

Principles of Positive Discipline in supporting child wellbeing during COVID-19

In times of stress and anxiety, it is very common and completely normal for children to seek more attention. Below are some suggestions on what parents/caregivers can do to support children's wellbeing, and good and healthy relationships with children.

- Keep as much structure, family routines, or create new routines as you can; Make a schedule that allows you to do activities with your children or spend leisure time outdoors (if allowed and depending on the situation, e.g.: walking, exercise, outdoors/park).
- Communication should be an inevitable part of the whole process: Discuss with children about the COVID-19 pandemic very honestly, always using language and examples appropriate for their actual age; offer warmth, support and guidance whenever children need it and make sure you judge children and their feelings as little as possible!
- Support your children in the home learning process and make sure they also take play time. Putting too much emphasis on academic achievement, especially during the pandemic period (online learning/circumstances), causes a lot of psychological pressure and stress on adolescents and young children, consequently, such pressure can have consequences on children's mental health and their well-being in general, as well as in our interpersonal relationships: parent/caregiver and child;
- Help children find positive ways to express their feelings. Sometimes, different creative activities, such as drawing, painting, different story telling, helps children in their self-expression. Assessing feelings and emotions, in this case even negative ones, helps children understand that difficult and negative feelings and thoughts are completely normal in a stressful situation, in fact they can appear even when the stress is overcome.

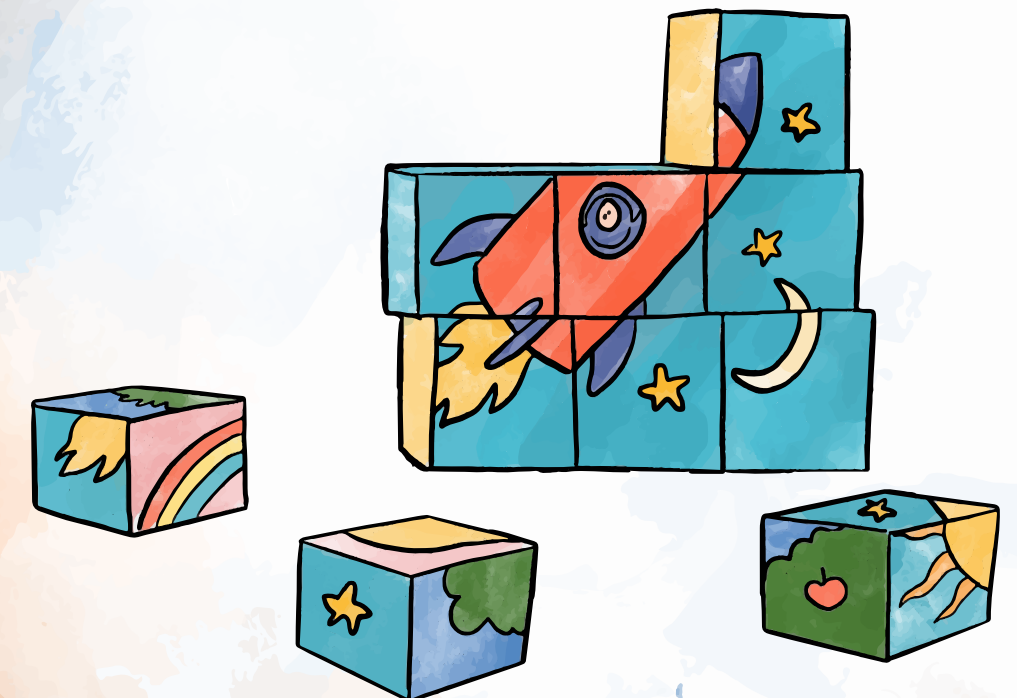
- Support children keep in touch with family and friends: maintaining social contact and social support is essential for good mental health for children as well as adults;
- Encourage both concrete and imaginative thinking of the child: depending on their age, e.g. your stories as parents, personal experiences, more specifically our childhood experiences may be a good opportunity to foster social and cognitive skills, as well as foster resilience
- Appreciate your and your children's efforts to do the best you can together! If we focus on long-term goals in supporting the development and education of children, even in the pandemic, we can be the best reflection model of how our children will help other children overcome this period together as well!



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MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS DURING COVID-19 BASED ON POSITIVE DISCIPLINE



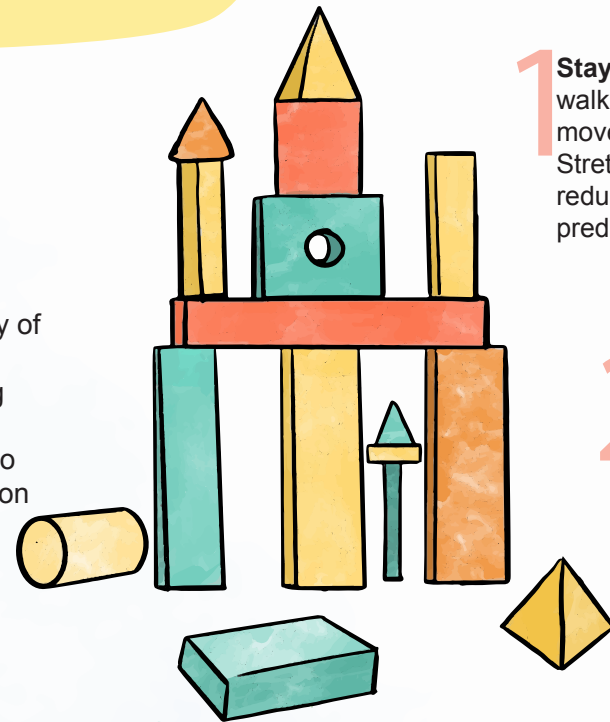
THE FIGHT AGAINST THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC OF COVID-19 HAS AFFECTED THE ENTIRE WORLD, PARTICULARLY PARENTS AND CHILDREN, INFLUENCING NOT ONLY THEIR PHYSICAL HEALTH BUT ALSO THEIR EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL AND MENTAL HEALTH IN GENERAL.

THE STRESS FACTORS AND TRAUMA THAT CAN BE EXPERIENCED BECAUSE OF THIS SITUATION CAN HAVE AN IMPACT THROUGHOUT OTHER PERIODS OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND INTERACTION WITH PARENTS.

The biggest challenges that have emerged so far as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic are related to:

- changes in terms of daily routines,
- disruptions and obstacles in the continuity of the learning process,
- adaptation to virtual learning and learning from home,
- access to technology and other sources to enable the process of online communication and interaction.

The support we receive from each-other helps children and adults reduce the impact of this newly-created reality, and act as an encouragement to develop adaptability and resilience skills.



Mental health care and psycho-social support during COVID-19

Given the situation created as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, here are some tips that help us take care of the mental, physical and psycho-social health of both parents and adolescents and children.

- 1 Stay as active as possible:** a few sufficient minutes of walking (a short walk is enough) after a long sitting position, or short and light exercises/movements in terms of time (e.g. 4-5 minutes) are recommended. Stretching also helps blood circulation and other muscle activities, reduces the risk of heart disease, diabetes and all other health predispositions that can also be affected by the COVID-19 virus.
- 2 Keep a daily routine:** Daily routines help a lot in the best possible functioning of daily life, in reducing stress and anxiety.
- 3 Take care of sleep:** it is very important to get enough sleep because good and enough sleep further affects your health, your mood and your well-being in general.
- 4 Communicate your feelings and worries to others:** Do not let your emotions and stress affect and fuel your insecurities and fears. It is very important to identify the causes of stress, and try to minimize their impact on your emotional state.



- 5 Take time for yourself:** Despite the difficulties we are facing, it is very important to find ways to fill the day with positive events (e.g.: hopeful news from people who have been through the COVID-19 pandemic, or the benefits of spending more time with family), and with reflections, at least 5 minutes before bedtime on how the day went, what were the difficulties and what were the good aspects.
- 6 Help others:** Stay close to the community and support, for instance, people in need of help; initiate various actions for residents to get activated in volunteering and supporting the neighbourhood in turns, this helps maintain routines, above all to feel valuable and active even outside home.
- 7 Follow accurate news:** listen to advice and guidance from the National Institute of Health and other relevant authorities; follow official communication channels and not any kinds of sources - it is very important to be able to distinguish authentic information.

WHAT IS POSITIVE DISCIPLINE?

Positive Discipline is an approach to parenting through which children are taught and guided about their behavior, by providing warmth and structure as well as respecting their rights to healthy development, protection from violence, and participation in their learning.