

## Coronavirus and emotions- Being a foreigner in the current situation

The outbreak of coronavirus disease may be stressful for people. Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in. It is common and normal for you and your children to feel sad, nervous, upset, confused, afraid, or irritable.

Being a foreigner today implies living much more uncertainty. Common vulnerabilities, fears and triggers for anxiety are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Language barriers</li><li>- Lack of information or information received about the virus from another country</li><li>- Cultural differences in emotional expression and body language</li><li>- Difficulty of balancing work and family life</li><li>- Divorce / Domestic violence</li><li>- Asylum application</li><li>- Lack of social engagement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Work in restaurants or as home health care aides</li><li>- Lower incomes than native-born workers</li><li>- Get sick away from home and family</li><li>- Get sick in an unknown health system</li><li>- Country of origin in Estate of Emergency</li><li>- Family members get sick while we are away from home</li><li>- Cannot travel to the country of origin due to closure of borders or the suspension of flights</li></ul>
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## Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include

Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones

Changes in sleep or eating patterns

Difficulty thinking, concentrating, and remembering

Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Irritability, anger, and agitation

Worsening of chronic health problems. People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms.

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## Coping with Stress

Talking with someone you trust may help to improve your mood.

A healthy lifestyle is necessary for you. This includes a balanced diet, proper sleep, regular exercise, and communications with families and friends online.

DO NOT use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs to improve your mood.

If you feel you cannot cope with the stress by yourself, you need to contact medical professionals or psychological consultants. You should make a plan in advance in order to know where to seek mental health and psychological support when necessary.

Avoid misinformation. You should collect proper information that can help you assess the risk in order to make a preventive plan. Reliable sources are needed. For example, the information from the World Health Organization or other national and local public health agencies are generally considered reliable

**Use your previous experience in dealing with emergencies and adversities to cope with this outbreak**

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## Coping with stress for children and teens

*“The priority should be to protect children from all the information that they cannot yet process and that can lead them to develop anxiety and fear due to uncertainty” (UNICEF).*

Some common changes to watch for include:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children</li><li>- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)</li><li>- Excessive worry or sadness</li><li>- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens</li><li>- Poor school performance or avoiding school</li><li>- Difficulty with attention and concentration</li><li>- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past</li><li>- Unexplained headaches or body pain</li></ul> |
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Adults should employ supportive measures to cope with the stress responses of children. For example, adults should listen carefully to the worries of the children and dedicate more love and attention to the children.

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**During an emergency, children need more love and attention from adults.** Please give more time and care than usual.

Please **listen to children carefully and speak to them softly** in order to put their minds at ease.

**Reduce the time that you and your children spends to watch or listen to depressive media**, which can help you reduce worries and anxieties

**If it is necessary to separate the children from their families**, such as in a hospital setting, please make sure that children can communicate with their families regularly in order to reduce their anxiety

**Try to keep the routines of normal times.** In a new environment, adults need to help children build a daily routine, including study, lessons, play, and relax.

Tell children what is happening and explaining the situation. Meanwhile, children should be taught how to prevent the infection in a way that is understandable to them.

**Be a role model.**

Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children.

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## REFERENCES

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- „Coronavirus (COVID-19): what parents should know“. UNICEF. March 2020.
- „How to talk to your child about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) tips to help comfort and protect children“. UNICEF. March 2020.

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