

# Back in school after COVID-19



June 2020

**Psychosocial Centre**



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Back in school after COVID-19

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Suggested citation: *Back in school after COVID-19*. IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support, Copenhagen, 2020.

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*Back in School after COVID-19* is adapted from *I skole efter Corona* from Danish Red Cross. We would like to thank Danish Red Cross for their permission to adapt *I skole efter Corona*. Editor Lene Vendelbo, Anne Marie Thirup Christensen, consultant, Jon Skræntskov, illustrator, and Tina Schembecker, graphic designer. *I skole efter Corona* is supported by the Novo Nordisk Foundation.

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The IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support is hosted by the Danish Red Cross.

We would like to thank the Danish Red Cross and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their support in the publication of these.

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MINISTRY OF  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
OF DENMARK  
*Danida*

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# Introduction

All over the world children have been exposed to challenges and experiences never encountered before. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected children's daily lives, and many of them stayed at home in lockdown for longer periods of time. Schools closed abruptly in some countries, and some children were home schooled or attended on-line schooling, whilst other children had access to only minimal education during the lockdown.

Children, as everyone else, had to learn to maintain physical distance, wash hands, use hand sanitizer and they were socially isolated from their teachers, class mates and friends. For some, the time out of school have been pleasant and they may have enjoyed the opportunity to spend more time in the presence of their caregivers. At the same time, they may have been missing friends and the options to play and go outside. For others, the time in lockdown have been very difficult as their caregivers could have lost their jobs, property, access to services or been very affected psychologically. An increase in domestic violence and child abuse has been reported around the world. Some children witnessed family members being ill with coronavirus, and have lost loved ones and they may not have been able to say their goodbyes nor attend the burial or funeral ceremonies.

Each child will have experienced the pandemic in his or her own way. When welcoming children back into schools, clubs or other activities, it is important to be aware that they will have experienced different emotions and reactions during COVID-19. Therefore, it shouldn't be assumed that they have been affected in the same manner. The experiences of a child will depend upon their age, understanding, social environment and context and whether the child received stable and sufficient support during the lockdown.

The sessions facilitate the adjustment and return to school, clubs, sport and leisure activities and will assist children in reflecting on their experiences of the pandemic and the skills acquired going through these experiences. The sessions are tailored to fit different age groups and there is the choice of carrying out full sessions or to adapt them to the context.

## Running sessions in schools, clubs, sport and leisure activities

The materials can be used in schools that re-open and welcome children back again. The sessions can also be a way to ease the way back into any kind of social learning environment. Thus they can be adapted and activities carried out in sports clubs, social clubs, all types of leisure activities or group meetings in a community centre.

When using the materials, exchange the words teacher and class for what is suitable in the context where the sessions or activities are used. The sessions can be facilitated by a teacher, coach, trainer or by Red Cross Red Crescent staff or volunteers. If used by Red Cross Red Crescent staff or volunteers, they must be familiar with the Minimum Standards of Child Protection in Humanitarian Action from The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Child Protection and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) policies<sup>1</sup>.

## Learning outcomes

The age groups and the learning outcomes mentioned below are indicative, as children, their development, capacity, environment and pedagogy used in a given setting will differ.

At the end of the sessions children are expected to:

1 [alliancpcpha.org](http://alliancpcpha.org) and [ifrc.org](http://ifrc.org)

**Age group six to nine:**

- Be able to reflect on their experiences during COVID-19
- Learn healthy behaviours and how to keep protected from virus in school, clubs or at home
- Create rules for social behaviour
- Gain knowledge on how to help someone who needs support

**Age group ten to 14:**

- Be able to reflect on their challenges and what they learned during COVID-19
- Learn about emotional reactions to a health crisis
- Be able to identify their own emotional reactions
- Learn about the usefulness of having good habits
- Be able to offer emotional support

**Age group 15 and above:**

- Be able to reflect on their challenges and lessons learned during COVID-19
- Be able to identify their emotional reactions
- Gain knowledge on how to be well by maintaining routines and habits
- Learn new healthy behaviours in school

**Duration & adaptation**

Each session is for approximately 90 minutes or can be split into smaller sessions. Any of the exercises can be adapted and used as fit the needs and contexts.

# Age group six to nine

**Duration:** The total time for the session is 90 minutes. The session can be split into several sessions depending upon time available and context.

**Materials:** Flipchart paper and colours, colour prints of the poster Be a good Friend, pens or pencils, small note papers, and You are a Hero, hand-crafted greeting cards.

## Introduction

The initial discussion is for the teacher to assess what children know about the pandemic. This will allow the teacher to correct any misconceptions about the coronavirus. Before the session it is therefore recommended that the teacher access the WHO Mythbusters webpage or national equivalent for correct and updated information. The teacher also gains insight into how the daily life of the children has been affected and whether anyone in the class has experienced the virus at close hands. Finally, the initial discussion also brings in the themes of kindness and helping behaviours and which experience children have had helping others.

## How have you been doing?

The teacher could begin the session by saying the following: *Today's session is to welcome you back in school after the coronavirus pandemic. The last several weeks or months have been different from how our lives used to be. In fact, it has been a time like nothing we have ever experienced before.*

*We have been through a lockdown. We needed to physically distance ourselves from others, even from people we love, and we stopped going to school. It is perfectly normal and natural if some found it very difficult and also if some had a lot of fun during this time.*

*It is important to think about our experiences with COVID-19 and find out about the changes we have to make in our daily routines and the way we interact in school.*

Initiate a discussion in the group where different children get to answer the questions. Ensure that everyone has a chance to be heard during this discussion, to get a full picture of how the children have been doing. This will help the teacher determine if a child needs more support.

First, let me hear how you have been doing since we were together some time ago:

- What is a pandemic?
- Who can tell me why schools were closed?
- How long time were schools closed?
- What have you been doing whilst not in school?
- In which way were the days different during the lockdown from the days before the lockdown?
- Has anyone you know been infected with the coronavirus?

## Good health practices

*Many things were different during the lockdown. I will ask you what can you can tell me about what you had to do to keep healthy and not get infected by the virus?*

Gather children's answers making sure they mention the following important points:

- Keep physical distance from others except close family members
- Wash hands for 20 seconds frequently or use hand sanitizer
- Not touching eyes, nose or mouth with dirty hands
- Wear a face mask, if applicable in the context
- Maintaining a clean environment
- Eating well

End the listing by doing an exercise:

*Let's do an exercise to find out how long time 20 seconds is. Please stand up and close your eyes. (Another option is to remain sitting and raise a hand). I will say 'begin', and when 20 seconds are gone, you sit down (or lower your hand).*

*Begin!*

- How did you find out when 20 seconds had passed?
- What do you do to wash your hands for 20 seconds?
- When should you wash the hands? (Make sure the following is mentioned: Before touching eyes, nose or mouth, eating or touching food, and after sneezing or coughing, going to the bathroom, and touching or playing with an animal.)
- Can anyone show me how to wash the hands properly? <sup>2</sup>

## Virus free school

**Material:** Flipchart or A4 paper, crayons or markers

Divide the children into groups of three or four. Ask them to imagine that the school is their castle and they want to protect it from a virus. What would a protected castle/school look like? Instruct the groups to draw anything that symbolizes a virus free school.

When the groups have finished their drawing, ask them to talk about it. Ask one of the groups to present their drawing, and ask if other groups have anything to add, that hasn't been mentioned yet. Discuss with the class what they should do differently from now on in comparison with before to maintain a disease-free school.

Some ideas could be:

- Clean the school by establishing rotating health committees responsible for keeping the classroom and playground clean
- Appoint rotating 'inspectors' who is responsible for reminding their pals to wash their hands as per school rules
- Open the classroom windows often to keep the fresh air flowing
- Go out of the classroom for the recess.

Use this exercise to discuss the rules and regulations the health authorities and school have put in place. Some authorities changed timings to avoid many having recess at the same time, others have decided, that children wear masks in school. Knowing that other regions or countries have other rules, children may bring this up and if so, explain that the situation differs from

place to place, country to county and that it is important to follow the rules laid out by local or national authorities. The facilitator can ask if anyone in class has family or friends living in other countries and what the current situations are elsewhere, to promote an understanding of how a pandemic spreads and develops.

End by informing the class, that by taking measures to prevent the spreading of the virus, they help protect those that need to be protected, so following rules and regulations are acts of helping others.

## Our rules to keep a virus free school

**Material:** Flipchart or A4 paper, crayons or markers

Tell the following short story to elaborate further on key advice to prevent the spreading of a virus in class:

*Adam is eight years old. He woke up in the morning and got ready to go to school. The day began like any other day, and when walking to school he was looking forward to seeing his friends. On the way to school however, he began to feel a bit sick having a headache and a cough. When Adam arrived at his classroom, he met Dana, whom he had not seen for some time. He approached to greet her, but at the same time he began sneezing and coughing.*

Ask the following questions.

- What should Adam do now?

Make sure the following is mentioned:

- Adam should sneeze or cough in a tissue or cover his mouth and nose with his elbow
- If using a tissue, he has to throw it into the garbage bin
- He should neither approach, nor shake hands with Dana
- He should wash his hands or use hand sanitizer
- He should maintain physical distance to others
- He should explain to the teacher that he is not feeling well and ask what he should do.

*What should Dana do?*

Make sure the following is mentioned:

- Dana should not shake hands with or touch Adam in any way
- She should keep a physical distance from him
- Staying helpful, Dana can ask him if he needs anything, i.e. water, tissues, etc.

End by explaining that this is very good advice that everyone in the class should follow. Not only does it prevent the spread of the coronavirus, it also prevents other viruses from spreading in the school.

Agree on the main advice all should follow, note them on a large piece of paper and hang them on the wall. Children could also individually note the class rules in their note books as this can help their motor and memory skills.

## Helping others

**Material:** Poster printed in A3 preferably in colours, pens or pencils

Introduce the following exercise: *Now we will talk about what went well during COVID-19. Even though many were struggling during this time for different reasons, they may also have been helping others or receiving help themselves. When times are difficult, or we find ourselves in difficulties, we all need help from others. During this time in lockdown many, including children, showed kindness and helped others in different ways.*

- *Do you know of someone who helped others during the epidemic?*
- *Did you or anyone in your family or friends help others?*
- *Have you seen examples of helping behaviours on tv or social media?*

Share a few examples of helping behaviours or initiatives to encourage the class to speak up and share their own examples. Make sure to give examples of initiatives from families, neighbours and the local community.

- Family members helped their neighbours
- Children helped their parents with the daily chores
- Some older adults and those in quarantine who were living alone, needed help in shopping for groceries and getting their medication. Youth volunteers helped them get what they needed.
- Some lost their jobs and did not have enough money to buy essential needs. All around the world, there were community initiatives to collect donations to help them
- Musicians published songs free for anyone to watch
- Museums and libraries gave free access to the public to their virtual collections.

After the examples have been shared, children can be asked to pair up and exchange stories of how they helped others. Ask:

- *What did you do to be kind to and help others?*

Should children need encouragement, ask questions such as:

- *Did any of you call grandparents or other family members?*
- *Did you run errands?*
- *Did anyone help in the kitchen, took out the garbage or helped laying the table?*
- *Did you play with siblings even though wanting time alone?*
- *Can anyone tell me how it feels to be kind or help others?*

Conclude the discussion by saying: *Being kind makes us feel good inside and can even make us feel happy. It is also healthy for the body and helps us feel better and be calmer if we are upset.*

*Listen to the following story and tell me more about kindness.*

*Dana was at home and feeling sad because she lost her favourite toy. Her old neighbour called Dana's mother and asked if Dana could come and help prepare the vegetables for dinner. Dana was so sad that she did not want to go to the neighbour to assist. However, her mother encouraged her to go and help. Reluctantly Dana went to prepare the vegetables. The neighbour was very thankful and seeing her gratitude, Dana's mood changed, she felt glad too and her mood changed, so she no longer cared about her lost toy.*

- *Why do you think Dana's mood changed so much when she helped her neighbour?*
- *Have you ever experienced that it felt good to be kind to and help others?*

*Being kind to others can help us feel better, also when we are sad. It makes us happier to be nice to others. Now imagine that a friend is not feeling good one day in class. Let us think about some of the ways you can show kindness and help your friend who is not feeling good one day. Think about what you can say and do to show your friend that you care and want to help.*

Show the poster *Be a good Friend to the class*. Read the text if there are children in class that do not read well and continue: *I have this poster with some tips on how to be a good friend.*

- *What do you think of the tips in the poster?*
- *Do you want to make any additions to it?*

Add any other piece of good advice from the class to the poster.

## Heroes

**Materials:** Pens or pencils, small note papers, and hand-crafted greeting cards, with *You are our Hero* written on one side and the other side left blank. The cards can be prepared in advance or with the class.

Introduce the exercise: *Children who help others and do acts of kindness are heroes. We need heroes in our lives to help us along the way. I will now distribute note paper to you all. Please write THANK YOU on a small piece of paper. On the same note, write the name of someone from the class who has been kind to you.*

Allow the class time to think and write the names of their class mates.

*I will collect the thank you notes and find out who are the heroes in this group.*

When collecting the notes, see which children had many thank you notes. Write the names on the backside of the *You are a hero* cards. The class can also sign their names on the card or decorate it with small drawings. Other options are to create cards for the entire class or to ask children to stand spaced apart and have each child give the next child in the circle a hero compliment on something they do: *You are a hero as you always...*

Repeat the greeting card on a regular basis. Ask the children to write two or three “Thank you” notes, and ask them to give it to their others in the group when they are kind to them, and at the end of each month, you collect the notes to find out who is the Hero of Kindness of the month and give him/her the greeting card with their name written on it.

## Ending the session

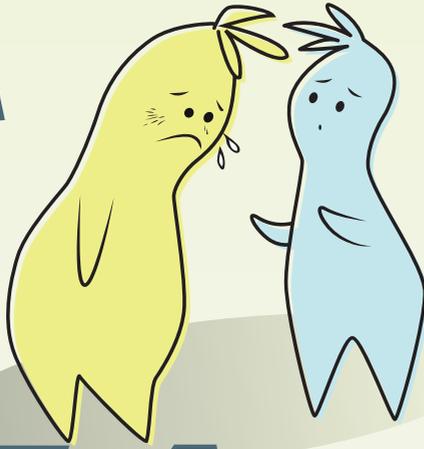
Ask about the main things they learned during the session.

- *How can we have a disease-free school?*
- *Why is it good to help others?*
- *How can we help each other in class?*
- *Who can give examples on how?*

End the session by singing a group song, or by clapping for everyone in class for being active in the session.

## JUST ASK

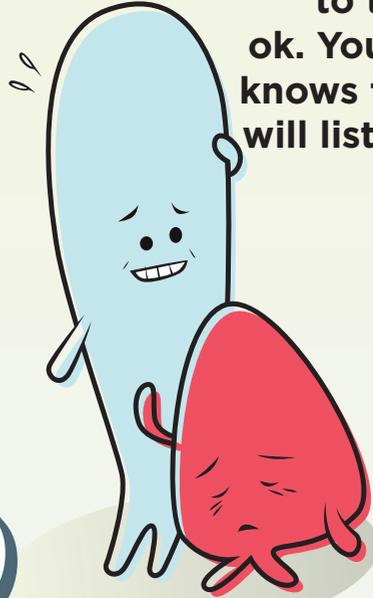
1. Ask how your friend is doing.



## 2.

IT IS OK TO SAY NO

If your friend does not want to talk, it is ok. Your friend knows that you will listen later.



# BE A GOOD FRIEND



## 3.

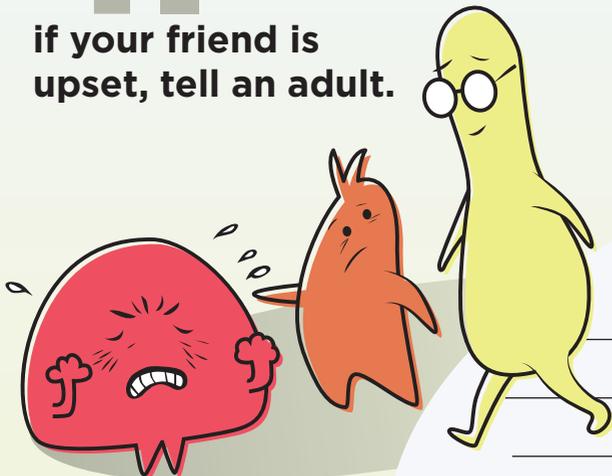
DO NOT FEAR TEARS

Do not be scared if your friend cries. It is ok to cry. We all do that - adults cry too.

## 4.

TELL AN ADULT

if your friend is upset, tell an adult.



## 5.

CLASS★ OWN ADVICE

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# Age group ten to 14

**Duration:** The total time for the session is 90 minutes. The session can be split into several sessions depending upon time available and the context.

**Materials:** Small pieces of paper, scissors, tape, colours and papers. the poster *The psychological impact of public health crisis* printed for each student preferably in colours, and the poster *A good friend* printed in A3, preferably in colours.

## Introduction

The initial discussion is for the teacher to assess how the students have been doing during the lockdown. The teacher will also gain information about how the daily lives have been affected and whether anyone in the class has experienced the virus at close hands. It may become clear who has had a good and pleasurable time and who has had a difficult time. This will help the teacher to identify anyone in need of special attention, further support or referral to other services. Finally, the initial discussions also bring in the themes of kindness and helping behaviours and which experience class members have had helping others. Should the students live in situations where incorrect information circulated on the coronavirus, ask questions on rumours and where the students accessed accurate information.

## Welcome back

Ask the class to sit in a circle for the session. Begin the session by saying: Today's session welcomes you back in school after the lockdown. Will discuss how the lockdown has affected your lives as we have all been out of the school premises for a long time. The last several weeks or months have been different from how our lives used to be and we have never experienced anything like this before. We were in a lockdown, had to keep physical distance from others - even from people we love - and needed to find new ways of being socially close. We also had to learn to learn remotely. It is normal and natural if sometimes it was difficult and at other times it was pleasant or maybe even fun. It is important to think about what we experienced during COVID-19, to establish new routines and also discuss the way we will now have to interact in school.

Ask the following questions:

- *What have you been doing during the lockdown?*
- *What did you miss most about being out of school?*
- *What did you enjoy most about being out of school?*
- *Have you been sick yourself?*
- *Has anyone of your family, people you love, or someone you know got sick?*
- *Has anyone in your family been taking care of anyone who had the virus?*
- *Have you or your parents helped other people and if yes, how?*

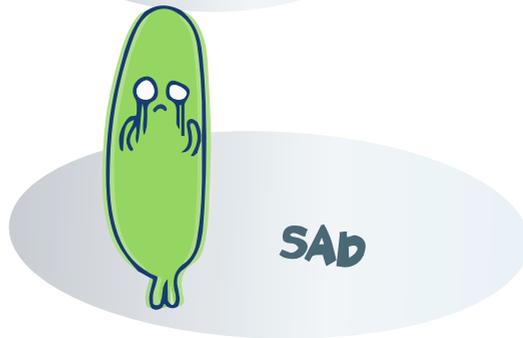
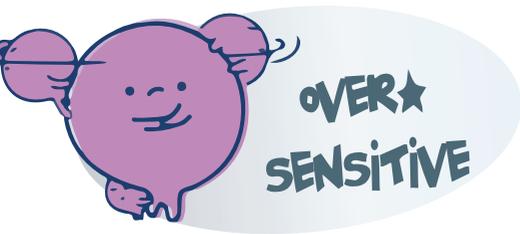
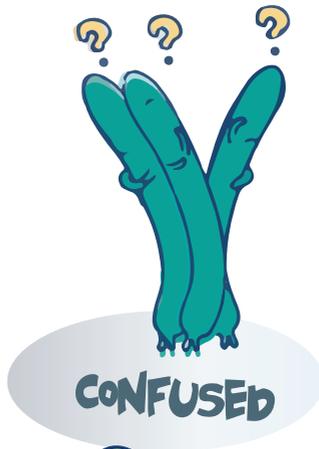
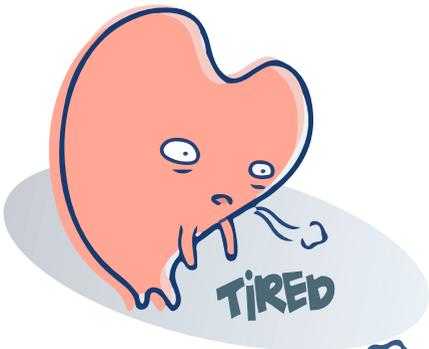
Sum up what has been said in a way that ensures all students feel heard and listened to.

## The emotional impact of a health crisis

**Materials:** small pieces of paper, scissors, copy of *The Psychological Impact of a Health Crisis* for each student and tape.

Distribute the poster and introduce: *Let us reflect on how the coronavirus pandemic affected us. It is a huge health crisis and as such also has an impact on our social and emotional lives. We have all had different experiences during the pandemic, so let us think and talk about the different*

# THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF A HEALTH CRISIS



How have you felt lately?



*ways we have felt and reacted during this time. I will ask you to choose the figure from the poster that best describes how you felt at times during the lockdown. Think for a moment and cut out the figure when you know which figure you want to choose. Should you not be able to find a figure that represents the right emotion, you can write it on a post it or make a drawing that shows the feeling.*

As an alternative, show the poster to the class and ask students to draw an emotional figure of their choice. If doing so, remind the class, that it is not a drawing competition, so they can draw the figure in any way they like.

Nominate two students to cluster similar figures, whilst ensuring they keep physical distance during the task. They can ask their classmates for advice on clustering, should they need this.

Next, look at the figures on the wall and summarize what is noticeable. It may become apparent which emotions were the most and least prevalent, if many had similar emotions or if any of the emotions were not experienced by anyone etc.

Mention, that all feelings are ok, there is no right or wrong feelings, and that there are individual differences in how we react as humans. Make sure that a student who may have chosen for example a least prevalent emotion does not feel judged or criticized in any way.

If time allows it, it is an option to discuss with the class if the emotions experienced changed over time. Were any of the emotions felt more in the beginning of the pandemic, other emotions more during and again others now the lockdown is over. Discuss how and why emotions change over time.

Initiate a discussion with the class about why it is good to identify what emotions we are feeling. Mention how knowing what goes on inside and being able to name an emotion makes a person calmer and that it becomes easier to know what to do and how to act.

End the exercise by saying: *When we live through challenging and stressful circumstances it is normal and natural to have a variety of unpleasant emotions. Challenging and stressful situations could be having to pass a difficult exam, changing schools, being separated from family members. In the case we have been discussing, it was a health crisis - be something totally unexpected and out of the ordinary, namely the coronavirus pandemic. Usually the difficult feelings related to an event will diminish and disappears when the event is over. If the feelings are too big to handle or they do not go away after some time when the pandemic is over, we need to ask the help from an adult or someone that can be trusted.*

## A day in Coronaland

**Materials:** colours and papers

Divide the class into groups of four to five. Give them the task to discuss what a typical good day in lockdown during the coronavirus looked like. Next distribute paper and colours and ask the groups to make a drawing of a day in Coronaland.

- Ask the groups to explain their drawings to the rest of the class answering the question: *What made the good day in Coronaland good?*

After each presentation, students from other groups can ask questions or comment if they had similar days in Coronaland.

Next, ask the class to join the circle and initiate a plenary discussion by asking questions on the days in Coronaland and what was good outcomes of the time in Coronaland. Ensure each question is answered before moving on to the next.

- *What does it take for a day to be a good day?*

Make sure the following is mentioned e.g. having a routine, waking up, eating, and sleeping at a certain time, taking walks, playing with siblings, etc.

- *Have you done things that you did not do before the coronavirus pandemic that you liked?*
- *Is there anything you began doing in your days in Coronaland, which you wish to continue doing now that everyday life is going back to normal?*

## Be social - and keep physical distance

**Materials:** none

Ask the group to get up and mingle with a distance. They should walk around the room or in an outside area in silence. Ask the class to ensure keeping the proper distance to their class mates when walking around. Give the following instructions:

- *When you pass a classmate, say hi or hello and keep on walking.*
- *When you have eye contact with someone else, say hi or hello and keep on walking.*
- *The next time you have eye contact say hello, move your right shoulder up and down and keep on walking.*
- *Say hello to the next person you have eye contact with and touch him or her lightly elbow to elbow. Continue greeting a couple of classmates in this way.*
- *Say hello to the next person you have eye contact with and greet each other by touching the feet. Keep on greeting a couple of people in this way.*
- *Say hello to the next mate and clap your hands softly. Keep on greeting a couple of others like this.*
- *Say hello in a loud voice to the next you meet and clap your hands loudly. Keep on greeting a couple of mates in the same way.*

Ask the class what they have learned from this exercise. After a couple of answers explain:

*During the corona pandemic as well as when people are sick with a flu or similar viruses, we are all advised to keep physical distance from each other. The exercise is an example of how we need to find creative ways to greet each other without touching each other. Let us discuss how to maintain a disease-free school, what we need to adjust and how we need to behave to protect ourselves from any diseases in the future.*

Some ideas:

- Clean the school by establishing rotating health committees that are responsible for keeping the classroom and playground clean.
- Appoint rotating 'inspectors' who is responsible for reminding their mates to wash their hands as per school rules.
- Open the classroom windows often to keep the fresh air flowing
- Go out of the classroom for the recess
- Find out smart ways of knowing the correct distance children need to keep from others
- Find nice ways to remind peers to stick to the rules.

Conduct a round of sharing ideas for social games and activities that can be played or carried out for example during recess while keeping physical distance. Gather a collection of ideas for in-door and out-door activities.

## Help others and be a good friend

Materials: Poster *How to be a Good Friend* printed in A3 and preferably in colours. Write the questions on the board or a flipchart paper in advance of the session.

It is an option to use the exercise to discuss the rules and regulations the health authorities and school have put in place. Some authorities changed timings to avoid many having recess at the same time, others have decided, that children wear masks in school. Emphasize that it is important to follow the rules laid out by local or national authorities. By doing so, it is an act of kindness towards those that need to be protected from the virus, so following rules and regulations are ways of helping others.

Begin by giving the following introduction: *Now we want to talk about what went well during the COVID-19 pandemic. Different people were struggling during this time for different reasons. Can I ask some of you to give some examples of difficulties some may have had during the lockdown?*

- After some answers continue: *Thanks, as you mentioned many needed help from others to handle their difficulties such as (name some of what was mentioned), and many including children and teenagers showed kindness and helped in different ways.*

Divide the class into smaller groups and ask groups to discuss the following questions:

- Share examples of how someone you know showed kindness and helped others during the lockdown?
- What did they do?
- Did you yourself help others?
- What did you do? Did you do it on your own or were you helping together with others?
- Which examples have you heard or seen examples on tv or social media of people who helped others?

When the groups are done with their discussion, ask each group to share some example of kind and helpful actions.

When the groups have shared their example, ask in the plenary:

- *Think of a time you helped others. How does it feel to help others?*
- *What can we learn from this experience and keep on helping others in the future?*
- *Who can give examples on how?*

The class may find it difficult to answer the last question, and if so go directly to introducing the poster and discuss how to help others when they go through difficult time, or when they are upset. Ask the class:

- *What do you think of the advice?*
- *Do you need to add anything to the poster as a good piece of advice?*

Add the key points the class mentions to the poster.

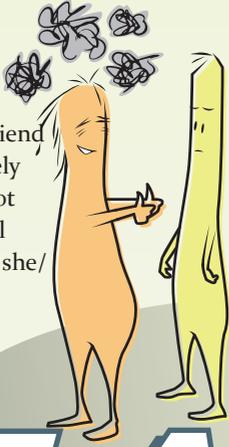
## Ending the session

Ask what the class learned during the session. What are the most important things they would tell their families about the session.

End the session by singing a group song, or by clapping for themselves and their classmates for being active participants in the session.

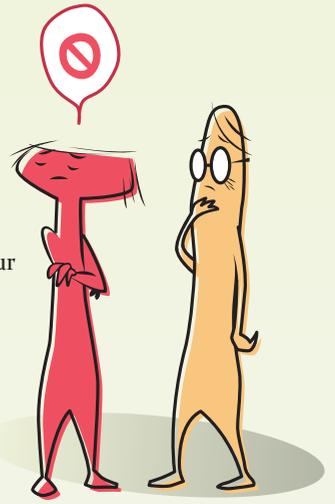
## 1. JUST ASK

Even if your friend looks absolutely fine, it does not mean they feel well. Ask how she/he is doing.



## 2. ACCEPT NO FOR AN ANSWER

If your friend does not want to talk, it is ok. It is always good to show your friend you are interested in how they feel. If your friend wishes to talk later he/she knows you will be listening.



# 1. BE A GOOD FRIEND



## 3. DO NOT LET TEARS SCARE YOU

If your friend is going to cry, then do not be afraid. It is human to cry; we all do that - adults do too...

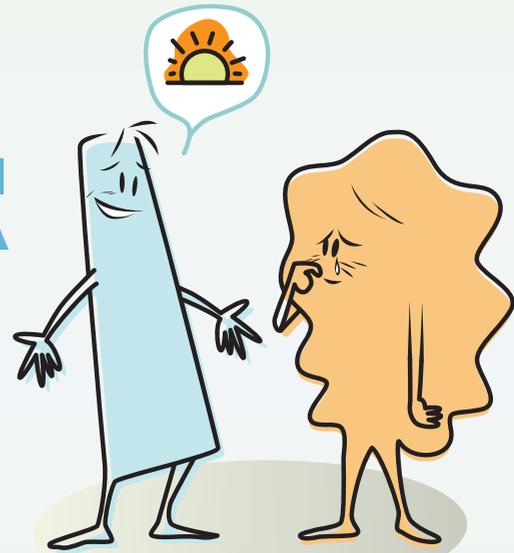
## 5. TALK TO AN ADULT

When you talk to a friend who is upset, and you feel that she/he needs further help or protection, consult an adult you trust or talk to a teacher.



## 4. AVOID DRAMA

If you are talking about difficult emotions your friend feels, remember to end the conversation in a good manner, i.e. something good they did to overcome those emotions. If you only talk about the drama, it will be difficult for your friend to move on.



## 6. CLASS' OWN ADVICE

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# Age group 15 and above

**Duration:** The total time for the session is 90 minutes. The session can be split into several sessions depending upon time available and the context.

**Materials:** sticky notes, pens, flipchart paper or a board, worksheet, pen, or pencils.

## Introduction

The initial discussion is for the teacher to assess how the students have been doing. The teacher gets an insight into how the student's daily was affected and whether anyone in the class has experienced the virus at close hands. It is possible to gauge the student's understanding of the decisions of restrictions made during the virus. Finally, the initial discussion also brings in the themes of kindness and helping behaviours and which experience students have had helping others.

## How have you been doing?

Ask participants to sit in a circle through the session. Introduce the session by saying the following: *Today's session welcomes you back in school. The last several weeks or months have been different and nothing like any of us have experienced before. We had to go through a lockdown that lasted xx weeks. The time out of school has impacted us in many ways: We needed to keep physically distant from others, from people we love, and we stopped going to school. We also had to learn to learn in new ways that were easy for some and more challenging for others.*

*It is perfectly normal and natural in these circumstances to have been frustrated and felt stressed or worried about not learning enough. It is also normal to maybe have had fun and some may even have enjoyed time out of school. During today's session we will look at the stress reactions many may have had during the lockdown and how these reactions may change now the lockdown is over. It is important to reflect on the experiences during COVID-19 and find out what changes to our daily routines or the way we interact in school is needed. More...*

Ask the following questions:

- *Has any of you been sick by the virus yourself?*
- *Was anyone you know infected with coronavirus?*
- *What have you been doing during the lockdown when not in school?*
- *What are the reasons the politicians decided to close schools?*
- *Do you know of anyone who had a hard time during the lockdown?*
- *How did you help those that needed help or had a hard time?*

## Identifying emotions and reactions

**Materials:** sticky notes, pens, flipchart paper or a board.

Ask students to form pairs and distribute sticky notes to each pair. Allow them eight to 10 minutes to discuss common reactions or behaviors the pairs witnessed during COVID-19 and which reactions or behaviours they expect now the lockdown is over.

Instruct the pairs to agree on three common reactions or behaviours they witnessed in themselves or others during the lockdown and note them on the sticky notes. Only one reaction or behaviour noted on each note.

Ask the pairs to agree on three common emotions or behaviours they expect many to have now

the lockdown is over. One reaction or behaviour should be written on a separate note.

Divide the board/flipchart into two sections; one section is for the “during the lockdown” and the other section is for “after the lock down”. Ask the pairs to take turns to hang their sticky notes on the board or flipchart.

Ask the pairs to look at all the sticky notes. Ask if anything should be added and if there are any emotions or reactions that are missing?

Ask the pairs to organize the notes in the sequence they would commonly occur.

Begin a plenary discussion prompted by the following questions:

- *What are normal and natural reactions that will diminish or disappear when normal life is resumed?*
- *What are normal and natural reactions that will remain when normal life is resumed?*

Summarize the discussion: Some examples of reactions to the stress caused by COVID-19 were mentioned such as...

*It is important to remember, that stress can be caused by any change and that the change can be positive or negative. Stress is an ordinary feature of everyday life and can be positive when it makes a person perform optimally e.g. at an exam and be negative when the demands exceed the resources of the individual. We talk mostly about stress as a reaction to demands that are too high or changes that are too much to handle. Following a huge challenging health crisis as COVID-19 there will be common signs of stress that are normal and natural reactions to an abnormal situation. Stress reactions will differ from person to person. Some of those stress reactions such as boredom, worry, fear, etc. can disappear as soon as people go back to their normal life or will decrease over time. If stress reactions are not managed properly it can seriously affect health, school work, friendships and other aspects of private life.*

Ask:

- *Which positive ways have you witnessed so far in yourself in managing emotions and stress during the pandemic?*
- *Which positive ways have you witnessed so far in others in managing emotions and stress during the pandemic?*

Note the examples on a board of flipchart. Answers could include:

- Making a plan for days for example days in lockdown
- Talking to trusted others when feeling stressed, having worries or being concerned
- Getting exercise and going for walks (if possible to go outside)
- Sleeping and eating well
- Helping others
- Being kind to self
- Keeping in touch with friends using different ways
- Noticing what went well during each day
- Learning new hobbies
- Learning new skills or practicing new hobbies
- Being grateful for small and big good things
- Accepting the situation and making the best out of it

Continue by concluding: *These are some of the examples of how we can manage stress when challenged by difficult circumstances. We will continue with an exercise focusing on routines and how they are useful.*

## Useful routines

*One of the key practices which help us managing stress in a positive way is to maintain a daily routines and habits; waking up at a specific hour, eating at a specific time, learning and doing certain activities daily or weekly, and following a schedule. One of the causes of stress during COVID-19 is that the daily routines and habits were stopped and interrupted almost from one day to another and we needed to find new routines and habits. Let's talk about daily routines and the importance of them.*

Ask the class:

- *How do you define a daily routine?*

Divide the group into three or four smaller groups. Instruct the groups to discuss the following:

- *How did your and your family's daily routines change during the lockdown?*

Give groups time to discuss, and next to prepare a sketch or roleplay demonstrating how their daily routine was affected by the lockdown. Ask the groups to show their sketch or roleplay to the rest of the class.

Lead a plenary discussion and ask the groups to give examples of the effect of COVID-19 on their daily routine, either from their discussion or from what they have witnessed from the sketches.

Ask the class:

- *Which changes in the routines were positive and which were negative.*
- *In which ways is having a daily routine a help for us as human beings?*

*End the discussion by summarizing: Sometimes we are exposed to events or situations that are out of our hands which we can not control. If we take COVID-19 as an example, it interrupted our lives, and also our daily routines. We stopped waking up every morning, having to get ready to go to school, go to the park, do our own shopping etc. The changes made many feel that they lost control over their lives and it created uncertainty and some anxiety. Having a routine, such as, waking up at a certain hour, changing clothes even if not going out, having meals at a certain time, sleeping at regularly and at certain times, will help gain control over the things we can control. Having this sense of control, reduces the stress. When having a routine, we do not need to stress about what is important to do each and every day. Having a routine helps us prioritize what is important without having to think about what to do each and every minute of the day. It helps us finish a task and move to the next with no effort. It also increases our sense of security and stability.*

## Learning and moving forward

**Materials:** Worksheet, pens, or pencils

Distribute the worksheet and ask the class to fill it in thinking about what they have learned from the COVID-19 or another challenging experience.

When they are done, ask if they would like to share what have they learned about themselves and their plan for the future. Encourage students to only share their

challenging experiences if they feel comfortable doing so, if there is time enough to process reactions that may arise from sharing with others and time to wrap up and.

### **Ending the session**

Ask the class if there is something else they want to share or add before you end the session.

Ask the class to discuss with the partner they had earlier and discuss the things they learned during the session.

End the session by singing a group song, or by clapping for themselves and their peers for being active in the session.

## Reflecting on the past to help learn for the future

**A difficult event in the past**

**How did I cope with it?**

**What did I learn about myself from this experience?**

**What will I keep doing or do differently if I face another challenging event?**

**Small goals for myself to cope better in the future**

# Resources

## IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support

COVID-19 and MHPSS related resources can be found on the [IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support website](#) in different languages. An adaptable online PFA training for COVID-19 and a recorded version are available on the site.

- *A Guide to Psychological First Aid for Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. 2018.*
- *Psychological First Aid for Children – Training module 3. 2018.*
- *Different just like you. A psychosocial approach promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities. 2015.*
- *Moving together. Promoting psychosocial well-being through sport and physical activity. 2014.*

## With Save the Children, Denmark

- *The Children's Resilience Programme. Psychosocial support in and out of schools. Booklets: Understanding children's well-being, Programme managers handbook, Getting started and Workshop tracks.*

## With World Vision International

- *Child Friendly Space at Home Activity Cards*
- *Operational Guidance for Child Friendly Spaces in Humanitarian Settings*
- *Activity Catalogue for Child Friendly Spaces in Humanitarian Settings.*

## Inter-Agency Standing Committee resources

- *My hero is you – children's mental health and psychosocial needs during the COVID-19 outbreak. 2020.*
- *Briefing note on addressing mental health and psychosocial aspects of COVID-19 outbreak version 1.5. 2020.*
- *Basic Psychosocial Skills: A Guide for COVID-19 Responders.*

## Child Protection Cluster and MHPSS Collaborative for Children and Families

- *Communicating with Children about Death, and helping Children cope with Grief. 2020.*

## **Psychosocial Centre**



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

### **IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support**

c/o Danish Red Cross

Blegdamsvej 27

2100 Copenhagen Ø

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Twitter: @IFRC\_PS\_Centre

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/Psychosocial.Center](https://www.facebook.com/Psychosocial.Center)