT can we do or say to stay safe? | WHERE can I go to, to stay safe? | WHO can I can talk to / who are the people can help me stay safe? |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| | | | |

4. Group Talk: Online safety (Optional)

Time: 10 minutes

1. Ask the group if their children are spending more time online and if so, how they spend their time. Ask what they see as the main advantages or disadvantages of being online during this time.
2. Explain that young people will want to be in touch with friends and that being online can be very helpful for them. Highlight that parents and caregivers can help them to stay safe online.

Discuss the following advice that parents can give to their children:

- **There's a lot of "fake news" about COVID-19 being spread across the internet, so stay alert! Select one or two reliable sources for your news, to avoid false information.**
- **Online criminals are actively looking for people to exploit or abuse during the crisis. Do not trust people who offer a cure for the virus or other remedies.**
- **Never give away your own or others' login details, passwords or personal details.**
- **Never send (sexy) photos of yourself or others to people you do not know.**
- **Do not engage in bullying others online; be kind to each other in these stressful times.**
- **If you are bullied online, report it to someone you trust. Report it to the social media where it is occurring, keep the evidence and block the sender.**
- **Take a break: try other activities like reading, exercising or playing games offline.**

5. Closing

Time: 5 minutes

1. Closing exercise – Head, Hand, Heart Reflection: Ask participants to briefly reflect on their experience in this session. Invite everyone to share some thoughts about:

Hand: What happened in the session? What did you notice?

Head: What have you learned in this session?

Heart: What did you feel during the session? How do you feel now?

2. Home practice: Provide a copy of the session handout to all participants to take home. Ask the group to share what they have learned about the session with their children.

3. Q&A: Answer any final questions or reflections from the group before closing the session.

References

The **Coping with COVID-19** sessions for adolescents, parents and caregivers are developed based on content from one of the following sources:

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