

Hope Groups

A MODEL FOR BUILDING HOPE
IN CAREGIVERS, FAMILIES AND CHILDREN
IN CRISIS AND TRANSITION

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Hope Groups sessions were developed by experts on trauma-informed care from multiple countries and by trainers in local contexts. Dr. Susan Hillis (PEPFAR, WWO, University of Oxford), Nicole Baldonado (WWO), and Lyudmyla Bryn (Children's Mission) wrote the sessions, with contributions from Ruby Johnson (LAMB International, WWO) and cultural adaptations by Oksana Boichenko, Olha Medvediva, Yulia Vlasiuk, Yulia Smolyar, Irina Sen, Michelle Pratt, and Evgenia Taradaika.

The sessions were created in a collaboration of the following organizations:



World Without Orphans Global (WWO), alongside World Without Orphans Europe, calls and equips national leaders to collaborate to solve their own country's orphaned and vulnerable children's crisis.

Viva is an international charity with partner networks dedicated to changing children's lives to fulfill their God-given potential. Viva's work alleviates the adverse conditions many children face, providing them with new opportunities and bringing hope to contexts of fear.

The sessions that follow are an adaptation of the original Hope Groups for Displaced People and Ukrainians Impacted by War, which have been evaluated using a pre-/post-analysis with support from the University of Oxford in collaboration with WWO, Children's Mission, and Ukraine Without Orphans. Results show significant increases in positive parenting, playful parenting, and abilities to cope with stress, and reductions in physical and emotional abuse.

All partner networks and organizations contributing to the original 'Hope Groups' aim to leverage resources and expertise to provide an effective, long-term response to the holistic needs of vulnerable children in their communities and to positively impact local and national government priorities and provisions.

Designed and illustrated by Leah de Jager.

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SESSION AGREEMENTS

Always open every session with the following Session Agreements:

- Anything shared with the facilitator or group is confidential. It's critical for participants to feel safe and develop trust.
- Each participant has the freedom to not share, if they are uncomfortable doing so.
- These settings are an ideal setting for healing compassion and psychosocial support, but they are NOT suitable for sharing personal stories of deep trauma. For grieving participants who need more intensive counselling, the facilitator will offer to refer them to a mental health care provider.
- Inform participants that Hope Groups' content incorporates key aspects of human flourishing, such as sociology, psychology, and theology – all of which may inform meaning, purpose, virtue, and religious community.¹ Healing aspects of being in nature, physical exercise, inspirational quotes, verses from sacred texts can be a source of ongoing spiritual support that build hope.²
- Inform participants that if you as the leader become aware of child abuse, whether physical, sexual or non-contact (such as engaging children in pornography), you will report that to the appropriate authority. (WWO provides a [Hope Groups Child Safeguarding Policy](#) on our website, in which we define child abuse, including both physical, sexual, and non-contact sexual abuse including engagement in pornography. We recommend that all Hope Groups staff, whether paid or volunteer, and all partnering organizations, are required to read and sign this policy, indicating their commitment to follow this policy.)
- Inform participants that if you sense that any member is experiencing distressing symptoms of trauma that make it difficult for them to function in daily life, you will refer them to a mental health professional. If a participant is a danger to themselves or others, you will notify the appropriate authority that same day.
- Start each session by asking what the best parts and the most difficult parts of the last week have been.



¹ Harvard University. (2023). *The Human Flourishing program at Harvard's Institute for Quantitative Social Science*. <https://hfh.fas.harvard.edu/>



² Karam, A., Clague, J., Marshall, K., Olivier, J. (2015, July 6). *The view from above: faith and health*. *The Lancet*, 386(10005), E22-E24. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)61036-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)61036-4)

SESSION 1

FINDING STABILITY - OUR EVERYDAY TOOLS

Illustration 1

Types of change that create transition cycles



Physical transition



Life stages



Unexpected sudden changes



Traumatic events



Other

Illustration 2

Transition cycle

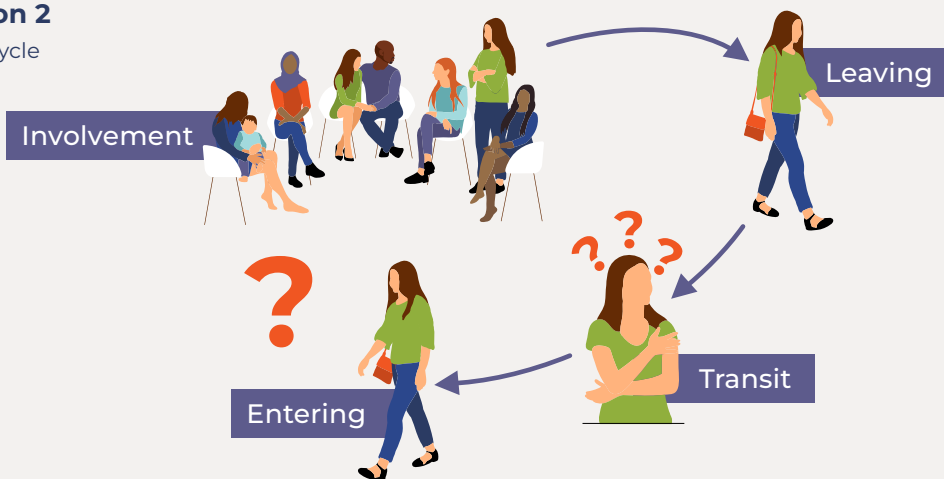
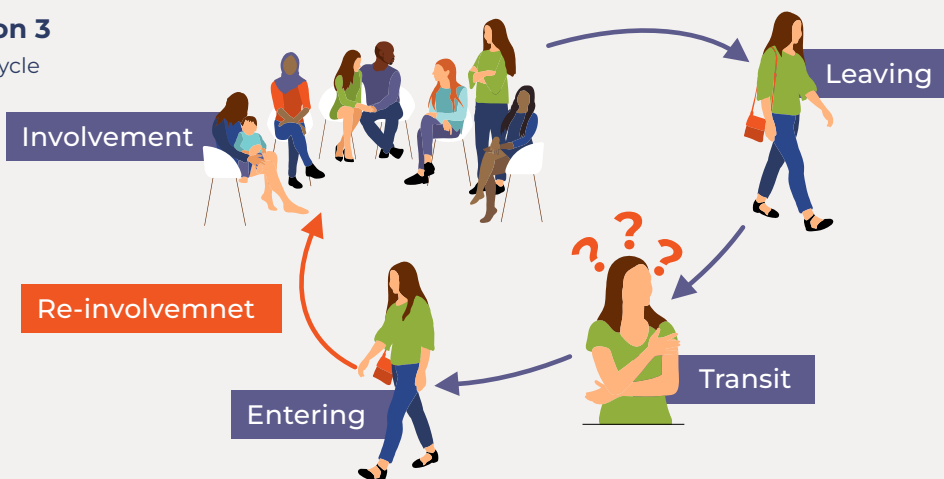


Illustration 3

Transition cycle



PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WVO PARENTING
Hope@Groups

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

- Look after yourself as much as possible and try to rest when you can.
- Take a moment each day to listen to your breath as it goes in and out.
- Connect with loved ones as often as you can.
- Taking care of yourself also helps you to help your family.



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Protecting our children in a crisis

No.1

Moving from Transition to Stability Our Everyday Tools

Transition can feel like chaos. We might feel confused, in shock, lost. Loss of loved ones, displacement, and disaster mean we are continually dealing with loss and traumatic situations.

The good news is we can work through transition and move toward a sense of stability. We cannot always change our circumstances, but we can develop a set of tools to help us regain some internal stability. We can also help our children develop their own tools. These tools - things like healthy eating and sleeping habits or talking with people we trust about our feelings - can also help us grieve our losses in a healthy way.

Let's imagine that each of us has a toolbox. Throughout these meetings, we are going to fill our toolbox with two sets of tools. The first set are our everyday tools - those we use routinely to help us have a healthier mind and emotions. They are a foundation for us and for our children. The second set are our anchoring tools - tools that are like an anchor for us in a storm, the tools we use when we feel afraid, anxious, panicked, or depressed.

Every one of us has the ability to fill our toolbox.

Some of these tools will be the same for many. Others will be different from person to person. The most important part of filling your toolbox is to find out what works for you and practice using those tools, so it becomes a habit for you to use them.

Let's consider some everyday tools we might put into our toolbox, and remember that your child/children will also benefit from these tools:

Physical Tools

- Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of water.
- Try to develop healthy sleep habits.
- Get regular physical exercise, especially any that increases your heart rate. Even ten minutes a day can help!
- Watch out that you aren't overusing alcohol or medications or turning to drugs for relief.
- Spend time outside, especially in the sunshine.

Social Tools

Look for ways to maintain contact and re-connect with friends and loved ones.

- If you have moved to a new place, get to know new people in the place where you are settled, even temporarily. Re-engaging in a social circle is vital for healing from trauma.
- Invest in friendships that are honest and non-judgmental.
- Be willing to ask for help or to receive it.
- Help someone else.

Emotional and Spiritual Tools

- Re-establish routines as much as possible. This is especially important for children.
- Read a funny book, watch a comedian or a funny movie.
- Regain a sense of control - complete small tasks, make small decisions.
- Avoid making big decisions, if possible. When you need to make decisions, find a time when you are well-rested and feeling in a healthy state of mind. When you have

to make decisions without the support of those who are closest to you, consider discussing the decision with other friends or family members you trust.

- Don't worry if you struggle to relate to God right now. It's normal to not want to pray during these times, and it does not mean you have lost your faith.
- An inspirational quote, or a quote from a sacred text, can be a source of spiritual support that strengthens hope.

“Nothing can dim the light which shines from within.”

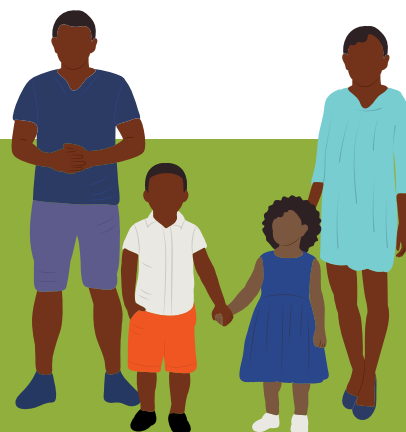
Maya Angelou.

Believing in the renewal of strength comes from patiently trusting in the Lord.

For Reflection

- Take some time to think about what resources you have. This is more than just money. Think about people who can help you, organizations, churches, or government programs. Think about your personal experiences or strengths that have helped you through this time. What tools do you already have in life?
- After considering, each participant can take some time to share what resources have helped them.
- What new tool will you try out this week? What new tool will you discuss with your child/children?

**This ends Session 1.
Thank you for participating in
this session. We look forward to
meeting again next time!**



SESSION 2

FINDING STABILITY - OUR ANCHORING TOOLS

PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

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TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

- Look after yourself as much as possible and try to rest when you can.
- Take a moment each day to listen to your breath as it goes in and out.
- Connect with loved ones as often as you can.
- Taking care of yourself also helps you to help your family.



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PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

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COPING WITH STRESS, UPSET, AND ANGER

- Find someone who you can talk to about how you are feeling.
- Losing your temper? Breathe in and out slowly five times.
- Try to do something that helps you relax.
- Remember to praise yourself each time you take steps to cope.



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PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

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ROUTINE HELPS CHILDREN FEEL SAFE

- Even when it feels hard, try to have some daily routines for yourself and children.
- If you can, help children with daily routines like meals or schoolwork.
- Our children learn calmness and kindness from us.
- Tell yourself a calming message again and again, Try 'I can do this, I am trying my best'



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No.2

Recognizing the Signs

Last meeting, we talked about common reactions to trauma. Learning about these can give us a sense of power and hope; we realize we are not the only ones who feel this way, and we find something in common with the people around us. Let's review and consider a few more signs that might occur for you or your child/children after experiencing a traumatic event.

Physical Reactions

- Fatigue/extreme tiredness
- Sleep disturbances
- Changes in appetite
- Headaches
- Upset stomach
- Chronic muscle tension

Emotional Reactions

- Feeling overwhelmed/emotionally empty
- Feeling helpless
- Feeling inadequate
- Sense of vulnerability
- Increased mood swings
- Irritability
- Crying more easily or frequently
- Suicidal or violent thoughts or urges

Behavioral Reactions

- Isolation or withdrawal
- Restlessness
- Changes in consumption of drugs and alcohol
- Changes in relationships with others

Thought-Pattern Reactions

- Disbelief, feeling numb
- Replaying events in one's mind over and over
- Decreased concentration
- Confusion or impaired memory
- Difficulty making decisions or problem-solving
- Distressing dreams or fantasies

As well as the signs above, children can show additional reactions to trauma, including:

- Misbehaving, such as deliberately getting into fights
- Acting withdrawn and unable to engage or talk like they used to
- Reverting to the behavior of a much younger child, such as thumb sucking, bed wetting, or demanding that you stay close

- Engaging in 'repetitive play', repeatedly acting out an upsetting experience
- Suffering from unexplained aches and pains

For Reflection

- Have you experienced any of these reactions since your family's crisis began? Are you commonly experiencing any of these reactions now?
- Do you notice any of these reactions among your children/the children in your care?

The good news is these reactions are normal and, with self-care and some intentional processing, the reactions may become less frequent and even disappear with time. Today's session, and the sessions after, will give you knowledge and tools which can help to ease some of the trauma reactions which you and your child/children may be experiencing.

We will talk today about tools we can use to find an anchor of hope during stormy times, both for ourselves and our children. These tools can help reduce anxiety, depression, and stress in our lives.

Please remember that each of us is unique! People experience different reactions to trauma and find different tools helpful. You are going on a journey to find the tools that work for you and your child/children. A helpful tip is to practice these tools when you are calm, so they become habits. If you build these habits when you feel calm, it will be much easier for you to use them during times of stress!

It is also important to note that you might benefit from more than just these tools. If at any time, you feel that your trauma reactions are stopping you from living day to day life, ask your group facilitator if they can refer you to a psychologist or other mental health professional who can help you more directly.

Our Anchoring Tools

Intentional Breathing

Taking just 30-60 seconds out of your day to breathe deeply can empower you to cope with stress. Here are some tips for making this part of your routine:

- Find a comfortable place to sit. If possible, look for a quiet spot where you won't be interrupted.
- Breathe from your diaphragm. Put your hand on your lower abdomen and feel that your stomach expands as you breathe in and falls as you breathe out.
- Listen to the sound of your breath.
- Count to 2 as you breathe in, then hold your breath for 2 seconds, and then slowly let your breath out for 2 seconds.
- Practice this every day, several times a day.
- When you feel particularly stressed, take 30 seconds to breathe in this way.

Here is a great way to teach children how to practice deep breathing:

- Ask your child/children to cup their hands, as if holding a bowl of hot soup or a cup of hot tea. *Be sure to "hold" your own bowl and practice with them!*
- Tell your child/children that you will now take a deep breath in to smell the tasty soup or tea, and then blow out slowly to cool it down.
- Practice this together several times with your child/children.

Engage in Relationship

- Intentionally call or meet with someone you trust and who helps you look at life from a positive perspective. It doesn't matter what you talk about. Just engage in the relationship.
- Take a walk with someone you trust. Share how you are feeling and talk about tools that help you cope.
- Spend time together with your child/children, doing something fun or relaxing. Support your child's/children's relationships by making it possible for them to visit with, or make phone or video calls with, people who care about them and support them (grandparents, friends, relatives, etc).

Practice Little Things

- Spend time outside. Nature, fresh air and sunshine have strong healing powers. This is great for children, too!
- Reduce stressors in areas of your life. Learn to say no. Step away from others and allow yourself some alone time, without a phone.
- Do a bit of physical exercise - even 15 minutes can help. Consider walking, running, aerobics, swimming or yoga. Do some exercise together with your child/children, and it's even better if you can exercise outdoors.
- Learn about stress. When you are learning and applying what you have learned, you feel more competent and successful.
- Ask questions. Sometimes asking others how they are doing and coping will open ideas for yourself. Even when you share an idea of what might have helped you, you are potentially helping reduce your own stress as well as the other person's.
- Write in a journal or a gratitude journal. If your child/children do not know how to write, they could keep a journal of pictures they draw.
- Watch a funny movie or TV show or read a funny book. Smiling and laughter help reduce stress. Laugh together with your child/children!
- Create music, a poem, a story, or a game to play with others.
- Think about a quote that gives you hope (there are examples below). You may want to pray about it or talk about it with your child/children, family and friends.

"It's often said that having two people working together is more effective, as they can resist challenges that might overwhelm an individual. Similarly, a three-strand rope is harder to break."

“Hope is being able to see that there is light, despite all the darkness.”

Desmond Tutu

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Do you have frequent headaches? Do you feel tension in your neck, shoulders or back? When you are stressed, your body may respond with these physical sensations. Here is one technique to help your body and mind relax.

This practice involves gradually tensing and relaxing different muscle groups in your body. When you do this, you learn to recognize the physical sensations of tension and relaxation. Becoming aware of physical tension and symptoms of stress are an important part of healing.

Start by finding a quiet place where you can be alone and comfortable. Sit in a comfortable chair, close your eyes and let your body become relaxed. Next, begin to tense and then relax the muscles in your toes, and slowly work your way up your body, all the way to your head. Inhale as you tense each muscle group for about five seconds and then relax that same muscle group for 30 seconds. As you relax, slowly exhale. Pay close attention to the sensations in your body as you tense and relax. You can repeat this process, if you like. Be sure to spend a little time enjoying your relaxed state!

This technique might be more difficult for a younger child to practice, so you might want to focus simply on intentional breathing with them. If you choose to guide an older child through this technique, consider simplifying the language of the step-by-step instructions and talking them through it the first few times.

Imagine a Peaceful Place

Find a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down. Close your eyes, start to breathe more slowly, and imagine a place that is peaceful for you. Maybe think of a favorite vacation spot, or somewhere you have always wanted to visit. It can be a place from your own life, or a book or picture or film. Imagine what you can see, hear, smell, touch and even taste. Spend time imagining and breathing, simply enjoying the peaceful location in your mind.

Practice this activity together with your child/children and encourage them to tell you about their peaceful place.

For Reflection

- How did you feel as you practiced these tools?
- Which tool was most helpful to you?
- Which new tool do you plan to try in the coming week?
- Now let's think of your child/children:
 - › Which of these tools could be most helpful for your child/children?
 - › Which of these tools do you plan to try with them during the coming week?

**This ends Session 1.
Thank you for participating in
this session. We look forward to
meeting again next time!**



SESSION 3

TALK ABOUT IT

PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

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HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH CRISIS

- Children may be scared, confused and angry. They need your support.
- Listen to children when they share how they are feeling.
- Accept how they feel and give them comfort.
- Every day before you sleep, praise yourself for trying to help your children cope.



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No.3

PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

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SMALL THINGS HELP KEEP CHILDREN SAFE

- Talk to children about what is happening in a way that they can understand.
- Identify a meeting point and make a plan in case you get separated.
- Assure your children that you will do everything to keep them safe.
- Planning with children helps them feel safer too.



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No.6

PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

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MAKING TRAVEL PLANS WITH OUR CHILDREN

- Make a song with your child so they memorise your full name and phone number, and number of someone you trust. Go over it every day.
- Tell your child where you're going and why, in a way they can understand and handle.
- Make backup copies or photos of all your identity documents
- Praise yourself for doing the best you can.



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No.10

PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

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KEEPING SAFE ON THE ROAD

- If a child has a mobile phone, save your number and those of a few trusted people.
- Explain to your child how they should behave when at checkpoints, (i.e., be quiet, do not leave the vehicle).
- Hide money or bank cards in different places, in case you lose your bags.
- Being prepared takes hard work. Be sure to look after yourself.



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No.15

PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

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CARING FOR CHILDREN IN A SHELTER

- Take a comfort item from home with them to a shelter
- Find something to smile about together
- Decorate the shelter together, with notes or pictures for the walls if you can
- Try to reassure your children as often as you can.



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No.16

Where Am I?

For Reflection

1. How has life changed for you since your family's loss or crisis?
2. What has been the biggest change for you?

We all go through transitions in life – some transitions are forced on us and others are welcome. Both types of transitions involve adjusting to what we have to let go emotionally, to move forward healthily. Many of us are here because we have been through a very difficult experience. We want to be able to cope and support ourselves and each other. To begin to do that, we need to become aware of where we are, and what has happened to us. We might feel alone or think that we are the only person who feels this way — and it is true that each person's experience of a crisis is unique. But there are some common experiences people often have when difficult events happen.

These are common reactions to our losses and crises:

- We look for someone to blame – ourself or someone else.
- We have regrets over things we said or did - or did not say or do.
- We feel guilty — that we survived when other didn't, or that others have suffered more than ourselves.
- We feel ashamed about how we are reacting or feel embarrassed about accepting help.

For Reflection

Do any of these sound like where you are right now?

While we might look for someone to blame, feel guilty or ashamed, these reactions can stop us from accepting what's happened, and accepting that it is not our fault.

Besides these feelings, we can also react to trauma in three main ways:

1. We may relive the experience - in nightmares or flashbacks during the day.
2. We may find ourselves avoiding things that remind us of the event. We may avoid feeling at all, by becoming “numb,” or by working or keeping busy all the time, or we may withdraw from doing anything.
3. We may be on alert all the time, feeling tense, overreacting, having difficulty sleeping, or feeling unwell. We may find it hard to concentrate.

For Reflection

Does any of that sound like how you are feeling?

Things That Can Help When We are Reacting to Trauma or Transition

These reactions are normal and it's good to notice them in ourselves, be aware of them, and talk about it. By talking about our experiences, and finding ways to be calm and stay in the present moment, we can support one another to get through this hard time.

However, if these reactions continue for a long time or prevent us from living our day-to-day life, we may need to speak to someone and get further support. Talk with your facilitator after the session if you feel you need more support.

Here are some other healthy habits that can strengthen you, as you go through this time:

- Learn to recognize stressful thinking. Paying attention to stressful thoughts may help you to reduce them. Training yourself to be aware of your thoughts, your breathing, your heart rate, and other signs of tension, helps you to recognize stress when it begins.
- Breathe deeply: take a breath in through your nose, hold for a few seconds, then let the breath out through your mouth. This is a simple tip for stress reduction that can be used anywhere, at any time.

- Take breaks from news stories, including those on social media. It's good to be informed, but constant information about the crisis around you can be upsetting. Consider limiting news to just a couple of times a day and disconnecting from social media for a while.
- Be your best self. Feelings of shame, guilt, regret, or inadequacy can lead to negative thinking. Develop the habit of gratitude and forgiveness of others and positive thoughts of yourself.
- Step away from others and allow yourself some alone time.
- Connect with others. Get to know them better – ask questions and listen with concentration.

Talking with Children About the Crisis

We have spent time sharing where we are, and how we are doing. This is important for our own healing, and also helps us to recognize how our children are, as they deal with similar issues. The next questions and tips will help us to reflect on how our children are doing and how we can talk with them about their reactions to the crisis.

You may have friends, relatives, or neighbors who are not a parent or caregiver. The tips we will talk about now (and in future sessions) can be important for them as well. Think of the people who regularly interact with the child/children in your household or with other specific children in your life - such as a grandparent, an aunt or uncle, a teacher, or a close family friend. How could they use these tools when interacting with the child/children you know? Also, although these tools are for relating to children, many of the ideas are relevant for your adult relationships, too. For example, we encourage that communication with children should be open, honest, supportive, and positive. All these recommendations are equally valuable for communication in adult relationships.

For Reflection

1. How often does your child/do your children seem stressed or worried?
2. How often is your child/are your children able to talk about their problems and share their worries?
3. Have you and your child/children talked together about what's happened? How did it go?
4. What are some of the fears or concerns your child/children are expressing?

Take a moment to acknowledge examples of how you have reached out and listened to the child/children in your care. These moments are important, because children value when we are open and honest with them and take their concerns seriously.

Here are some key tips on how to speak with your child/children:

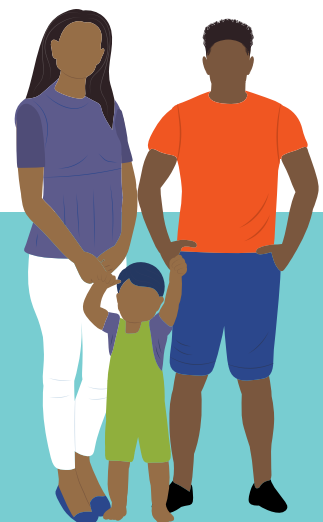
- **Be open** — Allow your child/children to talk freely. Ask them open questions (which means questions that can't just be answered by a "yes" or "no").
- **Be honest** — Answer their questions truthfully. Think about how old your child is/children are and how much they can understand, in the details you provide. It's ok to not know all the answers.
- **Be supportive** — Your child/children may be scared or confused. Give them space to share how they are feeling and let them know you are there for them. Praise your child/children every day for something they do well.
- **Be positive** — Remind your child/children that you care about them and how they are feeling, and that they can talk to you at any time.

Avoid exposing your child/children to graphic details of trauma or violence: in real life, on TV, on radio, or on your phone. Do not instruct your child/children to feel a specific emotion (for instance, anger); instead accept the way they feel and how they describe it.

Every evening, praise your child/children and yourself for something — recognize how well you are doing in these very hard circumstances.

This ends Session 3. Thank you for your participation.

Below are some extra tools you can use in supporting your own or other children before our next session. We look forward to meeting again next time!



SESSION 3

EXTRA TOOLS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN

The following tools are for parents, caregivers, or trusted friends to do with children in various settings. You will see the following symbols, which show if the tool is for use with children in live conflict/disaster zones, children on the move, or those who are settled.



**Live Conflict/
Disaster**



On the Move



Settled

You will see the words “parent” and “parents” in the tool. If you are the parent or caregiver going through this tool with your own child/children, you can say “me” and “we”, instead. These are the included tools:

- Talking with Children about the Crisis/Transition
- Extra Actions - Planning for Safety Together
- Talking with Children - Simple Steps to Stay Safe

Talking with Children About the Crisis/ Transition



This tool is a practical guide for talking with children about the crisis they have experienced. It includes specific statements, questions, and ideas to use in helping a child cope with a death or loss, or other trauma.

Begin this one-to-one time with your child/children with a few general check-in questions, such as:

1. What was the best thing that happened this week?
2. What was something funny that happened this week?
3. What was hard about this week?

Game: Good and Bad

Explain that you will read some statements of a change that could happen – like winning a prize or starting a new school. The child/children should quickly decide whether the change is a good or a bad thing. There are no right or wrong answers!

For example, You: “Winning a prize!” – Child: “Good!” You: “Starting a new school” – Child: “Bad!”

- Winning a prize
- Moving house to a new city
- Starting a new school
- Getting a puppy

Explain that the crisis we have had has made a lot of changes in our lives. Let’s look together at what’s happened, how we feel about it, and what we can do to stay safe.

For Reflection With Your Child

1. What are some of the changes that have happened for you and your family since your loss or crisis?
2. How do you feel about these changes, or about what's happening now?

Explain to your child/children: "It's normal to feel scared or upset. Adults do too! Lots of things have changed, and it can be scary when we don't know what will happen next, like where we will go to school or who will be our friends. It's good to ask questions and to share how you are feeling. If there's anything you are confused or worried about, go ahead and ask someone you trust."

Say to your child/children: "Here are some ways you could talk to your parent(s)/caregiver(s) about your questions or what's worrying you:

- Ask your parent(s) or caregiver(s) to sit down with you for a few minutes and tell them how you are feeling.
- If you have seen or heard things related to the loss (of a person you loved or of what your life was like before) or about the crisis - from other people, or the news, or online, ask your parent(s) or caregiver(s) to talk with you about it and ask them any questions you have.
- Draw a picture about how you are feeling about the situation and share it with your parent(s) or caregiver(s).
- Talk with your family about what helps you to feel safe.

Encourage your child to support others

Say to your child/children: "You are doing so well. (Mention something specific to the child's/children's situation – such as "you have kept going to school" or "you helped your family when others have felt sad or lonely" or "you have played with your siblings and that cheers them up".)

For Reflection With Your Child

1. Thinking about other children in your family or community, or about people in your family or household: Is there anyone who is having a hard time, or seems like they might be sad or worried?

2. Do you think there's anything you could do to encourage someone else this week?

Praise your child/children for all their ideas and the ways they already care for others. Suggest to the child/children some things they could do to encourage others:

- Play games with a younger brother or sister or read them a story.
- Tell your parent(s)/caregiver(s) something you love about them or want to say thank you for.
- Draw a picture and put it in your window with an encouraging message for people who pass by.

Wrap up: What can we do together this week?

Explain: "We might feel overwhelmed by the situation, but as we've talked about today, there are so many things we can do ourselves that can help us and our families to support each other and stay safe."

Some ways children can help are:

- Talking with your parent(s)/caregiver(s) about what you are feeling worried about.
- Helping others in your family who might be having a hard time. Being kind – put a picture in your window with an encouraging message.
- Making a family plan together for staying safe and healthy.

Extra Actions - Planning for Safety Together

Some of this section is intended for use with individuals or groups who are currently in a live conflict/disaster situation or are on the move. However, some of the basic safety principles are relevant for keeping children safe in general. There are activities for participants to do with their children and suggestions on how to talk with children about staying safe.



Planning for safety together with children helps them to feel safer, too. Children will be aware that things are uncertain, and being able to talk about this and have practical actions they can be part of helps them to feel calmer and safer.

You could take some time with your child/children and ask them for their ideas of what you could do to stay safe. Here are some practical ways you can plan for safety together with your child/children:

- Make a plan together for what to do if you are separated, and every day, agree on a clear place to meet if you are separated.
- Make a song or chant with your child/children so they memorize your full name and phone number, and the number of someone you trust. Go over it every day.
- Tell your child/children they should not spend time outside alone after dark or take a lift with someone alone.
- Make sure you know who your child is/children are spending time with online and in person.

For Parent/Caregiver Reflection

What have you done that has helped to keep your child/children safe, and what are you doing now?

For Reflection with Your Child

- Is there something we've talked about that you are going to put into practice or do differently this week?
- What kind of plan could you make with your family to help stay safe?



Here are some tips for staying safe with children in active conflict zones:

- If there is no shelter available, it is better to stand in the staircase of a building and stay away from windows.

- Remind your child/children to avoid touching unknown items or ruins after the bombing, to avoid interaction with explosives.
- Practice with your child/children: What do we do when there is active bombing? What do we do afterwards?
- If there is a shelter available, practice running to the shelter. Making a routine out of the bombing can significantly reduce stress and provide your child/children with some sense of control.

Putting it Into Practice this Week

Talk with your child/children about what they have heard about the war or crisis and any questions they have. What can you do together as a family to stay safe?

Talking with Children- Simple Steps to Stay Safe



Only use this extra tool with participants who are currently in active conflict/disaster zones or are on the move (leaving or returning home). This section includes tips for both parent(s)/caregiver(s) and children.

Say to your child/children: "You are doing so well. (Mention something specific to the child's/children's situation – such as "you have stayed safe on your journey here" or "you are helping your family when you have to shelter at home".)

For Reflection with Your Child

Review with your child/children some things they have been doing with their parent(s)/caregiver(s) or brother(s) and sister(s) to stay safe. Encourage the child/children in all the ways they have been staying safe and the actions they are taking, even if it is difficult and means, for example, that they are not in school, or not seeing their friends or loved ones. Share with them that there is a lot that children can do to help stay safe – they can work with their family to make plans to help stay safe and to stay together when things are difficult.

Say: “Here are some things you could do together with your parent(s)/caregiver(s):

- Take some time together as a family to agree on your family safety plan.
- Remember to avoid touching unknown items or walking in ruined buildings after a bombing or disaster, unless your parent(s) or caregiver(s) tell you it is safe.
- Make a plan of what to do in case anyone gets separated from the others, and agree on this plan every day.
- Make up a song or chant together to memorize your parent’s/caregiver’s full name and phone number, and make sure you know your own full name and address, too.
- In a conflict/war/disaster setting: Talk with your family about a plan for what to do when there is danger (e.g., running to the shelter, taking supplies with us).

For Reflection with Your Child

Is there something we’ve talked about that you are going to try to do this week?

This ends the tools “Talking with Children about the Crisis/Transition,” “Extra Actions - Planning for Safety Together,” and “Talking with Children-Simple Steps to Stay Safe”. We look forward to hearing how it went!

SESSION 4

STRONG FAMILIES AND POSITIVE PARENTING

PARENTING TIPS FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WVO PARENTING FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH
HopeGroups

5 MINUTES OF POSITIVE TIME WITH OUR CHILDREN

- Playing with and talking to children for a few minutes every day helps them feel secure.
- Ask children what they would like to do.
- Listen to them, look at them, give them your full attention.
- Small amounts of time can help them feel safe and loved.



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Protecting our children in a crisis

No.4

PARENTING TIPS FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WVO PARENTING FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH
HopeGroups

CARING FOR CHILDREN IN A SHELTER

- Take a comfort item from home with them to a shelter
- Find something to smile about together
- Decorate the shelter together, with notes or pictures for the walls if you can
- Try to reassure your children as often as you can.



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No.16

PARENTING TIPS FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WVO PARENTING FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH
HopeGroups

BUILDING CHILDREN'S STRENGTH IN A CRISIS

- Ask children to help with day-to-day tasks such as making food or cleaning.
- Praise children for trying or doing well.
- This encourages helpful behaviour.
- Praising children shows them that you notice and care.



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Protecting our children in a crisis

No.7

Today's session talks about relationships within families and will help us to relate positively with our family members. Many of these principles are relevant for communication in relationships both with children and with adults.

Many of us are now living in different family circumstances than before the crisis or loss. You may have been separated from some family members, and you may be living with other relatives, friends, or even new acquaintances. As we discuss "family" in today's session, please consider both your family members and the people you are currently living with. Also, when we discuss parents and children, the ideas are equally relevant for other caregivers, like grandparents or trusted friends of the family.

Let's be sensitive to each family member's situation. Where parent(s)/caregiver(s) are separated, or where loved ones have been lost, we can admit at the start that the missing person or separated family members are not there, and that this is difficult.

Positive Communication At Home

For Reflection

- Can you think of a time this week where you had a good conversation with the child/children you are caring for, or with other family members?
- What was positive about it?

When we're under pressure at a time of crisis and change, it can be hard to keep our communication positive – but when we do, it has a big impact on children and adolescents. How we talk and behave in front of and with our children and adolescents influences how they behave, too. Positive communication also involves positive discipline, such as speaking calmly and removing privileges, rather than the harmful discipline of hitting a child with our hand or an object. Poor communication between adults in the household can have a negative impact on children. Practicing peaceful, loving relationships helps children feel secure and loved.

For Reflection

What do you think positive communication looks like in practice?

Positive communication could include:

- Trying to talk kindly to everyone in the family – both adults and children. When you are upset, make a conscious effort to speak kindly to your child/children and not shout or scream at them.
- Telling others what you want them to do, instead of stating what you want them to stop doing. Instead of saying “Stop shouting”, try to say “Please speak more quietly”.
- Being a good listener – be open and show others that you hear what they are saying.
- Saying thank you, even for small or routine things, can make a big difference.
- Praising your child/children every day for something they do well. This can have a big positive impact on their behaviour.

One on One Time with Children

For Reflection

- Can you think of an activity you have enjoyed doing with your child/children in the last 3 days?
- Is it easy or hard to spend time individually with each of your children? What helps or hinders you in this?
- How could spending quality time with your child/children help you and them?

Especially in times of loss or crisis, it can be difficult to find time to spend with our children. But one-on-one time is a key way that we can help children feel loved and secure, and it shows them that they are important. Playing with and talking to children every day helps them feel secure.

Even in difficult and uncertain times, you could do this by:

- Setting aside time to spend with each child. It can be for just 5 minutes or a little longer, and at the same time each day so children can look forward to it.
- Asking your child what they would like to do. Choosing builds their self-confidence. If they want to do something that isn't possible in the current situation, then this is a chance to talk with them about it.
- Even if you aren't able to do an activity together, just listening to them, looking at them, and giving them your full attention, can make all the difference.

Exercise - Model Possible Time with a Child

Your facilitator will now lead you in an exercise about spending time with a child. You will be using the game called “Which Person in the House,” and you can find that game in your Extra Tools for Supporting Children, at the end of this session.

If your family has many children, you can make one-on-one time practical by suggesting group activities as a family, and one-on-one time less frequently.

If your family is in a more stable situation or you would like more suggestions for activities, consider the ideas below. Remember that where parent(s)/caregiver(s) are under intense stress and in ongoing conflict/disaster settings, simply spending 5 minutes a day with your child is enough and will really help.

Ideas for different age groups of children

Baby/Toddler:

- Copy their facial expression and sounds
- Sing songs, make music with pots and spoons or other available items
- Stack cups or blocks
- Tell a story, read a book, or share pictures

Young Child:

- Read a book, tell stories or look at pictures, play games
- Go for a walk, if possible
- Dance to music or sing
- Do a chore together – make cleaning and cooking a game!
- Help with schoolwork if the child is in school

Teenager:

- Talk about something they like: sports, music, movies
- Go for a walk, if possible
- Play a game together

You can do anything together! Good one-on-one time means that you listen to your child/children, look at them, give them your full attention, and have fun, even if it's for a short time.

Putting it Into Practice this Week

Can you plan to have quality one-on-one time with your child/children this week? What might you do together? Could you find out what they would enjoy? It's fine if this can only be for 5 minutes a day right now.

**This ends Session 4.
Thank you for your participation.
We look forward to seeing you
again next time!**

Below are extra tools that you can use, including example questions to help you talk with your own or other children.



SESSION 4

EXTRA TOOLS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN

This tool is a practical guide for parents, caregivers, or trusted friends to use when talking with children who are settled, either at home or as displaced persons. It includes specific statements, questions, and ideas for talking with their child about family relationships. You will see the words “parent” and “parents” in the the tool. If you are the parent or caregiver going through this tool with your own child, you can say “me” and “we”, instead.



Settled

These are the included tools:

- Talking with Children About Their Family
- Who Am I?
- My Family

Note for the parent or caregiver: You should be sensitive to the child's living situation and family context. Where children are separated from a parent/caregiver, or living in a different household away from some of the people they love, they may want to look back and talk about their absent family, or they may want to talk about who they live with now. Let the discussion be led by the child and don't press them to talk about something they are not happy to discuss.

Talking with Children About Their Family

Begin this one-on-one time with your child with the same check-in questions you used before, such as:

1. What was the best thing that happened this week?
2. What was something funny that happened this week?
3. What was hard about this week?

For Reflection With Your Child

Who lives in your home (or the place where you are staying) with you now?

Game: Which Person in the House

Explain that you will play a game together. You will say something, and the child should say the name of the person in the household who is the most like what you have said.

Example: You: “Which person in the house makes the most noise” – Child: “My dad!”

The child should answer as quickly as they can! And the answer can be “me”.

Be flexible about which household the child is talking about. They may want to look back at their previous family home setting, or they may be thinking about where they currently are – which may be someone else's home, a transit centre, or many other living situations.

Which person in the house...

- Is the tallest?
- Makes the most noise?
- Is the youngest?
- Is the best cook?
- Is kind to others?
- Makes you laugh? Add your own ideas of something special about your family members.

Explain that now we'll be looking at how you can be yourself and be the part of your family (or household) that only you can be.

Who Am I?

For Reflection With Your Child

Have you ever wished you could be more like your brother or sister, or your friend at school? *(Note to parent(s)/caregiver(s): Be ready to share your own answer first, if the child finds it difficult to answer)*

Sometimes it can be good to try to be like someone else – like wanting to learn to play football like your sister, or to be a good listener like your brother. But it's really important to realize that we are special just for who we already are!

There's no one quite like you, and there are things that only you can do! It might be things like:

- Being kind
- Making people laugh
- Helping your younger sibling or your parent(s)/caregiver(s)

For Reflection With Your Child

What is one thing that you think is special about you? It might be something you are good at or something about who you are. *(Note to parent(s)/caregiver(s): Again, be ready to share your own answer, if the child needs you to go first).*

My Family

For Reflection With Your Child

What is your favourite thing to do with your parent(s)/caregiver(s)? *(Parent(s)/caregiver(s): Share your own experience from your own childhood if you can!)*

Say to your child: "That does sound fun! Are you still managing to spend time together doing things like that at the moment? What has changed in your family, and is it easier or harder to have fun together?"

When things change, our parents/caregivers or other adults around us might have a lot on their mind or have many responsibilities. Sometimes we may be separated from someone in our family, or not be able to see everyone. But our parents/caregivers still love us and want to spend time with us."

For Reflection With Your Child

What might be some ways that you could spend time with your parent(s)/caregiver(s)? Here are some ideas (if you need them):

- Ask your parent(s) or caregiver(s) if you can read a book or sing songs together
- Do some exercise together to your favorite music
- Ask if you can help with cooking or preparing a meal, or another household task

If the child is currently separated from a parent or important caregiver, you may think together about how they could keep in touch, or how they could remember this person together with those they are living with now. For example, through phone calls, writing a letter to express your feelings and telling them about the place you are living now, or doing an activity you enjoyed doing together to remember them.

Wrap up: What can we do together this week?

What is one thing you will ask your parent(s)/caregiver(s) if you can do together this week? Remember what you said is special about you – what can you do this week to share this special quality or ability with your family? For example:

- “I am kind” – tell each person in your family something you love about them, or help someone.
- “I’m good at making people laugh” – gather your family together and tell them some jokes!
- “I’m good at cooking” – ask your parent(s)/ caregiver(s) if you can help to prepare one of the meals this week.
- “I’m good at writing” – write a story or a poem and share it with your family/ household one evening.

This ends the tools “Talking with Children About their Family,” “Who Am I?” and “My Family.” We look forward to hearing how it went!

SESSION 5

STAYING SAFE TOGETHER

PARENTING TIPS FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WVO PARENTING FOR CHALLENGING TIMES
HopeGroups

KEEPING OUR FAMILIES TOGETHER

- Keep children with you or someone you trust all the time.
- Encourage them to share anything that worries them with you.
- Talk to them about things that are not safe.
- Be proud of your efforts and try to take care of yourself too.



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No.8

PARENTING TIPS FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WVO PARENTING FOR CHALLENGING TIMES
HopeGroups

MAKING AN IDENTITY TAG FOR A CHILD

- Write the full name & phone number of you and three people you trust.
- Write any medication your child needs, any special needs or disability.
- An identity tag should be covered in plastic or kept in a waterproof bag.
- Hide the tag in something your child always wears (e.g., a pocket, shoe, necklace).



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No.9

PARENTING TIPS FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WVO PARENTING FOR CHALLENGING TIMES
HopeGroups

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN FROM TRAFFICKERS

- Traffickers can be men, women, couples, and could be from your own community.
- Teach your children that people sometimes lie and trick children into coming with them.
- Tell children to talk to a trusted adult if they feel confused or worried.
- Teach children to trust their instincts and get away if something feels strange.



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No.11

PARENTING TIPS FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WVO PARENTING FOR CHALLENGING TIMES
HopeGroups

TRAVELING SAFELY WITH OUR CHILDREN

- Tell someone you trust your travel plans, where you are and who you are with.
- When it's hard, remember you're trying your best in a difficult situation.
- Travel in a group of people you know where possible.
- If you need to show your passport or ID, try to keep it in your hands.



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No.12

PARENTING TIPS FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WVO PARENTING FOR CHALLENGING TIMES
HopeGroups

KEEPING SAFE ON THE ROAD

- If a child has a mobile phone, save your number and those of a few trusted people.
- Explain to your child how they should behave when at checkpoints, (i.e., be quiet, do not leave the vehicle).
- Hide money or bank cards in different places, in case you lose your bags.
- Being prepared takes hard work. Be sure to look after yourself.



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Protecting our children in a crisis

No.15

Today's topics are designed to be used in various contexts – whether in a conflict/disaster zone, moving to a different home, displaced, returning to home, or settled at home or in a new location. Where activities vary, you will see these symbols – please choose the content reflecting your context. The topics we will talk about today are important for every parent and child to understand, regardless of where they live.



**Live Conflict/
Disaster**



On the Move



Settled

Staying Together



For Reflection

Have there been times when you have felt worried about the safety of a child/children in your care?

In times of loss, conflict, displacement, and crisis, there is so much that we can feel worried about – it can be overwhelming, and we can feel that we cannot do enough to keep our children safe. However, as a parent or caregiver, you have already been doing so much – helping to find a safe place to stay for your child/children, keeping them safe, finding food for them to eat, reassuring them.

One of the simplest and most powerful ways we can keep our children safe is by staying together and making sure our children are not separated from us. That might mean keeping them with us or with someone we know and trust, so they have adult supervision. We know that sometimes parents/caregivers are separated from each other or their family by loss of life, conflict, attacks, or other crises, and sometimes we cannot avoid this. We shouldn't feel guilty about this, or that this is our fault. But we can do everything we possibly can to make sure that children are not separated from the family, or from people we trust. By doing this, we can avoid many risks that children might face.

For Reflection

What do you already do to stay together?

It's great that you are already doing so much to keep children in your care together with you.

Some ways you can help to keep your children safe by staying together:

- Tell children that staying together will help to keep them safe.
- Keep children with you or someone you trust all the time.
- If you are travelling, hold their hand, have them walk in front of you, and stay in the same vehicle with them.
- Create a safety note for each child if you are on the move, whether away from or returning home – this should be covered in plastic or kept in a waterproof bag. Write on the note the full name and phone number of you and three people you trust, any medication your child needs, any special needs or disability. Hide a safety note on every child (for example, in a pocket of clothing that they always wear, on a necklace, or in their shoe).
- Tell your child/children they should not spend time outside alone after dark or take a lift with someone alone.
- Make sure you know who your child is/children are spending time with, online and in person.

For reflection

Is there something new you will put into place this week?

Children's Changing Roles



For Reflection

- Thinking about your child/children over this time of crisis or loss, how are they spending their time?
- Have you noticed any changes in their role, or what they do every day?

(For example, children may have been out of the house more, may have missed school, may be doing more or less of something, seeing their friends more or less, helping more or less with chores, etc.)

- Thinking of each child in the family, do you think this current situation has made each child closer to, or further away from, what you think children 'should' be doing as children?

(For example, more time with family could be a good thing, but being out of school might not be.)

There may have been both positive and negative changes to children's roles – and this may vary a lot between families and households. What do you think needs to be in place for children to be able to fulfill their roles as children?

Let's cover these key points, focusing on any areas which are especially relevant in your context or community:

- Engaging in education is very important – do your best to keep children in school, or enroll them in support programs, and take an interest in their work and studies, friends and hobbies.
- Children should only help with work in the house or work outside the home in ways that don't negatively affect their wellbeing

or development. When thinking about sharing household chores as a family, think about an appropriate level of responsibility for children.

- Education and opportunities to learn and develop are equally important for girls and boys, so be careful to ensure that children have the same opportunities, whatever their gender.
- Staying together as a family is very important for children's sense of safety and security; family separation (such as sending children away to a residential home) should be avoided.

For Reflection

Is there something that stands out to you from what we've talked about, or something that might be relevant for your family?

Avoiding Trafficking



For Reflection

Can you tell our group about someone who has helped you so far in the crisis? *(This might be someone who has helped you with housing, to access food and clothing, or told you about staying safe in a conflict/disaster zone).*

Can you share an example of something that has helped you feel safe during your family loss or crisis?

It's wonderful that so many people are willing to help and show kindness to one another in this difficult time. We also know that in any crisis – whether due to loss, conflict, displacement, disaster, epidemic, or other transition - there are some people who do not have good intentions and who see this as an opportunity to exploit people who are vulnerable.

For Reflection

Have you noticed anything like that during this crisis – feeling concerned about whether someone you have seen or met has good intentions - in your experience so far?

One key risk in times of crisis and transition is trafficking. Trafficking is when people who seem like they want to help, are actually seeking to exploit those who need help, for their own gain. This could involve taking people to a place where they will have to work or be exploited and will not be free to leave. This may be presented as a good opportunity for adults or children to find work or to be supported by people in a new location. Trafficking can happen to both adults and children, and it will usually seem like a good opportunity to find a safe place and earn money. A trafficker might offer to help a person get back home if they have been displaced by the crisis or transition. They may go out of their way to be helpful or give extravagant gifts, which makes it difficult for people to say no to their requests and offers. In some places, traffickers force others, especially children, to fight in armed conflict or war.

Human trafficking can also include sex trafficking of adults and/or children. A sex trafficker might pretend to have a romantic interest in someone, especially someone who has unmet emotional needs or is very young. But after gaining the person's trust, they force them to have sex with others for money or some other payment, which the trafficker keeps. Some traffickers might be in a genuine relationship, but force or pressure their partner into having sex with others for money, to support them materially.

It's important to know the signs to look out for, so that you can avoid danger and find honest people who will help, and for you to share this information with others. It is also important to know that there is a lot you can do to help yourself and your child/children stay safe in the crisis.

For Reflection

How do you think we can stay safe from trafficking?

Some ways you can stay safe are:

- Be aware that traffickers will look like ordinary people, and sound like they want to help you.
- Trust your instincts. If something feels strange or too good to be true, get away from the situation immediately.
- Learn these warning signs, and don't trust someone who is doing any of these things:
 - › The person is vague about the terms and/or location of a potential job and is not willing to give you details about the company.
 - › They deny you access to information about your rights.
 - › They don't let you have contact with friends or family.
 - › They might try to control what you do, where you go, and/or who you spend time with.
- Ask to see a photo ID before you accept anyone's help, transport, or a place to stay. If local police are there, check with them before accepting help from a person you don't know.
- Teach children that they should not say yes to anyone offering help without talking to you first.
- If you are travelling:
 - › Travel in a group of people you know.
 - › Keep someone you trust updated with your travel situation, where you are, and who you are with.
 - › When travelling with someone you don't know, take a photo of the person and the vehicle and send it to someone you know and trust.
- Make a code word with people you trust, to let them know if you are in danger.
- Don't give your passport or ID documents or personal phone to anyone.
- If you are concerned that someone may have been trafficked, or that trafficking is happening, you should report this to the nearest police station or local authorities.

For Reflection

Is there someone you could share this information with?

Putting it into practice this week

What actions can you take with your child/children, or what can you talk to them about from our conversation today?

**This ends Session 5.
Thank you for your participation.**

Below are extra tools that you can use, including example questions to help you talk with your own or other children. We look forward to meeting again next time!



SESSION 5

EXTRA TOOLS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN

This section is a practical guide of tools for parents, caregivers, or trusted friends to use when talking with children about safety and human trafficking. It includes specific statements, questions, and ideas for talking with and helping your child consider how to stay safe during these times. *You will see the words “parent” and “parents” in the tool. If you are the parent or caregiver going through this tool with your own child, you can say “me” and “we”, instead.*

You will see the following symbols, which show if the tool is for use with children in live conflict/disaster zones, children on the move, or those who are settled.



**Live Conflict/
Disaster**



On the Move



Settled

These are the included tools:

- Staying Safe Together
- Who Can I Trust?

Beginning the Time Together with Your Child

Begin with your usual check-in questions, such as:

- What was the best thing that happened this week?
- What was something funny that happened this week?
- What was hard about this week?

Staying Safe Together



For Reflection with Your Child

Imagine you could create a fun and safe place for children where you are. What would be there? What would it be like?

You can ask the child/children to draw this place. If you are talking with a group of children, the children can create a huge drawing altogether, or they can create individual pictures and share about them with the group.

With all the changes that have happened recently, it may be difficult to find these safe places for children to have fun and play together.

For Reflection with Your Child

In the place where you live now, what are your favorite places to go? Where are the best places for children?

In a group session, you could ask children to work together to draw a map of where they live – adding in places like shops, their homes, health centers, school, churches/mosques/temples, etc. They can then mark on the map with one color the places that are safe

and good for children and use another color to show places that are not good or safe for children.

For Reflection with Your Child

Has this changed since the crisis?

(Are there new places that have been opened for children? Are there places that you used to go to that are gone or closed and you miss? Are there places that used to be safe, that aren't safe anymore? Is it safe for you to go out of your home and move around the neighborhood?)

When things are changing fast, or we are in a new place, we might feel uncertain or worried.

For Reflection with Your Child

What do you think can help children to stay safe where you are now?

There are some simple things that can help children to stay safe, wherever they are, even when things are changing a lot or are very different.

- Stay together with your family.
- Tell someone you trust if you feel worried about your safety.
- If you can, keep going with your schoolwork and ask for help to do that.
- If you are in an insecure place or might be moving to somewhere new: Make sure you know your full name and your parents' or caregivers' names, and your address.
- Talk with your parent(s)/caregiver(s) about what you would do if you were separated.

For Reflection with Your Child

Is there anything you might do to stay safe where you are this week?

Who can I trust?



In a group setting, you could start this section with a group game – 'Secret Safe Zone'. Choose one place in the room (such as a wall or rug) to be the 'safe zone' – where players

cannot be 'tagged' – but do not tell the children where it is.

Explain that the children should run around, and that you can "tag" them (tap on the shoulder) when they are not in the safe zone. When a child is tagged, they must sit down where they are. They can be 'released' by being tagged (tapped on the shoulder) by another child. Invite the children to run around, and you should "tag" them when they are outside the safe zone. Gradually, the children will be able to work out where the safe zone is. The children win when they are all in the safe zone. Play again, with one or two of the children choosing where the safe zone is.

For Reflection with Your Child

Apart from your parent(s)/caregiver(s), can you think of any other adults or children who have helped you and your family since the crisis started?

(This could be people who have helped with food and clothing, a place to stay, transport, or sharing helpful information, for example.)

It's great that there have been so many people who are willing to be kind and to help others during this difficult time. Most people are kind and want to help us.

But sometimes, people are not kind and might say they are trying to 'help' us and our family, when really, they are not helping us. For example:

- Someone might come to the community and say that they have a great opportunity for children to learn or to work, in another place. Or they might offer to help older children get back to their home. Even if this sounds like helping, it can turn out to be very dangerous, as children would be separated from their family, and might not be treated well, or what the person said may not be true.
- Older children might be asked to work with soldiers or fight, which puts children in serious danger.
- Someone might treat you like a friend, or even like a girlfriend or boyfriend, but then they ask you to do things which you don't want to do, to make money for them.

- Our parents/caregivers could be given a job which is not good for them, where they work too hard, or are not safe at work.
- This can sound scary, but there are some simple things we can do as children, which can help us to know who to trust, and how to get help from people who really do want to help us.

For Reflection with Your Child

What do you think children can do to make sure they are helped safely by kind and honest people?

Here are a few things children can do that will help you to stay safe:

- If at all possible, stay together with your family. Don't travel on your own.
- Don't accept help from someone you don't know without talking with your parent(s)/caregiver(s) first.
- If you feel worried about something, talk to someone you trust.
- Talk with your family about these issues and discuss how you can stay together and find help from people you trust.
- Share this information with other children and the people in your family.
- For older children: Only share your phone number or social media details with people that you trust.
- Don't accept gifts which you have to keep secret.

For Reflection with Your Child

Is there anything you will talk with your family about?

If there is anything you want to talk about based on what we have discussed today, please do talk to me, or someone that you trust, about any concerns you have.

Wrap up: What can we do together this week?

For Reflection with Your Child

From our conversation today, can you think of 3 things that might help you be safe where you are? Great! *(Remind the child/children of one or two things that seemed to be important for them during the conversation.)*

What will you do this week to stay safe together? *(Some suggestions are: talk to someone I trust / talk with parents/caregivers about safety / talk with parents/caregivers about trafficking / share safety information with others.)*

This ends the tools "Staying Safe Together" and "Who Can I Trust?". We look forward to hearing how it went!

SESSION 6

STAYING SAFE AT HOME

PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WVO PARENTING
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES
HopeGroups

COPING WITH STRESS, UPSET, AND ANGER

- Find someone who you can talk to about how you are feeling.
- Losing your temper? Breathe in and out slowly five times.
- Try to do something that helps you relax.
- Remember to praise yourself each time you take steps to cope.



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Protecting our children in a crisis

No.5

PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WVO PARENTING
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES
HopeGroups

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- If they tell you about abuse, trust your child. Reassure them it's not their fault and they are safe and loved.
- Teach your child that no one has the right to touch them or make them uncomfortable.
- Practice saying "no" loudly and strongly.
- Tell them that abusers often trick children by saying it is their 'secret'
- Talking about this with your child helps protect them.



Parents and Caregivers are HEROES
Protecting our children in a crisis

No.13

When We Get Angry

For Reflection

- What has been a time this week that you remember feeling angry about something or angry with someone at home?
- What did you do when you felt angry?

(Be prepared to share your own experience.)

Under stress it is normal to feel more angry than usual – whether about big things or small. We love our children and teenagers, but the stresses of our losses, grief, the conflict, disaster, or other crisis, along with the extra pressures they bring in our daily life, separation from family members, and the sadness we face, can all make us angry. This is normal and something that we all experience. Our anger doesn't need to be out of our control – we can do things before and during it to help us manage it.

For Reflection

- The same things usually make us feel stressed and angry every time – can you see any patterns in what makes you angry, and how do you normally react?
- Do you know what helps you to respond well?

(In times of crisis, like loss, conflict, disaster, or displacement, people may not be able to access rest, food, support and time-out as in the following examples. In this case, move straight to the 'Taking a Break' tip below).

There are ways we can help ourselves to prevent anger from starting - for example:

- If we usually get angry when we are tired, can we get more rest?

- If we are angry when we are hungry, can we make sure we eat? (*Be sensitive to families who may not have enough food*).
- If we are angry when we feel alone, can we ask for support or make sure we connect with others?
- If we feel under pressure and overwhelmed, can we make sure we are doing something that we enjoy and taking some time for ourselves somehow?

Finding someone we can talk to about how we are feeling can be a simple step that can make a big difference, even if we aren't able to solve all the issues and problems we are facing.

For Reflection

Can you think of any ways you could prevent your anger from starting?

That sounds great! But however much we prepare, we will all still feel angry sometimes. So, we can prepare ourselves to react to our anger in a positive way.

Taking a break is one of the best ways to manage anger.

- When you start feeling angry, take 10 seconds to calm down. Breathe in and out, slowly and deeply, five times before you speak or move. Then try to respond in a calmer way.
- Go somewhere else for 10 minutes to regain control of your emotions. If you have safe outdoor space, go outside.
- (*If relevant in your context:*) Drinking alcohol can influence our emotional reactions. Cut back on drinking or don't drink, especially when children are awake.
- Do you have weapons or things that can be used to hit others? Lock them up, hide them, or take them out of the home.

For Reflection

Is there something we've talked about that you want to try to put into practice this week?

Using Positive Discipline with our Children

For Reflection

- What have you noticed about your child's/ children's behavior during this time of crisis and of change in the family?
- Is your child/are your children behaving the same as usual, or have you noticed more difficult behavior?

All children misbehave. It is normal when children are tired, hungry, afraid, or learning independence. This can be harder to cope with during a crisis.

For Reflection

- How confident are you in using positive discipline, rather than physical discipline, with your children?
- What are some of the ways you help to encourage positive behaviors in your child/ children?

Some ideas for positive discipline:

- Encourage positive behavior by using positive words to say the behavior you want to see. (For example, say: 'Please put your books away,' rather than saying: 'Don't make a mess'.) Praise your child/children when they are behaving well.
- Redirect unwanted behavior quickly when you notice it beginning, by suggesting another activity.
- Use consequences, rather than hitting or shouting – this is more effective and teaches children responsibility. Some examples of consequences are taking away privileges or instructing your child to take time to calm down (a time-out). Give your child a chance to follow your instructions before giving them the consequence. Stay calm when giving the consequence, and make sure it is something you can follow through with. The consequences should be in scale and reasonable to the child's misbehavior and age.

For Reflection

What will you do differently, for one specific behavior, with one specific child, this week?

How to Support our Children if Someone Has Hurt Them³

Sometimes, something happens at home or outside that makes a child feel unsafe. Experiencing abuse or violence is one of the things that can lead a child to change their behavior and seem to be behaving “badly”, or withdrawing and not engaging, connecting, or talking the way they used to. An important part of our journey to learn and practice parenting skills is for us to learn some truths about child abuse, consider how each of us thinks about abuse and children who experience abuse, and learn how to comfort and strengthen our children if they experience abuse.

Abuse against children is sometimes overlooked, or even accepted as ‘normal’ by social and cultural norms, or attitudes and beliefs that people hold. That is why it is important for each of us to understand that: Abuse is NEVER a child’s fault. THE PERPETRATOR IS THE CAUSE OF ABUSE, NOT THE CHILD’S BEHAVIOR.³ A child who is abused is NEVER to blame, and they need love, care, and support to heal and recover.

In a later session, we will talk more specifically about sexual abuse. For now, here are some points on how you can respond in a loving, supportive manner if you think your child/children might have experienced abuse:

- If you notice changes in your child’s/children’s behavior or see any physical signs of violence, please invite the child/children to talk to you about what is happening to them. When you speak to them, make sure that you are gentle, compassionate, and calm. They may not be ready to talk about what happened, and it’s important to not push them to share details, if they are not ready. If your child shares that they have been abused – or if you think they

may have been abused, even if they have not shared - here are some messages that your child will need to hear from you:

- › Anything that happened was NOT your fault.
- › I love you so much.
- › Nothing could ever change my love for you.

Children who have gone through trauma, like physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, can carry negative beliefs about themselves, about their parent(s)/caregiver(s), and about the world. For them, this feels like the burden of carrying a heavy suitcase that no one else can see, which is full of confusion, pain, and fear. This heavy suitcase (burden) can lead to challenging behaviors. Parent(s)/caregiver(s) can help their child/children empty their heavy suitcases and even “repack their suitcase” full of positive messages; parents can do this by speaking positive messages, like the ones above, to replace the negative ones.

If you learn that your child was/children were abused, make sure to report the abuse to the appropriate authority. Your facilitator can share that information with you.

(Note to facilitator: Share with participants the appropriate procedure for reporting child abuse in your context – child helpline, social services, NGO, or police.)

It’s also important for both your child and you, as a parent/caregiver, to receive support during this time. Here are some suggestions:

- Never tell your child/children to “forget about the abuse.” Instead, help them by reminding them that this doesn’t change the way you see them or your love for them; it was not their fault.
- Find a professional child counsellor who can help your child/children work towards healing. Find a counsellor who can support your personal healing and guide you on how to help your child/children through this.

³ PEPEAR Faith and Community Initiative (2019, March). Preventing and responding to sexual violence against children. (Presentation).

- Consider asking close family and friends to support your child/children and/or you. Think carefully about one or just a few people in your life who are safe, trustworthy and non-judgmental, people who will support you without shaming or gossiping. If you are considering getting someone else's support to help you support your child/children, it's important to plan this thoughtfully in a way that won't make your child/children feel 'out of control of their own story'.

Putting it into practice this week

- Could you try to talk with your child/children about what ideas you and they have for how you can each manage your anger effectively?
- What can you do if you notice each other getting angry?
- What do you plan to put into practice with your child/children this week?

This ends Session 6. Thank you for your participation.

Below are extra tools that you can use, including example questions to help you talk with your own or other children. We look forward to meeting again next time!



SESSION 6

EXTRA TOOLS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN

These tools are a practical guide for parents or caregivers to use when talking with their child about staying safe at home. They include specific statements, questions, and ideas for talking with and helping their child think about anger and how to stay safe when they or others in the home are feeling or showing anger. *You will see the words “parent” and “parents” in the tool. If you are the parent or caregiver going through these tools with your own child, you can say “me” and “we”, instead.*

You will see the following symbols, which show if the tool is for use with children in live conflict/disaster zones, children on the move, or those who are settled.



**Live Conflict/
Disaster**



On the Move



Settled

These are the included tools:

- Staying Safe at Home
- Someone I Can Talk To

Beginning the time together

Begin with your usual check-in questions, such as:

- What was the best thing that happened this week?
- What was something funny that happened this week?
- What was hard about this week?

Staying Safe at Home



Activity to play with your child

Ask the child/children to tell you something they can do with the part of their body you name. You can take turns asking each other,

choosing a different part of the body each time.

For example, You: “Legs” – Child: “Running fast!”; You: “Eyes” – Child: “Noticing when my sister is sad”.

What’s something you’re glad you can do with your...

- Ears?
- Feet?
- Mouth?
- Hands?
- Legs?
- Eyes?

If there are several children, the children can try to touch that part of their body as fast as they can, at the same time as shouting out their answers.

Explain that today we'll be talking about how we can stay safe at home, including how we use our bodies in a positive way.

Me and My Body

For Reflection with Your Child

It's great that we can use our body to do so many good things, as we just talked about. But sometimes, we can use our bodies in less helpful ways - maybe to hurt others or even ourselves. Can you think of any examples of this?

Some examples might be:

- Using our hands to hit someone
- Using our feet to kick someone
- Using our mouth to say unkind words

All of us get angry and upset sometimes (both children and adults!), and especially at the moment, when we are having such a hard time. When life is hard and confusing, we can find it difficult to stay calm and kind.

You could ask the child/children to make a face that looks angry.

For Reflection with Your Child

- Can you think of a time you felt angry this week?
- What happened?
- What did you do?

(Be ready to share your own example with the child/children, to show that all of us can find life difficult.)

For Reflection with Your Child

- What do you normally do when you feel angry?
- Does this help you feel better?

Here are some helpful things we can do if we feel angry:

- Count to ten
- Walk away from the situation
- Breathe slowly and deeply

- Talk to someone you trust
- Do some exercise or physical activity
- Write or draw how you are feeling

For Reflection with Your Child

Will you try something different this week when you feel angry?

Someone I Can Talk To



Introduce to the child/children that there are lots of things that can make us feel unsafe and scared, whether we are a child or an adult. Explain to the child/children that being around people who are angry is one of the things that can make us feel scared, even when they are people we love and who love and care for us. We can feel scared by other people's anger, and even by our own. Explain that you will now talk together about things children can do when they feel unsafe or scared.

For Reflection with Your Child

What would you do if something happened to make you feel unsafe or scared tomorrow?

Do not prompt the child/children for answers, but some of their answers might include: (Talk to someone I trust / Tell someone to stop what they are doing / Get away from the situation / Don't know)

Look at your hand and your five fingers. It's important that we have people to talk to when we feel scared, upset, angry, or sad.

For Reflection with Your Child

Can you think of five people you can talk to if you are feeling scared, upset, angry, or sad? (one for each finger) *(This might include parents/caregivers, siblings, friends, wider family, teachers, mentors, faith leaders, or others).*

You could ask the child/children to write or draw on their hand, and write the name of (or draw) one person they can talk to on each finger.

For Reflection with Your Child

- Can you still talk to these people at the moment?
- If not, is there someone else at home or nearby you can talk to?

We can feel scared or unsafe if someone touches us in a way we don't want, or in a way that doesn't feel nice or right. If that ever happens to us, we can:

- Tell the person to stop.
- Get away from the situation.
- Tell someone we trust about it. *Note to parent/caregiver: please say to your child, "I hope you feel safe talking with me if something like this ever happens. And I want you to know that I would not blame you for someone hurting you, that I love you so much, and that nothing can ever change my love for you!"*

Wrap up: What can we do together this week?

For Reflection with Your Child

What is one thing you will do this week to help you if you feel angry, or to talk to someone you trust if you feel worried or scared or unsafe?

(Some options include: do something different, such as counting to ten or walking away, if I feel angry / talk to my parent(s)/caregiver(s) about managing my anger / talk to someone I trust if I am feeling worried or scared / other)

This ends the tools "Staying Safe at Home" and "Someone I Can Talk To". We look forward to hearing how it went!

SESSION 7

COPING WITH LOSS

PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WWD PARENTING
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HELPING OUR CHILDREN WHEN SOMEONE WE LOVE DIES

- Tell children who they will live with and who will look after them – they often worry about this.
- Listen to and accept whatever your child feels. Children may seem happy but be sad.
- Do something together to say goodbye to the person – a song or letter or prayer.
- Allow yourself to mourn your losses too.
- In simple words, tell them the person has died and will not come back.

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No.14

For Reflection

What have been the best parts and most difficult parts of the last week?

Coping with Loss

Today's topic is coping with loss as a family. We're all aware that this has been a difficult time for everyone, and many of us have lost friends or family members or have struggled with other kinds of loss during this time. We know that our children have experienced these losses, too. By the end of our session today we will have talked about:

- How we have experienced loss as a family
- How we can support our children to deal with loss and grief

This can be a difficult topic to talk about and, at any point, you should feel free not

to answer, or to end the conversation, or to change the subject. Our goal is to create a safe space to begin to talk about this topic and think about some practical ideas. If there is a need for further support, your group facilitator can help you connect to further support, such as counselling.

How Have we Experienced Loss?

We have all experienced different kinds of loss – being separated from friends and family, losing a loved one, losing a familiar place like a home, losing our job or school.

For Reflection

What are some of the ways you or your child/children have experienced loss during this time?

Grief is the name for the painful emotions we feel when we lose someone or something. As humans, connection to other people is very important to us, and that is why we feel pain when separated from those we love, and why losing a loved one creates the greatest pain.

We can also grieve for other losses: being separated from friends and family, or our home; losing access to a familiar place like school, our workplace, or our place of worship. And we can also grieve for things that can't be seen: such as losing our sense of security, or our hopes for the future.

Here are some examples of "hidden losses" that can cause grief – loss of:⁴

- A world
- Status

⁴ Ruth E. Van Reken, co-founder of Families in Global Transition. Co-author of *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*.

- A sense of identity
- A sense of cultural balance
- Similar cultures of people in our family
- Lifestyle
- Possessions
- Relationships
- Past that wasn't or past that was

Phases of Grief⁵

Grief is our natural reaction to loss. When we experience a loss, we may go through a number of phases in the grieving process. We might go back and forth between these phases, and we might experience them in different orders. The way one person grieves may differ from the way someone else grieves: one person may feel a need to be alone in nature, while another person may feel a need for companionship. In the grieving process, our minds and emotions are trying to make sense of our loss and adapt to the new reality that has been created in our lives. The recognized phases of grief are listed below:

Disbelief

We may feel numb or shocked. We may struggle to believe that the loss has happened. We may avoid people or put off doing things. We may become forgetful and distracted and try to stay busy. We may find ourselves frequently telling others, "I'm fine." Even if that is not how we are feeling inside.

Anger

It's normal to feel angry after a loss. We may feel frustrated, impatient, or resentful. We may feel like we are out of control. We may become pessimistic, cynical, and irritable.

Sometimes we may be aggressive and get into arguments with other people.

Yearning

After experiencing loss, it's common to have strong emotions of wishing our loved one or something we lost was still with us. We are looking for comfort, and we might relive memories of the person we lost, through pictures or items that remind us of them.

Depression

It's normal to feel intense pain after a loss, and that pain may come and go over time. We may feel hopeless or overwhelmed. We may have trouble sleeping and eat less or more than we normally do. We may feel less energetic or less motivated, and we may try to avoid being around people. Some people use alcohol or drugs to lessen or numb the pain of their grief.

Acceptance

Over time, the pain of loss usually lessens. This does not mean we are forgetting who or what we have lost. We are learning to live in our new reality. We are adapting and being honest with ourselves and others. We are learning to be present and mindful. Practicing these coping skills can help us feel courageous.

Making Sense

Loss creates a new reality in our lives, and we can find healing in making sense of that new reality. This usually takes time, and it does not mean that we have to understand why our loved one died. It means we can honor our loved one and make sense of the life we now live and the people who are still with us.

"Meaning is a reflection of the love we have for those we have lost."⁶

David Kessler

For Reflection

- For those who have experienced a loss: Which, if any, of these phases of grief have you experienced after your own loss?



⁵ Currier JM, Holland JM, Neimeyer RA. Sense-making, grief, and the experience of violent loss: toward a mediational model. *Death Stud.* 2006 Jun;30(5):403-28. doi: 10.1080/07481180600614351. PMID: 16610156. Retrieved Jan. 1, 2024, from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16610156/>

⁶ Kessler, D. (2020) *Finding meaning: The sixth stage of grief*. Scribner, New York, NY.

- For those who have not experienced a recent loss but know others who have: Which, if any, of these phases of grief have you observed in the person who has experienced a loss?
- What has helped or might help you adapt to your new reality and find meaning? Or what might help the person you are thinking of?

Children and Grief

For Reflection

Thinking about the losses your child has/children have experienced (such as loss of loved ones, lost opportunities and friendships, or other losses), how has your child/have your children reacted to these losses?

There is no ‘correct’ way to grieve. Children’s reactions will vary, depending on their age and level of understanding and personality. If someone has died, children’s reactions can depend on how close they were to that person, how the person died, and how the family are responding.

While every child is different, you might see changes in your child’s:

- **Feelings:** they may feel sad, angry, frightened, lonely, guilty, or confused. They may experience more than one feeling at the same time, or feel and show nothing at all for long periods, and then suddenly feel overwhelmed by different emotions.
- **Thinking:** they may find themselves thinking constantly about what happened, or find uncomfortable or frightening thoughts or images suddenly appearing in their mind without warning. They may worry about the future and find it hard to focus and concentrate.
- **Behavior:** children may withdraw and isolate themselves, or they may carry on with their normal activities as if nothing unusual has happened. They may misbehave, such as deliberately getting into fights, or they may revert to the behavior of a much younger child, such as thumb sucking, bed wetting, or demanding that you stay close. They may engage in

‘repetitive play’, repeatedly acting out an upsetting experience.

- **Physical state:** children may not want to eat and may have difficulty sleeping. They may have nightmares. They may suffer from unexplained aches and pains.

These reactions vary between children and over time, and a child may have many different reactions over the course of a single day. Grief can continue for a long time when life circumstances are challenging, and can return much later, for example, if triggered by a reminder, such as an anniversary, or a favorite activity that the child did with the lost person. All these reactions are natural. However, in a very small number of children, the reactions may be intense and prolonged and very disruptive of daily life, in which case the parent(s)/caregiver(s) should seek further support for the child, such as from a community health worker or a counsellor.

Helping my Children Deal with Loss

This section is relevant for parents/caregivers, grandparents, teachers, children’s ministry leaders in religious settings, such as for example Sunday school teachers and others, and others who regularly interact with children.

Please take note that family members grieving the death of someone they love may be so overwhelmed by their own grief that they cannot comfort one another for many months. In this case, accepting comfort from a small group of trusted friends can be healing.

For Reflection

- How is your child/are your children coping now?
- What do you think is helping them to deal with their sadness or grief?

It’s great that you can see some positive ways that your child/children are able to move forward and cope with these difficult things. While losing a loved one, or any other loss, can be deeply upsetting for a child, there are lots

of things we can do to support our children and move forward together.

Here are examples of some ways we can support our children to cope with loss:

- Talk to children openly and honestly: While it is natural to want to protect children from getting upset, even very young children can tell when something unusual is happening, and not understanding what is happening can increase their distress. If the truth is hidden from them, children can imagine something that is even worse than the reality, and they may blame themselves. All children, including those with physical and mental disabilities, need clear, honest, consistent explanations appropriate to their age and ability to understand, so that they can accept the reality of the loss. Telling your children the truth will increase their trust in you and help them cope better with the loss.
- Ensure that children receive loving, consistent care from you. Try not to punish the child/children for challenging behavior or where they seem unable to do something they used to be able to do, as these can be reactions to grief. Very young children feel more secure through loving physical contact, singing, cuddling, and rocking.
- Try to maintain normal life routines and structure as much as possible. Try to have a regular pattern to the day, with allocated tasks and times for activities, such as cleaning the space where you live or are staying, doing schoolwork, getting exercise, and having time to play.
- If there has been a death of a loved one, other children in the child's life, at school or in friendship circles, should be informed (through their teachers or parents/caregivers) as to what has happened, so that they can support the child/children.
- Give children the opportunity to help you, but do not push them to take on adult roles and responsibilities beyond their capacity.
- Self-care remains important, so take care of your own physical and mental well-being. You have experienced loss, as well. It is vital that you get enough sleep, eat

properly, exercise, take time to relax, and have someone to whom you can turn for emotional support. Try to avoid harmful practices, such as increased alcohol or tobacco consumption.

- Art or drawing, drama, songs, and play can help children to find outlets for their grief. See creative ideas in the "Putting it into Practice" section below.

For Reflection

Is there anything you want to put into practice with your child/children?

Putting it into Practice this Week

(If the conversation has included examples of children dealing with the death of loved ones, you may want to suggest the below ideas for ways the family could remember the person together.)

Ideas for an activity to do with your child this week:

- Find ways for your child/children to show their love for the person who has died, and to show the importance of that person in the child's/children's life. Children may like to paint a picture, read a poem or something they have written about that person, or sing a song, or make music. You could prepare and share a meal together which the loved one enjoyed and talk about them during the meal. This kind of activity can be repeated on significant anniversaries, like the birthday of the person who has died.
- Put a picture on a wall and/or display objects that remind you of that person.
- Help the child/children to create a 'memory box', where they can place small items that remind them of the person who has died. These can be photographs if you have them, or objects such as buttons from a favourite jacket, or a pendant, or prayer beads. Or help the child/children create a scrap book, in which they tell stories and make pictures of happy times that they remember.
- Work with the child/children to draw a family tree. This emphasizes that there is still a connection with the lost loved one, even if they are not physically with us anymore. It also helps the child/children to see that they are still part of a wider family network.

Wrap Up

We have all experienced losses in our lives, and especially at this time of crisis. Engaging in a social network can help bring healing. Let's talk about how we can get involved with a small group of friends, in our community, in a hobby or sport, in a service organization, in a church or faith community or congregation, or a project, as part of supporting ourselves and our families in dealing with grief and loss at this time. *(You can point out if this Hope Group is part of a larger organization or church or faith community or congregation that participants might take part in. Also talk about any opportunities for children to get involved.)*

This ends Session 7. Thank you for your participation.

Below are extra tools that you can use, including example questions to help you talk with your own or other children. We look forward to meeting again next time!



SESSION 7

EXTRA TOOLS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN

This tool is a practical guide for parents or caregivers to use when talking with their child about the losses the child has experienced. It includes specific statements, questions, and ideas for talking with and helping their child deal with their loss and grief. You will see the words “parent” and “parents” in the tool. If you are the parent or caregiver going through this tool with your own child, you can say “me” and “we”, instead.

You will see the following symbols, which show if the tool is for use with children in live conflict/disaster zones, children on the move, or those who are settled.



**Live Conflict/
Disaster**



On the Move



Settled

These are the included tools for this session:

- Talking with Children about Coping with Loss
- What Have I Lost?
- How Can I Move Forward?

Talking with Children about Coping with Loss



Beginning the time together

Begin with your usual check-in questions, such as:

- What was the best thing that happened this week?
- What was something funny that happened this week?
- What was hard about this week?

Game: More or Less

Explain to the child/children that you will say several things to them, and they should

respond with either ‘More!’ or ‘Less !’ to let you know whether they think there has been more or less of each thing during the last few months.

Examples: You: ‘Going to school?’ - Child: ‘Less’; You: ‘Playing with your family?’ - Child: ‘More’

Select from the things below, as relevant for the child/children you are speaking with:

- Going to school
- Playing with your family
- Taking care of people at home
- Eating chocolate
- Exercising outside
- Seeing your friends

- Reading books
- Going shopping
- Helping with household chores

We have all been through a lot of change, and gained and lost things, sometimes things that are really important to us. Explain that today we'll be looking at what we've lost and sharing some ideas together to help us to cope with these difficult times.

What Have I Lost?

We know that this has been a hard time for all of us (adults and children) and we've all lost different things – maybe not being able to see our friends and family, or being away from our home; not being able to go to a familiar place like school, or to our place of worship or community center. Some of us have lost people we love, because they are far away from us, or because they have died. We can also lose things we can't see – for example, we could lose our sense of feeling safe, or our feeling of hope for the future.

For Reflection with Your Child

Looking back over the last few months, what are some things you feel like you have lost? *(The child/children may mention losing a loved one or friend, or they may choose to talk about other types of loss. That's fine, and you can be guided by what the child wants/children want to talk about in the conversation.)*

That must have been a hard time for you and your family.

For Reflection with Your Child

How are you feeling about it now?

It's normal to have different reactions and feelings when we lose someone or something, and we shouldn't feel bad about that.

Here are some different ways you might be feeling, when you have lost something or someone:

- You might feel sad, angry, frightened, lonely, guilty, or confused, and wish things could go back to the way they were. You

might feel ok for a while and then suddenly feel really sad again.

- You might find it hard to concentrate or focus on your schoolwork, or you might find you are thinking about the loss a lot.
- You might feel like you don't want to do the things you usually enjoy doing, or you might find yourself getting into trouble more often.
- You might feel less hungry, or find it hard to sleep, or feel ill.

It's normal and ok to experience any of these feelings, and it's ok to cry or share the way you are feeling with someone you trust, so you don't have to handle it on your own.

For Reflection with Your Child

Do you have a parent, caregiver, or other trusted adult you can talk to about how you are feeling?

How Can I Move Forward?

For Reflection with Your Child

What are some things you already do that help you to feel better?

That's great – and actually, you already have a lot of strengths and abilities inside you that help you to be ok, even if you feel like you are having a hard time. You can probably remember some other times in your life when you were facing challenges, and you were able to keep going even though things were hard.

Here are some other ideas you could try, which could help you to feel better *(If the child has/children have mentioned losing a loved one, talk about this specifically):*

- Remember that it's ok to have feelings! And that they might come and go at different times, and that's ok.
- Talk about it – find a way to talk with your parent(s)/caregiver(s) or other trusted adults about what happened and ask any questions you still have.

- Share your feelings with other people, or find a way to express them – such as drawing, writing, singing, dancing, or other ways.
- Find ways to do things that make you happy, like connecting with your friends, having fun with your family, doing a hobby, or other activities.

This ends the tools “Talking with Children about Coping with Loss”, “What Have I Lost?” and “How Can I Move Forward?”. We look forward to hearing how it went!

For Reflection with Your Child

Is there anything you might do this week to try out one of these ideas?

Wrap up: What can we do together this week?

If the child has/children have mentioned the death of a friend or loved one, you may want to talk with them about trying some of the ideas below for remembering the loved one together as a family.

The child/children may have their own ideas, as well.

- Paint a picture, read a poem or something you have written about that person, or sing a song, or make music.
- Ask if you can prepare a meal at home which reminds you of the person who died or is far away from you right now.
- Put a picture of the person on the wall.
- Create a ‘memory box’ where you can keep small items that remind you of the person.
- Create a scrapbook with stories and pictures of happy times you remember having with the person.

An invitation to connect

If there is a program or activity that the child/children could join, as part of your organization/ project/church/community, explain this to the child/children now, and ask if they would like to be part of it. Ensure that you have asked permission from the parent(s)/ caregiver(s) before inviting the child/children to participate in any group activity.

SESSION 8

UNDERSTANDING GUILT AND SECONDARY TRAUMA

PARENTING TIPS FOR CHALLENGING TIMES  Hope@Groups

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

- Look after yourself as much as possible and try to rest when you can.
- Take a moment each day to listen to your breath as it goes in and out.
- Connect with loved ones as often as you can.
- Taking care of yourself also helps you to help your family.



Parents and Caregivers are HEROES Protecting our children in a crisis No.1

PARENTING TIPS FOR CHALLENGING TIMES  Hope@Groups

COPING WITH STRESS, UPSET, AND ANGER

- Find someone who you can talk to about how you are feeling.
- Losing your temper? Breathe in and out slowly five times.
- Try to do something that helps you relax.
- Remember to praise yourself each time you take steps to cope.



Parents and Caregivers are HEROES Protecting our children in a crisis No.5

PARENTING TIPS FOR CHALLENGING TIMES  Hope@Groups

ROUTINE HELPS CHILDREN FEEL SAFE

- Even when it feels hard, try to have some daily routines for yourself and children.
- If you can, help children with daily routines like meals or schoolwork.
- Our children learn calmness and kindness from us.
- Tell yourself a calming message again and again, Try 'I can do this, I am trying my best'



Parents and Caregivers are HEROES Protecting our children in a crisis No.2

Today's topics are designed to be used in various contexts – whether in a conflict/disaster zone, moving to a different home, displaced, returning to home, or settled at home or in a new location. Where activities vary, you will see these symbols – please choose the content reflecting your context. The topics we will talk about today are important for every parent and child to understand, regardless of where they live.



**Live Conflict/
Disaster**



On the Move



Settled

Understanding Guilt, Fear, and Worry



It is common for both adults and children who have survived a traumatic event to experience guilt, shame, regret, fear, or worry. You or your child/children might experience any of the following:

- Guilt about surviving.
- Guilt over what you “should” have done.
- Guilt over what you did.
- Guilt that you left a place or situation when others did not.
- Regret over what you did or did not do.
- Fear that it was your fault.
- Worry about the added losses that are linked to the loss of a loved one - both for yourself and the surviving children.

It's normal to think repeatedly about events that happened, and to wonder what you could or should have done differently. You might feel you don't deserve to be safe and should have been harmed as others were. You might question the fairness and justness of the world. You might notice that your older child or children are experiencing the same feelings of guilt. Even when you know you could not have changed the outcome for others who did not survive, you can feel intense survivor's guilt. You might feel sad that you didn't do enough, help enough, share enough, or know enough. You might have feelings of regret, and tell yourself you should have tried harder to help others or to do something different than what you did.

For Reflection

- How have you handled these thoughts and feelings, if you have experienced them?
- Has your child/have your children expressed any of these thoughts and feelings?

If you or your child/children are experiencing these feelings of survivor's guilt, there are some tips that can help:

- Remind yourself who is truly responsible for this situation – you did not cause this. You can mourn the loss of a loved one, but focus on not taking blame for their suffering.
- Focus on the outside factors that led to an event. Don't assume responsibility for a situation that was out of your control.
- Be kind and loving to yourself and let self-forgiveness be the foundation on which you move forward.
- Remember that these feelings are common. During and after a crisis – like war, disaster, or loss of a loved one – sadness, fear, anger, anxiety, grief, and guilt are completely normal responses, and feeling guilt does not mean you are guilty of doing anything wrong.
- It's healthy to feel thankful for your life, while at the same time mourning the death of others.
- Think about how people who love you feel about your LIFE. Embrace the knowledge that those who love you are deeply grateful that you are okay.
- If people you know are blaming you for something that is not your fault, their response may be a direct result of processing their own trauma. It is healthy to keep reminding yourself that you are not to blame for the suffering of others; you did not cause this.

When considering survivor's guilt, it is helpful to understand what trauma can do to the body, brain, and sense of well-being. Your body and brain function best when you experience satisfying activities, such as the birth of a baby, a party, learning something new, and feeling success.

These satisfying experiences prompt hormones that help to regulate our moods and promote positive feelings. We need occurrences of these hormones to feel regulated and to experience a sense of well-being.

Traumatic experiences have the opposite impact on our emotions. Toxic stress produces unhealthy hormones that take over our senses, and tell us to “fight, freeze, or flee.”

At the same time, stress also releases healthy hormones that have a calming effect on our body and brain, helping us adjust to stress and to even grow through it.

Below are some POSITIVE ACTIONS that you and your child/children can take starting today, to produce healthy hormones and reduce harmful hormones:

- Do something meaningful for someone else.
- Allow yourself to grieve. It is hard to grieve loss during a time of war or other crisis because the threat is still present. In little moments, try to find ways to acknowledge and honor the people who were lost.
- Find a safe person to talk with.
- Find positive ways to express yourself, for example, in art, song, poetry, or dance. Journaling can also be helpful.
- Practice self-care. You have experienced a harrowing event and taking care of yourself, both physically and emotionally, is essential for healing. Eat well, sleep well, move your body, and find support to help make sense of it all.
- Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.
- Exercise earlier in the day. Exercising regularly can improve sleep quality when it is done at least 2–3 hours before bedtime.
- Limit caffeine intake. Avoid nicotine and alcohol.
- Limit exposure to bright light at night. Go to bed in a quiet room. Take naps.
- Learn to recognize stressful thinking. Paying attention to stressful thoughts may help you to reduce them. Training yourself to be aware of your thoughts, your breathing, your heart rate, and other signs of tension helps you to recognize stress when it begins.
- Get outside, turn your face to the sun and close your eyes for a few seconds.
- Laugh. Find a video on YouTube or a movie you can watch that is funny. Sit with someone and tell stories of experiences that brought you joy. Laugh or giggle.

- Sit and meditate, reflect, pray. If faith is important to you, reading an uplifting story, book, or sacred text may bring hope.
- Practice talking about what you are grateful for! Research shows that practicing gratitude and laughter help us to recover.
- Cook with ingredients and eat foods known for producing “happy” hormones: Spicy foods; Yogurt, beans, eggs, meats that are low-fat; Almonds; Sauerkraut; Foods with tryptophan, such as oats, cheese, canned tuna, seeds, whole milk; Green Tea extract.
- Be your best self. Feelings of shame, guilt, or inadequacy can lead to negative thinking. Instead, practice the everyday habits of gratitude and forgiveness of others.

Guilt can paralyze us or it can motivate us. Grieving your experiences is part of the healing process - but remember, **this is not your fault**. You can decide today to build simple healthy habits that make your healthy hormones increase and build feelings of hope!

For Reflection

- Who are some of the people who are glad that you are safe?
- Which of the POSITIVE ACTIONS suggested above have helped you, or that you think would be helpful for you to try?
- Which of the POSITIVE ACTIONS suggested above could help the child/children in your care?
- Who is one person you could share this information with?

Understanding Secondary and Vicarious Trauma



In times of crisis, disaster, war, conflict, and loss, we hear again and again stories that tear our hearts apart and see images that cannot be erased from our minds. We personally

experience the ongoing stresses of our own situation, and many of us continually help and support others. All of this can seem overwhelming and without end.

Secondary trauma is a type of exhaustion and desensitization to traumatic events that occurs when we are exposed to others who survived trauma. It affects both adults and children. It can come from direct exposure to a person and their stories, or through indirect exposure through the media. It can cause you to feel numb to the tragedies, upheavals, media stories, or experiences shared by others. Your child/children might also be experiencing this secondary trauma.

Vicarious trauma is the effect over time on a person who is supporting survivors. This type of trauma makes it feel like the helper themselves is experiencing the trauma of those they are serving.

For Reflection

- What are some ways you have helped others through this crisis/transition?
- Have you noticed any signs of secondary or vicarious trauma, in yourself or in your child/children?
- Have any of the POSITIVE ACTIONS we have talked about – or other actions – helped you?

The POSITIVE ACTIONS for increasing healthy hormones that we talked about can be helpful, if you are experiencing secondary or vicarious trauma. Below are some additional ideas for healthy habits which you can try:

- Listen to your body. Learn to recognize and manage tension – use relaxation techniques.

- Reduce stressors in areas of your life which you can control. Learn to say “no” when asked to take on tasks or roles that will add to your stress.
- Time away. Step away from others and allow yourself some time alone.
- Learn about stress. When you are learning and applying what you have learned, you will start to feel capable and successful.
- Take breaks from news stories, including those on social media. It’s good to be informed, but constant information about the crisis around you can be upsetting.
- Move more and sit less – keeping your body moving with walking, stretching, or other exercises.
- Take deep breaths in through your nose, and hold that breath, then breathe out slowly through your mouth.
- Drink plenty of water. Keep hydrated.

Wrap Up

Commit to practicing some of the POSITIVE ACTIONS and other healthy habits we have discussed today. Choose between one and three of these to try before our next meeting, and plan to share how it went when we meet again. Also consider the child/children in your care and think about how these tips might support them.



**This ends Session 8.
Thank you for your participation. We
look forward to meeting again next week!**

SESSION 9

LEARNING TOGETHER

PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WVO PARENTING FOR CHALLENGING TIMES
HopeGroups

ROUTINE HELPS CHILDREN FEEL SAFE

- Even when it feels hard, try to have some daily routines for yourself and children.
- If you can, help children with daily routines like meals or schoolwork.
- Our children learn calmness and kindness from us.
- Tell yourself a calming message again and again, Try 'I can do this, I am trying my best'



Parents and Caregivers are HEROES
Protecting our children in a crisis

No.2

In a crisis, we may feel that we can't possibly think about children's learning, on top of everything else we are dealing with. But being able to keep learning is one of the things that can help children to feel normal and to cope with change. As a parent/caregiver, you already have all the qualities you need to be able to help your child/children learn. They have already learnt a lot from you!

We can be encouraged that even a few minutes every day, sitting with your child/children and discussing what they have been learning, makes a big difference! Supporting children to continue learning will help them feel positive about the future, ready to return to school when that becomes possible, or able to adjust to school in a new place, or in a new language, or online.

Supporting Children to Learn



Be aware that in an active conflict/war or disaster zone, children and parents/caregivers may not have the capacity to concentrate on schoolwork or learning. In this case, move straight to the topic "Creating Structure and Routine in Our Day", and perhaps return to this topic when the family are in a more stable setting.

For Reflection

- Is your child/are your children in school at the moment?
- Whether they are or not, how has it been going trying to support your child's/children's learning at home?

Your child/children may have access to learning materials through books, radio, television, or the internet. If you have these resources, make use of them as much as feels comfortable, without putting pressure on yourself or your child/children to complete all available tasks. If you do not have these resources, you can still help children learn.

For Reflection

Can you think of ways that what you are already doing together is helping children to learn new skills or to practice what they know?

Some simple ways we can help children to learn include:

- Talk to children about your daily tasks and let them help you.
- Encourage your child/children to practice skills and knowledge they already have.
- Encourage older siblings to help explain

educational information and topics to younger children.

- Give your children a task to work on together, such as: draw a map of your community, build a tower, write and draw a story,

For Reflection

Is there something we've talked about that you want to try this week to help your child/children with their learning?

Creating Structure and Routine in our Day



For Reflection

- How has your time together as a family changed since the crisis/transition?
- Do you spend more or less time at home together?
- Do you do the same kinds of activities?

It's likely that most of your usual routines have been disrupted. You may be living with different people in your household or have left some people behind. Your situation may be changing fast all the time. You may be living in a totally new place; or you may feel stuck in one place and unable to do your usual activities. The disruption to our daily routines of work, home, and school can be hard to cope with. Making new routines together can help children to feel more secure and to behave better.

For Reflection

Are there things you try to do every day, or to do at particular times of each day, when you are together at home?

Below are some ideas of ways to plan your days together:

In an active conflict/war or disaster setting, or on the move, it may be hard to imagine any kind of routine. You could do something very simple that you and your child/children do at the start of the day and at bedtime (for

example, a song in the morning, and a prayer or story before bedtime). Or you could agree on one thing which you will try to do together each day.

If your family is in a more settled or safer context, you can try developing a daily routine by making a timetable with your child/children. Children will follow the timetable better if they help to make it.

- Include time for structured activities, as well as free time.
- Allow time for normal chores and for play time. Play is one of the best ways for children to learn and to support their wellbeing. Art or drawing also help children to express their emotions, and you can help by asking them to tell you about their drawing.
- Include time for exercise in each day. Exercise helps to reduce stress, and gives children an outlet for their energy.
- At the end of each day, take a minute to look back at the day. Tell your child/children one positive or fun thing they did and ask your child/children what they liked most that day. Recognize something that you did well too!

For Reflection

Is there something you might add into your day, or an adjustment you might make to your daily routine?

Putting it into practice this week

With your child/children, write out or revise your family's daily routine. You could simply do this by talking together with your child/children about what activities they would like to do every day.

Another way to do this is to gather as a family and ask each family member: 'What is important for you to do every day?' Draw or write each activity mentioned on a separate piece of paper (examples: brush teeth, eat lunch, sleep, play, practice reading). Then move the pieces of paper around and talk about:

- Which of these are possible for us to do in our day, at the moment?

- What order should they happen, during the day?
- Which of these things do we want to agree to do every day together as a family, or commit to make time for each day?

This way, you can work together as a family to decide what new routines you can create where you are right now – even if this doesn't look the same as it used to.

For Reflection

What is one action you will take this week?

(Some ideas include: Talk with child/children about schoolwork / Help child/children with schoolwork / Let child/children help with daily tasks / Make a daily routine together / Add more activities to your daily routine.)

**This ends Session 9.
Thank you for your participation.
We look forward to meeting again
next week.**

Below are extra tools that you can use, including example questions to help you talk with your own or other children about how they are doing.



SESSION 9

EXTRA TOOLS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN

These tools are a practical guide for parents, caregivers, or trusted friends to use with children in various settings, to help children continue or re-establish learning habits and to create a routine for their daily life. You will see the words “parent” and “parents” in the tool. If you are the parent or caregiver going through this tool with your own child, you can say “me” and “we”, instead.

You will see the following symbols, which show if the tool is for use with children in live conflict/disaster zones, children on the move, or those who are settled.



**Live Conflict/
Disaster**



On the Move



Settled

These are the included tools:

- Learning Together Every Day
- Activities in My Day

Beginning the time together

Begin with your usual check-in questions, such as:

- What was the best thing that happened this week?
- What was something funny that happened this week?
- What was hard about this week?

Learning Together Every Day



Activity to play with your child

Ask the child/children to tell you about what their perfect day at home would be. What would they do when they woke up, what would they have for breakfast, what activities

would they do throughout the day? Try to get as much detail as possible.

Also be ready to share your idea of a perfect day!

In a group setting, children could work in pairs to create their perfect day and share this with the group. Or, for a game, you could have different daily activities on pieces of paper, which the children need to arrange in the right order as fast as they can (for example, wake up, eat breakfast, playing, reading, go to bed, etc.).

Explain that today we'll be looking at how we can keep learning even when we're at home, and how we can enjoy our time together with our family.

Learning Wherever I Am - For Reflection with Your Child

- Are you still able to go to the school which you attended before your loss, or are you in a different school, or not at school at all?

- If you are not able to go to school at the moment, what is that like?
- What do you miss about school?
- If you are spending more time at home, is that a good or a bad thing?
- If you are in school, is it different from before your loss, and how is it going?

Lots of children affected by crisis/transition have to stop going to school for a time, or try to learn online, or go to school in a new place. It can be hard when things change and are uncertain, and we shouldn't feel bad if we don't feel that we are able to focus and concentrate as well as we usually can. We don't have to stop learning just because we are not in school, or if we are in a new place.

For Reflection with Your Child

- How have you been learning, if you have not been in school?
- If you are in school, who is helping you to keep learning?

It's great that you have still been learning! Even if you don't think you are, there are a lot of ways we learn, apart from doing schoolwork. When we do things with our family – helping with chores or helping a brother or sister to learn – we are learning! When we play or have fun together, we are learning skills, like how to solve problems and how to work together.

For Reflection with Your Child

- Can you think of something you have learnt during the last month?
- How are your parent(s)/caregiver(s) or other adults at home involved in helping you learn?

We learn best when we have someone to talk to about what we're learning, or someone we can share our new learning with.

Here are some ways we can ask our parent(s)/caregiver(s) to be involved in our learning with us:

- Share your schoolwork with them and explain what you have been working on each day.

- Work together to write a story, draw a picture, sing a song, or read a book.
- Ask them to teach you something that they can do that you want to learn – such as, cooking a favorite food, or learning to sew, paint, build, or repair something.

For Reflection with Your Child

Is there something you will ask your parent(s)/caregiver(s) to do to help you learn this week?

Activities in my Day



For Reflection with Your Child

What is your favorite day of the week at home? Why?

(If children are in a conflict/war or disaster setting or on the move, you could ask them about their favorite day of the week before the crisis began.)

Especially when we are spending our time in a new place, or a lot of things are changing, it can be good for us to plan activities in our day to help us stay healthy.

For Reflection with Your Child

What are some things you think it is important to do every day to keep you healthy and happy?

This might include ideas like:

- Exercise and being active (even inside!)
- Getting enough sleep
- Eating healthy meals
- Playing and having fun
- Learning or schoolwork
- Family time
- Time outside (if we can)

You might ask the child/children to mime or act out the different activities for you or others in the group to guess.

For Reflection with Your Child

- Which of these activities do you do every day?
- Which would you like to do more (or less!)?

We can talk together as a family and work together to plan our days. You could ask your parent(s)/caregiver(s) if you can make a schedule for your days, if you don't already have one, or could ask them to look at making changes to the current schedule.

In conflict/war or disaster settings or on the move, where life is very disrupted, children may not be able to think about planning a whole day. Ask them for one thing they would like to try and do each day – this could be really simple, like playing a game, singing a song, or telling a story at the end of the day.

Wrap up: What can we do together this week?

For Reflection with Your Child

What is one thing you will do to learn together with your parent(s)/caregiver(s) this week, or to add an activity to your days? *(Some ideas could be: Talk with a parent/caregiver about schoolwork / Ask to read, write, draw, sing together / Ask parent/caregiver to teach you a skill / Talk about daily schedule.)*

This ends the tools “Learning Together Every Day” and “Activities in My Day”. We look forward to hearing how it went!

SESSION 10

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS⁷

PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WVO PARENTING FOR LIFELONG HEALTH
HopeGroups

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- If they tell you about abuse, trust your child. Reassure them it's not their fault and they are safe and loved.
- Teach your child that no one has the right to touch them or make them uncomfortable.
- Practice saying "no" loudly and strongly.
- Tell them that abusers often trick children by saying it is their 'secret'
- Talking about this with your child helps protect them.



Parents and Caregivers are HEROES
Protecting our children in a crisis

No.13

Today, we are going to talk about healthy relationships. These could include relationships with family, friends, coworkers, but we're going to pay special attention to our romantic relationships. Right now, many of our relationships face extra challenges and stress, due to the crisis, and some of us are also physically separated from loved ones. We want to talk about healthy patterns in relationships, how to handle disagreement or conflict, and how to stay safe.

We welcome the partners and spouses who have joined this session. If your partner or spouse is not able to be with us today, please read through and discuss these topics together, so that you can strengthen your relationship. If you are not currently in a romantic relationship, use this session to consider what your expectations are for this type of relationship in your future life. You will also see that many of the aspects of healthy

and unhealthy relationships are relevant in friendships and other non-romantic relationships.

We also want to discuss teaching our children about healthy romantic relationships. One way to protect our children is by educating them and creating openness, so they will feel comfortable talking with us about these issues.

Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships

So, what is a healthy relationship? One way we can know that our relationship is healthy is by learning to identify elements of healthy and unhealthy relationships and recognizing those elements in our own or our children's lives.

For Reflection with Your Partner

What do you think are some elements of a healthy relationship?

Thank you for sharing! Let's talk a bit more about what a healthy relationship looks like.

Respect is vital in a healthy relationship. Respect means that the other person shows you empathy, supports you, and uses language and words that are respectful. Someone who respects you will ask if you are okay, listen to you, and respect your choices. They will stop doing something if you want them to. They would never force you into something that you do not want to do. In a healthy relationship, the other person will not be possessive or controlling over you.

⁷ The primary sources for this session are: Parenting for Lifelong Health (n.d.) Parenting App-Sexual Violence Prevention Module PEPPAR (2019, Jan 16) 9-14 Year Old Prevention, Module 1-3

Illustration 4: When a relationship is healthy, both partners will show these respectful behaviors to each other. Some other aspects of a healthy relationship are:



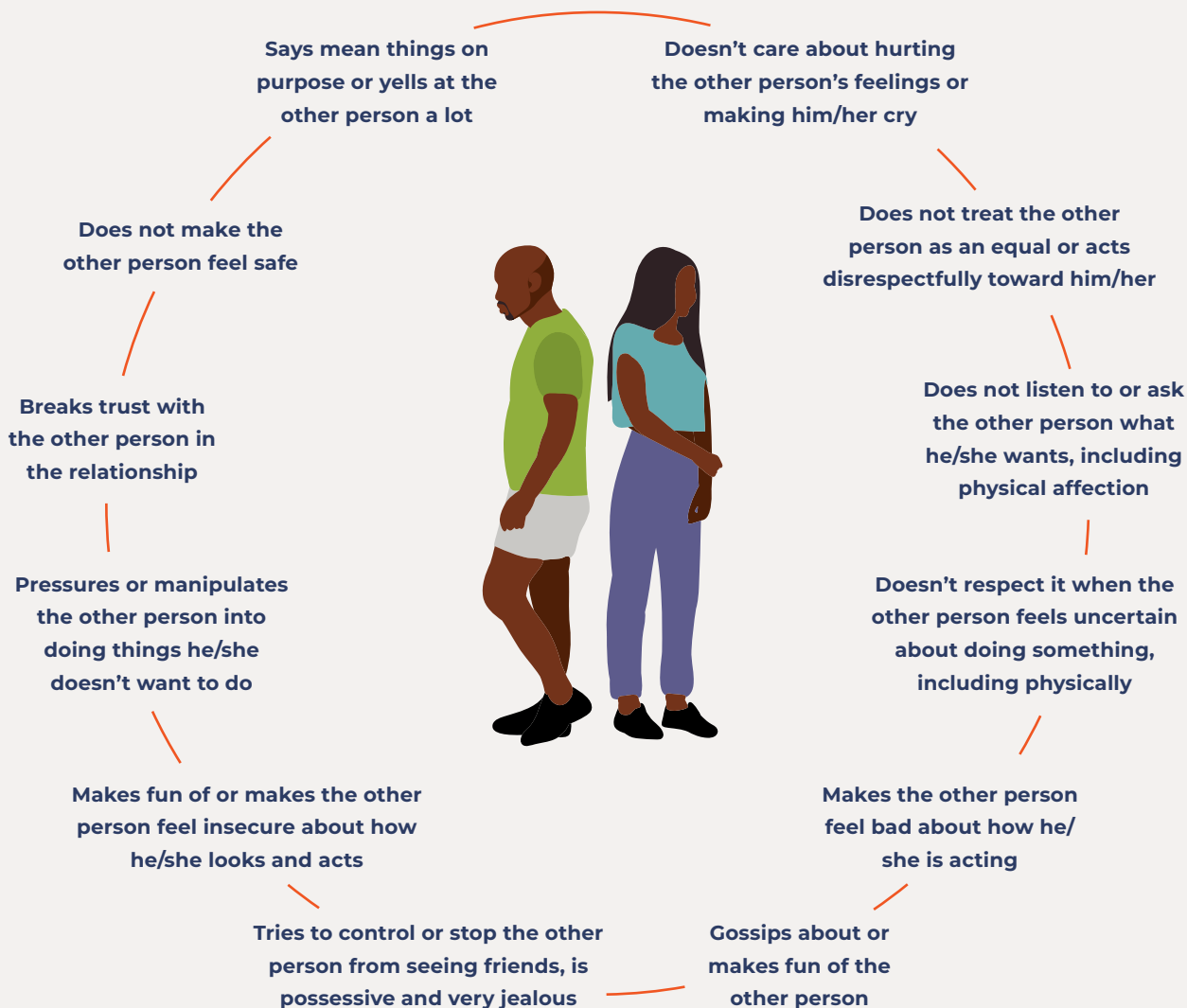
We often hear the reminder to treat other people the way that we want to be treated. In some cultures, this is known as the Golden Rule. This is a great standard to measure if your own behaviors towards others are healthy, and to think about whether or not your friend or partner is acting in healthy ways towards you.

Now let's talk about things people do in relationships that might not be healthy. These could include behaviors that hurt others in some way or do not show respect, trust, or healthy communication.

Illustration 5: For Reflection with Your Partner

What are some examples of behaviors that indicate an unhealthy relationship?

It is important for us to remember that all relationships have good and bad times, and we can all make unkind choices at times. But there are some warning signs that could mean a relationship is not healthy or safe. For example, your relationship might not be healthy if either you or your partner:



No relationship is perfect. There will be times when you have disagreements in your relationships, and that is ok, if you are able to solve these conflicts in a calm and healthy manner. If your friend or partner, or if you yourself, have behaviors that are unhealthy but not yet unsafe, you can try to use healthy communication skills to explain how you are feeling to resolve the conflict, or you can talk with someone you trust about the situation. At the same time, it is essential to think about

what is most important to you in these relationships. If the other person is treating you in unhealthy or unsafe ways, you may choose to end the relationship, choose a temporary separation to keep yourself safe, or just not spend as much time with the person. If you can't solve conflicts in a healthy way, you may also choose to get help from a counselor or psychologist, or chaplain or faith leader, especially if this is a romantic relationship.

For Reflection with Your Partner

- What are some healthy and unhealthy patterns you see in our relationship?
- How do we handle conflict or disagreement, and are there ways we could improve?
- What are two unhealthy behaviors we want to work on, and how will we do that, or get help to do that?

Staying Connected When We Are Apart⁸

Many people are separated from loved ones during times of crisis, like war and disaster. Communication is very important for our relationships and also for our mental health! So, let's talk about some ways that you can stay connected to your partner, spouse, family member, or friend even when you are physically separated.

- Share as often as you can with your loved one about things happening in your life; let them know about even little things.
- From time to time, record a video message for each other, especially when you don't have time for live calls.
- Find a convenient time for each of you to talk and have regular online meetings.
- Share with your loved one about your plans, feelings, thoughts, worries, hopes, and small reasons for gratitude, so that your relationship can deepen.
- Enrich your relationship with common interests; choose together a movie or TV show to watch, or a book to read, and then talk about it together.

For Reflection with Your Partner

Are there ways, such as those described above, that we can take positive steps to stay more connected with each other in the coming week?

Making Healthy Decisions about Sex

Sexual Consent

An important part of sexual decision-making is consent. Consent is related to what behaviors you and your partner or spouse decide are acceptable for both of you, not what one partner wants to do but the other does not. To say it simply, it is what we feel we can say 'yes' to. Physical intimacy, in the form of hugging, kissing, bodily touching, or having sex, should not happen without complete consent from both people, even in marriage or a committed relationship. If someone engages in physical intimacy with you without your clear consent, that is unhealthy. If sex happens without clear consent, or someone is forced to have sex, it is sexual violence, and in most countries, it is illegal.

Consent also means that each person listens to and respects the other person when they say both what they do and do not want to do. In a healthy relationship, people respect each other's boundaries, and do not pressure each other to do things they don't want to do. When consent is missing, the answer is always NO!

Here are four important parts of sexual consent:

1. **Free from coercion or force.** Coercion takes away a person's ability to consent. It might mean that one person uses their power or position over the other person to get them to do something sexual.
2. **Clear.** The person knows what sexual act they are consenting to. Each person in the relationship is equally responsible for clearly giving and receiving consent.
3. **Continuous.** Consenting to one behavior, like kissing, does NOT mean the person automatically agrees to any other sexual behavior. Also, consenting to a behavior once, does NOT mean consenting to that same behavior at another time. This is especially important in long-term



⁸ CETA Україна. (2023, July 22). *Communication with loved ones is a very important resource for mental health.* Facebook. https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0zBMcUQgxbeW4nffK9odTcXXWpMjQjfdXiBWLtULnFacUd8Fn9gkLjnyPatgBQM-Rl&id=100067650135192

relationships; a couple should regularly talk about what they do and do not want in their sexual relationship.

4. **Conscious.** This means you and your partner are both fully awake, alert, and understand what you are being asked to consent to. Consent cannot be given if a person is asleep or intoxicated with alcohol or drugs.

All four of these aspects of consent should be present before you engage in any sexual activity. We want to remind you of these principles, because respecting your sexual preferences and decisions is a way to remind yourself that your voice matters; your decisions matter; your preferences matter; you are valuable; and you have control over your body, even while you're living in a crisis where all control feels lost.

Three Options for Healthy Decisions about Sex

An important part of our health and safety in romantic relationships is our sexual decisions. It's important for you to think about this individually, to decide what you are and are not comfortable with, and then to talk with your spouse or romantic partner about each of your expectations in this area.

The best way for us to handle sexual decision-making is to think ahead of time about what boundaries or limits we want to keep, before we are in a situation where we have to make a sensitive decision. Having boundaries means that each person knows what behaviors they are ok with and what they are not comfortable with. We might change our boundaries, depending on the relationship and on various factors in our life at any given time.

When we talk about sexual decisions, we have three options:

1. **Delay sex.** Delaying sexual activity means choosing to wait to have sex. This may mean you are able to choose to not have sex at a certain time, if your partner wants to have sex at a time that doesn't feel right for you. It could also mean delaying to decide if you are comfortable with a sexual activity your partner is suggesting. Or, it may mean delaying having sex for the first time until you are in a safe and healthy relationship where having sexual activity feels right for

you. This is also relevant for you to consider for your child/children; research shows that most children are ready for these types of discussions when they are between the ages of 10 and 14 years. We want to teach our children that sex is good and pleasurable in the right circumstances, but that there are times when it is healthiest to wait to have sex.

2. **Abstain from sex.** Abstaining from sex means choosing not to have sex at a particular time or stage of your life. Even if you have been sexually active, you can still decide to stop having sex at various intervals throughout your life, because it may be the healthiest choice for you at that time. Abstaining from sex is the only 100% effective way to prevent sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancy.
3. **Protect yourself.** When you do have sex, it's important to be able to enjoy sex in a safe, protected way that is agreed on by the partners. It's important to protect yourself emotionally, by having sex with people who are safe that you trust. It's also important to protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancy. Using condoms correctly every time you have sex with a new partner, or a partner who hasn't recently been tested for STIs, is the best way to protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections. Condoms or reliable birth control methods can help to prevent pregnancy. Limiting the number of sex partners you have will also help protect you from sexually transmitted infections; it is safest to have only one sexual partner at a time.

It's also important to make wise decisions about your online activity (for both you and your partner), so that you and your child/children stay safe. Be respectful in what you say, post, or share on social media or text.

Also, it's never appropriate for someone to pressure you for naked pictures. It can feel awkward to say no, but it is so important to remember that your preferences and decisions are important, especially about your own body.

Don't participate in degrading talk about the opposite sex online. Remember that anything

you say or share online can leave a permanent record.

For Reflection with Your Partner

Note for Facilitators: These questions are meant for discussion between partners/spouses, but not as a whole group. These conversations may be sensitive. If you have enough room, ask couples to spread out for more privacy. Couples might also choose to discuss these questions alone, after the session.

- Are we in agreement about our sexual decision to delay, abstain, or protect ourselves and each other sexually? If not, let's discuss what each of us are comfortable with right now.
- What is our clear process for giving sexual consent?

consider how we want to treat people and how we want to be treated by others. Remember the Golden Rule!

Butterfly Hug and Wrap Up⁹

Before we finish, let's take a moment to give ourselves a little hug! Everyone please stand up and wrap your arms across your chest, as if giving yourself a hug. The tips of your fingers should reach your collarbone. Now pat your arms, alternating hands, like the wings of a butterfly. You can keep your eyes open or closed, but as you reach a rhythm with your 'wings', make sure you breathe deeply to help you feel calm and relaxed.

Putting it Into Practice this Week

Take some time this week to think about your own relationships and consider any elements that are healthy or unhealthy. At the end of this session, we provide an Appendix with a short test you can take to get a feeling for how healthy your relationship is. When we talk about relationships, it's important for us all to

This ends Session 10. Thank you for your participation. We look forward to meeting again soon!

On the next page is some extra reading and a test which you can do for yourself about the health of your relationship.

After that, there is an extra tool which you can use in supporting your child/children in thinking about having healthy relationships too.



⁹ Dempsey, K. (n.d.). Five instant ways to soothe somatic anxiety. The Awareness Center. Retrieved June 7, 2023, from <https://theawarenesscentre.com/somatic-anxiety/>

Appendix for Independent Reading: Healthy Relationship Tests

It can be easy for us to recognize unhealthy relationships, or even violence, in another family or couple. But in our own family or relationships, we may not see the warning signs, or we may pretend that everything is fine, even when we notice something is unhealthy.

If you are unsure about the health of your relationship, you can take this quick test (developed by La Strada and UNFPA).¹⁰ The test can help you to see warning signs that you may need help now to move in a healthy, safe, and positive direction in your relationship.

Answer the questions “yes” or “no”.

1. You are not allowed out of the house or into it.
2. You are forced to use alcohol or drugs.
3. You are not helped to move heavy loads (carry large purchases from the store or move furniture).
4. You are not respected and your desires, thoughts, or feelings, are ignored or criticized without reason.
5. Your opinion is disagreed with, even though you provide clear arguments and evidence.
6. You are deprived of the right to protect your honor and dignity.
7. You are restricted from accessing your own funds or are prohibited from using them at your own discretion.
8. Your partner restricts your possibility for employment or forbids you to study or work.
9. You asked to borrow a small amount of money, but were unfairly denied.
10. You are offered to have sex on the first date.
11. You are forced to work in the porn industry or sex business.
12. You are forced to get pregnant or have an abortion.

If you answered “yes” to one or more question, this is a warning sign of unsafe behaviors in your relationship. Please be sure to talk with your facilitator one-on-one, and they can connect you with someone who can help you in this situation. You can also call a hotline, where there are specialists to help in situations of violence in relationships.

Note for adaptation in your context: You should insert the contact phone numbers and websites for expert local resources that help in situations of sexual and/or domestic violence and abuse.

Additionally, the following link leads to an online test for warning signs, which you may wish to adapt and translate for your context:



<https://onlinetestpad.com/ua/testview/63459-chi-tebe-pid-dayut-psikhologichnomu-nasilstvu>



¹⁰ The Village Ukraine & UNFPA Ukraine. (n.d.). Is this a sign of physical violence? Retrieved on July 27, 2023, from <https://www.the-village.com.ua/village/city/promo/336295-unfpa-rozirvi-kolo-test>

SESSION 10

EXTRA TOOLS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN

This tool is a practical guide for parents or caregivers to use with their older child/children and teens. You should use this conversation guide with a child who is 10 years old or older and not with a child who is younger than that. The guide includes specific statements, questions, and ideas for talking with their child/children about healthy and unhealthy relationships. You will see the words “parent” and “parents” in the tool. If you are the parent or caregiver going through this tool with your own child/children, you can say “me” and “we”, instead.

Note to the parent/caregiver: YOU can be part of helping to prevent sexual violence against children. Adolescents face risks that can negatively impact their lives well into adulthood. Starting sexual activity and sexual violence both occur at the age of 15 – and sometimes as young as age 10, particularly in circumstances of sexual abuse. As parents and caregivers, you can provide your children with the information and skills to make informed decisions about sex throughout their lives and to understand the issues of sexual violence/abuse. The following conversation guide and activities will support your child’s ability to understand healthy and unhealthy relationships (including when unhealthy behaviors cross the line into violence and abuse, and where to get help if needed), and can increase their understanding of sexual consent as a foundation for the prevention of sexual violence. The materials below were developed for children as young as nine years.

You will see the following symbols, which show if the tool is for use with children in live conflict/disaster zones, children on the move, or those who are settled.



**Live Conflict/
Disaster**



On the Move



Settled

These are the included tools:

- Talking with Children about Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships
- Pressure
- Our Words Have Power

Begin the time with your child with regular check-in questions, such as

1. What was the best thing that happened this week?
2. What was something funny that happened this week?
3. What was hard about this week?

Talking With Children about Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships



Say to your child/children: We're going to talk today about what makes a relationship healthy or unhealthy. This can apply to relationships with friends or family. We're also going to talk about romantic relationships.

For Reflection with Your Child

What are some things you might see in healthy and unhealthy relationships?

Say to your child/children: You have done a great job thinking about healthy and unhealthy relationships!

Here are some other clues that might show a healthy relationship:

- When people have fun together and make each other laugh;
- Help each other solve problems;
- Can disagree without hurting each other;
- Are patient, honest, and dependable;
- Treat each other as equals and trust each other;
- Make each other feel safe;
- Are in the relationship because they want to be.

And here are some other clues that a relationship may be unhealthy:

- When the other person says mean things on purpose or yells at you a lot;
- Doesn't care about hurting your feelings;
- Does not treat you as an equal or acts disrespectfully towards you;
- Does not listen to you or ask you what you want, including physical affection;
- Doesn't respect it when you feel uncertain or uncomfortable about doing something, including physically;
- Makes you feel bad about how you are acting;
- Gossips about you or makes fun of you;
- Tries to control you, stops you from seeing your friends, is possessive and very jealous;
- Makes fun of you or makes you feel insecure about how you look and act;
- Breaks your trust; does not make you feel safe.

All these behaviors can happen in a friendship. They can also happen in a romantic relationship. As people grow up, they start to have romantic relationships. These are relationships where you and the other person consider yourself to be more than friends. Talking about romantic relationships may not apply to your current situation, but it will become important in the future, as you start to have these types of relationships. I want you to be prepared to handle issues you may face in the future. It can also be helpful in case you need to help a friend face these issues.

For Reflection with Your Child

- How old are most people when they have their first romantic relationship?
- What kinds of activities do they do together?
- Do they spend time mostly together or going out with other friends?

Pressure



One important part of unhealthy relationships is “pressuring the other person to do things they don’t want to do”. As you grow up, you may face pressure from other people to do things you don’t want to do, or things you know you shouldn’t do. These pressures may come from other girls or boys your own age, or from older children or adults.

People can pressure you in different ways. They can offer you gifts. They can make you feel like you have to do the things they do, if you want to be their friend. They can tease you and tell you it is time to prove you are grown up. They can ask you to do things that you feel uncomfortable with or not ready for. They can bully and threaten you. This pressure may make you feel embarrassed or scared, but if you feel that doing something is a bad idea, it is always best not to do it. Trust your feelings that tell you if something is a good or bad idea. Remember that it is always ok to say “NO” to something you’re not sure if you want, or something that makes you uncomfortable.

Talking with your parent(s)/caregiver(s) or another trusted adult can help. They can help you think about how you can avoid situations where people are pressuring you. They can also help you to imagine how you will feel if someone tries to pressure you, and to think through what you will do if that happens.

Our Words Have Power

Ages 10 and Above

For Reflection with Your Child



- What are some ways you could speak respectfully to, or about, someone of the opposite sex? How do you think that might make them feel?
- What are some disrespectful words or phrases you have used, or heard others use, about someone of the opposite sex? Why

do you think people use these types of words and phrases?

Say to your child/children: Thank you for sharing with me! The way we speak to, and about, others has a lot of power, either to harm or to help the other person. When we insult, or make fun of, others, it does not just hurt that other person, but it also promotes negative ideas and stereotypes about people, gender, and sexual topics. And that can hurt us all, because it shapes the ways we think about these things.

When we say “NO” to things that make us feel uncomfortable, or when we tell an adult if someone tries to do something that we’re not sure about, that also has power to keep us safe. Our words have power.

For Discussion with Your Child



The content in the main session above (with your partner/spouse) on healthy sexual relationships is appropriate for parents/caregivers to consider discussing with children ages 10-14 and older. Invite your older child to have a special one-on-one time with you. You might even make a cup of tea or have a special snack together. Read through and discuss the Making Healthy Decisions about Sex and Sexual Consent (pages 98-100) sections together. Don’t try to rush through or read it all in one sitting. It’s better to go at a slow pace and allow plenty of time for questions and discussion. Most importantly, make sure your child senses that you love, trust, and support them. After you have discussed those sections, go through the following scenario together.

Say to your child/children: Let’s look at and talk about a situation where a boy shouts a sexual comment at a girl.

Situation: A boy shouts a sexual comment at a girl

Two boys are sitting outside. One of the boys laughs and shouts at a girl who passes by, wearing school clothes: “Hey pretty, why are you walking so fast! Don’t you want to come show us what is under that skirt?”

The girl looks back uncomfortably, and the boy who did not shout looks unsure.

For Reflection with Your Child

What warning signs do you see here?

Some answers your child might give include: The boy who shouted makes fun of the girl, makes the girl feel insecure about how she looks and acts, and he acts disrespectfully.

Say to your child: Yes, all of these are warning signs! Shouting sexual comments, whistling, or making kissing sounds at someone are all types of sexual abuse. If the other boy stays silent, his friend will likely keep doing this disrespectful behavior. The quiet boy can help his friend see that his behavior makes girls feel scared, angry, or sad, and that it is not ok. The boy who shouted can take care not to repeat this unkind shouting in future, and can learn better ways of talking with girls. The girl can tell someone she trusts about what has happened and how it made her feel. She should be reassured that being shouted at in this way was not her fault, and that she was so strong to move away from the situation.

You, and all of us, have the power to make a real change, by not staying silent in these types of situations, and by not participating in these types of behaviors. We can all set an example of respect towards others, especially those of the opposite sex.

Wrap up: What can we do together this week?

For Reflection with Your Child

Can you think about any relationships in your life that have some of the healthy or unhealthy characteristics we've talked about today? If there are unhealthy characteristics, let's talk together about what you might be able to do to respond or change the situation.

This ends the tools "Talking with Children about Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships," "Pressure" and "Our Words Have Power". We look forward to hearing how it went!

SESSION 11

STAYING SAFE IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS¹¹

PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WVO PARENTING
HopeGroups

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- If they tell you about abuse, trust your child. Reassure them it's not their fault and they are safe and loved.
- Teach your child that no one has the right to touch them or make them uncomfortable.
- Practice saying "no" loudly and strongly.
- Tell them that abusers often trick children by saying it is their 'secret'
- Talking about this with your child helps protect them.

Parents and Caregivers are HEROES
Protecting our children in a crisis

No.13



Positive Self-Talk and Self-Praise¹²

Have you ever noticed that when we are having a hard time, we often talk to ourselves in negative ways, thinking things like "I am falling apart!"? These internal messages can have a negative impact on us, but we can change the way we talk to ourselves and improve our physical and mental health. "Everybody hates me" can be changed to "Sometimes I feel insecure about people liking me, but I am friendly and likeable". The first message makes us feel horrible, and the second builds our self-worth.

Self-praise can be very helpful, especially when we have difficult days. Let's practice

together some self-praise now.

- Let's each take a turn considering our past week and completing the following phrase: "This week, I am proud of myself for ..." It can be anything, not just things about being a parent/caregiver!
- Now, think of one thing you did well today. Would you be willing to share with the group?

Why Staying Safe?

Last time we met, we talked about healthy and unhealthy relationships. We know that any relationship can go through good times and difficult times. But it's important for us, and our children, to recognize signs that a relationship is not in a healthy state and to learn skills to make changes when needed.

Again today, we welcome the partners and spouses who have joined this session. If your partner or spouse is not able to be with us today, we encourage you to read through and discuss these topics together, so that you can strengthen your relationship. If you are not currently in a romantic relationship, use this session to consider what your expectations are for this type of relationship in your future life.

Today we're going to talk about staying safe in our relationships. This topic can be sensitive to discuss, so feel free to tell your facilitator if you need a break.

¹¹ The primary sources for this session are: Parenting for Lifelong Health (n.d.) Parenting App-Sexual Violence Prevention Module PEPFAR (2019, Jan 16) 9-14 Year Old Prevention, Module 1-3



¹² Walden University. (n.d.). How positive self-talk can make you feel better and be more productive. Walden University School of Psychology. Retrieved June 7, 2023 from <https://www.waldenu.edu/online-bachelors-programs/bs-in-psychology/resource/how-positive-self-talk-can-make-you-feel-better-and-be-more-productive>

“Hurt People Hurt People”¹³

In a previous session, we discussed how trauma can impact our reactions and make us more likely to become angry and lose control of our emotions. This is an important idea for us to return to now. During times of crisis, we and our loved ones face continuing and extreme stress and trauma, and this can lead to harmful behaviors in our relationships. There is no excuse for someone to hurt us, and we will talk about how to stay safe. But it can be helpful for us all to recognize that anger and hurtful behaviors are sometimes related to trauma. If they are, these behaviors can also show us how to get help. This can be especially true if you or a loved one has experienced violence, bombing, or active military duty.

“Hurt people hurt people. The more people are hurting, the more they lash out at everybody else.”¹⁴

If your spouse or partner has changed their behaviors and become hurtful towards you or your child/children since the crisis began, ask yourself, “What has happened to them? What have they been through?”. People who have witnessed or experienced a life-threatening event may develop a reaction called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Some of the signs of PTSD are:¹⁵

- Flashbacks, nightmares, and upsetting memories of the trauma that we cannot get out of our minds.
- Feeling detached, lack of emotions, loss of interest in activities.

- Avoiding activities, people, or places that remind the person of the trauma.
- Difficulty sleeping and concentrating, irritability, being constantly on guard, and startling easily.

If your loved one has been in active military duty, they might also experience Combat Stress. Some of the signs of Combat Stress include:¹⁶

- Intense anger or aggression
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts
- Moral injury – this is a psychological wound that some veterans experience, “failing to prevent, or observing acts that go against deeply held moral beliefs”.¹⁷

If you recognize any of these signs in your loved one, here are some tips on how you can support them:

- Tell them that “acknowledging they may have PTSD shows they’re strong, not weak”.
- Let them decide what they are comfortable talking about, and don’t push.
- Be a good listener while the person tells you how they feel, and try to avoid saying things like, “I know how you felt,” or “That’s just like when I...,” even if you also served in a combat zone. Everyone’s feelings are unique.
- Remind your loved one that they are not alone, and many others have personal stories they can share about their readjustment. Talking to other warriors can help them cope.



^{13, 14} Warren, R. (2019, July 24). *The Real Reason We Argue*. PastorRick.com. Retrieved July 26, 2023, from <https://pastorrick.com/the-real-reason-we-argue/>



¹⁵ American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed., text rev.)*. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425787>



¹⁶ Wounded Warrior Project. (n.d.). *Veterans and PTSD: Understanding Causes, Signs, Symptoms and Treatment*. Retrieved July 26, 2023, from <https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/programs/mental-wellness/veteran-ptsd-treatment-support-resources#3>



¹⁷ Wounded Warrior Project. (n.d.). *Veterans and PTSD: Understanding Causes, Signs, Symptoms and Treatment*. Retrieved July 26, 2023, from <https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/programs/mental-wellness/veteran-ptsd-treatment-support-resources#3>

If you are experiencing these types of reactions as a result of active military duty, there is help. Please talk with your facilitator about finding a trauma-informed chaplain, counsellor, or someone to walk alongside you through this healing process.

Learning to Recognize Warning Signs

We have talked about behaviors that might be signs your relationship is not healthy. There are other behaviors in a relationship that are not just warning signs, but show us clearly that we are not safe. Some examples are if your partner:¹⁸

- Hits, chokes, kicks, shoves, or physically restrains you or your child/children.
- Touches you sexually in a way that you don't want to be touched, forces or coerces you into any sexual activity, or touches your child/children sexually.
- Intentionally hurts you or your child/children emotionally, by intimidating you, making fun of you, screaming at or harassing you.
- Isolates you from friends or family, or silences you, or controls your activities and choices.
- Controls your finances and access to your basic needs.
- Uses the internet or social media to harass, intimidate, or control you.

No matter what your relationship is to the other person, no one has the right to hurt you or your child/children in these ways. We're going to learn about ways that you and your child/children can say "NO" to these types of

behaviors, so that you can stay safe. We are also going to talk about healthy ways to release anger and aggression; these emotions need to be given a place and a voice, but there are ways to do that so that no one is harmed.

Behaviors like the ones above are clearly unsafe, and there are also other behaviors that may be threats to your wellbeing and safety. Sometimes we can use healthy communication skills, or the help of a trusted friend or mental health care provider, to talk through the situation or problem. But sometimes that is not enough. Sometimes the other person refuses or is unable to use healthy communication skills, and the unhealthy behaviors continue to a point where the behavior is unsafe. In those situations, talking to a counsellor, social worker, or other worker trained in this area can help you make decisions about how you can best keep yourself and others safe.

Skills for Staying Safe

Responding to Anger

One important way to stay safe in our relationships is to learn how to respond to anger. Anger is a natural reaction many people experience, especially when they are dealing with trauma. Anger might give us a sense of strength, and there are healthy ways we can release and express our anger that don't hurt us or the people around us. In fact, when we hold anger inside, it's not good for us at all! Read through these ideas and try one or more of them the next time you and/or your partner is feeling especially angry.^{19, 20}

- Try a calming exercise, like deep breathing, muscle relaxation, imagining a peaceful place, or yoga.
- Try to change the way you think about the situation that's making you angry. For example, instead of telling yourself, "It's



¹⁸ National Domestic Violence Hotline (n.d.) *Types of Abuse*. Retrieved July 17, 2023, from <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/types-of-abuse/>



¹⁹ American Psychological Association. (2022, Aug.9). *Control anger before it controls you*. Retrieved July 27, 2023, from <https://www.apa.org/topics/anger/control>



²⁰ Mayo Clinic. (n.d.). *Anger management: 10 tips to tame your temper*. Retrieved July 27, 2023, from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/anger-management/art-20045434>

awful, it's terrible, everything's ruined!" tell yourself, "It's frustrating, and it's understandable that I'm upset about it, but it's not the end of the world and getting angry is not going to fix it".

- If you're having an angry discussion, slow down and think about your responses. Listen carefully to what the other person is saying, take your time before answering, and try to respond in a calm tone of voice.
- Get some physical exercise, especially something vigorous, like running or a brisk walk.
- Use humor, but avoid sarcasm.

For Reflection with Your Partner

- Do either of us tend to use one or more of the above responses when we are angry?
- Which of these responses could we commit to try the next time we are angry?

Boundaries in sexual relationships

Now we are going to learn some refusal skills that will help you take action, especially in the area of sexual activity. It's important that in a relationship, we make sure the other person understands what our boundaries or limits are.

If you have communicated your boundary, but the other person is not respecting that and is pressuring or forcing you, the first refusal skill is to say "NO". We are going to look at some things you can do to say "NO" as clearly as possible.

Say No

Say No With Your Voice

- Yell "No"!
- Call for help. "Someone help me"!
- Warn of consequences. "I will call the police if you touch me again."
- Name the behavior. "Do not touch my bum." Or "Do not yell at me."
- Act crazy. Make a crazy scream or act like a gorilla!

- Use humor. "No lift for me, thanks. Last time I got a lift I vomited EVERYWHERE!"
- Give something to get what you want. "I will give you my phone when you let me go."

Say No With Your Body

- You can use body language by using your hand(s) to signal, "STOP" and create space between you and the other person.
- You can say "NO" with your body position. Stand FIRM and upright, planting your feet solidly – you can place your hands on your hips.
- You can say "NO" by leaving a situation.

Say No With Your Face

- Say "NO" with your eyes. Make direct eye contact with the other person.
- Say "NO" with your facial expressions. Show that you are serious.

Sometimes, even when you do your best to tell someone what you want, or to tell them "NO", they can still do something to you that you did not want. *It is important to understand that this is NEVER your fault!*

Time to Practice

We will now consider a couple of scenarios where you might use "saying NO" to stop a situation you are uncomfortable with. We'll read each scenario out loud, and then discuss together your ideas of how you could say "NO".

Scenario 1: You had a long day at work, and now it's getting late, and you are tired. You're in bed, and your spouse/partner begins to kiss you and make advances sexually. You'd rather not have sex tonight. *Skip down to the reflection questions below and discuss.*

Scenario 2: You've been in a romantic relationship for a while now, and you have not yet had sex in that relationship. You're out walking with your partner, holding hands, and he or she brings up the subject of sex. He or she says, "We've been together a long time now, and I'm ready to sleep together. I love you! Don't you love me?" Your personal boundary is that you do not want to have sex at this time. *Skip down to the reflection questions below and discuss.*

For Reflection

- What are some different ways that you could say “NO”?
- What could you do if your spouse/partner continues to make advances, after you say “NO”?

Avoiding or Getting Out of a Situation

So far, we have talked about saying “NO”. Now let’s talk about avoiding a situation and getting out of a situation once you are in it. Remember that, **if possible, you should avoid situations that will make it hard for you to stick to your decision.** The Parenting Tip for this session emphasizes principles we covered earlier in Session 5 on avoiding unsafe people and places - particularly those we do not know. In this session, we are emphasizing avoiding situations that may be unsafe or unhealthy – with people we do know.

As we learn skills for avoiding or getting out of unsafe situations, it is important to remember that sometimes we cannot control what someone else does to us. If someone **FORCES** you to do something that you do not want to do, that is **NEVER** your fault.

You may have to make decisions about sex many times in your life. Sometimes, you may need to decide how to tell your partner that you want to abstain from sex, or that you want to protect yourself during sex. Often you may not have much time to think about what you should do or what you should say. Without a plan, it is harder to make decisions that prevent STI’s or pregnancy.

Now we are going to talk about steps that will help you to strengthen your sexual decisions, whether you want to delay sex, abstain from sex, or protect yourself. (These three sexual decisions are described in Session 10 above.)

There are three steps to strengthen your decision, whether it is to DELAY, ABSTAIN, or PROTECT. (Session 10)

1. **STOP.** This gives you a chance to take a deep breath and calm down.
2. **THINK.** Thinking keeps you in control of the situation. Your emotions will not get in the way. Here are some of the things you should think about:
 - a. What are you being pressured/asked to do?
 - b. What are your choices?
 - c. How can you stay in control of this situation?
 - d. What alternatives can you suggest? What can you do instead?
3. **ACT.** When you are calm and you have thought about what you want to do, you will act based on what you know and what you believe is the right decision for yourself.

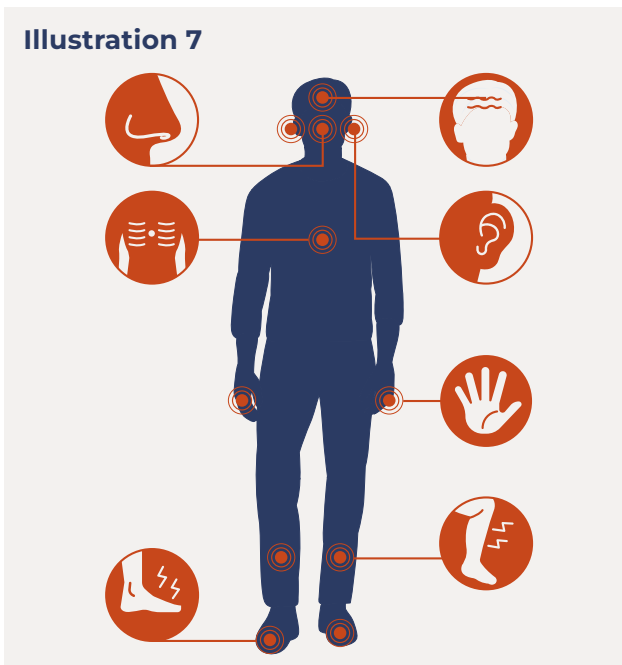
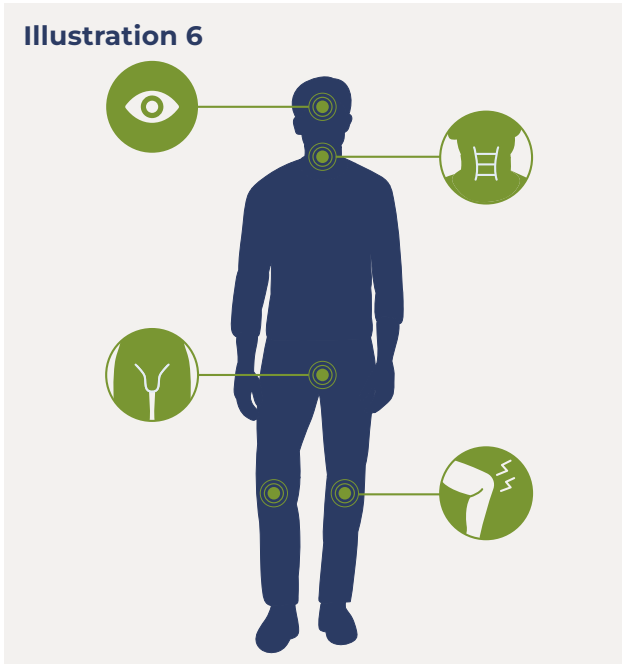
As you put your refusal skills into action, you may worry that you are going to hurt another person’s feelings. However, you should always remember the boundaries that you have set for yourself, and what we have learned about healthy relationships. If it is a healthy relationship, the other person will respect your limits and your decisions.

Self Defense Skills

In a dangerous situation, our nervous system usually responds automatically with what we call the “fight, flight or freeze” reaction. This means that if your mind senses danger, it will automatically tell your body to fight off the danger, run from it, or freeze. All of these reactions are normal, and the individual response might depend on the situation, your temperament or your past experiences.

When saying “NO” is not changing a potentially dangerous situation, we can use our bodies. In that situation, it’s important to know the ‘weapons’ on your body and know the ‘targets’ on your attacker’s body. This will make it more likely that you can stop them from hurting you. Use what is free on your body that you can fight with and what is open on the attacker’s body to hit.

The primary, or best targets on an attacker's body are: the eyes, throat, groin and knees. The secondary, or next best targets are: the temples, ears, nose, space between the ribs, fingers, shins, and tops of the feet. Some of the ways you might defend yourself is to target those areas of the attacker's body and scratch, pull, punch, kick, or twist (for example, the fingers). (See illustration 6 and 7.)



If you do get hurt by someone, remember it is never your fault. Ask someone you trust for help, and/or talk with your facilitator one-to-one and ask them about resources that can support you.

Time to Practice

We will now consider a few self-defense techniques that can be powerful tools for keeping you safe. Let's all stand up and practice these together.

Fighting Stance

This is our first way to use our body to say "NO". We don't intend to fight, but we are clearly telling the attacking person "NO" and are ready to defend ourselves if needed.

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Now step back with your stronger foot, the one you would use to kick with.
- Bend your knees a little.
- Hold your hands up in front of your chest so your palms are facing out and your elbows are close to your sides.
- Yell "NO" to the attacking person.

Side Stomp

- Start in the Fighting Stance.
- Lift up your foot and stomp your heel with all your strength into the top of the attacking person's foot.
- Yell "NO" and run away.

Little Finger Release

You could use this skill if an attacking person has their hand over your face.

- Start in the Fighting Stance.
- Reach your hand(s) up and grab the little finger of the attacking person. You might have to feel around before you know that you have their little finger.
- Pull down hard on their little finger to break it.
- Yell "NO" and run away.

Eye Poke

- Start in the Fighting Stance.
- Hold all your fingers sticking out together on each hand and then strike both eyes of the attacking person.
- Yell "NO" and run away.

Making a Safety Plan

An important skill for staying safe is to make a safety plan. If you see warning signs or

unhealthy behaviors in your relationship, make a safety plan now, before you need it. Then you will be ready if you do need to act to get to safety. Here are some suggestions for a safety plan:²¹



²¹ McFarlane, J., Malecha, A., Gist, J., Watson, K., Batten, E., Hall, I., Smith, S. (2002, Nov/Dec). *An Intervention to Increase Safety Behaviors of Abused Women*. *Nursing Research*. Vol 51, No 6. Retrieved Jan. 1, 2024, from https://journals.lww.com/nursingresearchonline/abstract/2002/11000/an_intervention_to_increase_safety_behaviors_of.2.aspx

Time to Practice

(Note: This scenario was created for use with people in or from Ukraine. You should adapt it to fit your local context and culture.)

We are going to develop a safety plan for an imaginary woman, named Olena. Olena lives with her husband and 10 year old daughter in a Kyiv apartment. She does not work outside the home. She has good friends in the next building, and her parents live 10 minutes away. Her husband works each day, at an office about 30 minutes from home.

Olena's husband has become angrier and more aggressive lately. He has been preventing her from going out with friends and has begun to restrict the amount of money she has access to. Olena has tried to use healthy communication skills with him. He has agreed to see a counsellor with her, but sometimes, Olena is concerned that he might become violent. She wants to continue working on the relationship, but she realizes she might need to get to safety one day.

For Reflection

- What kind of information about Olena's life would help her develop a safety plan? (For example: What relationships or resources does she have? Where does she live? What are the safe places nearby? Etc.)
- What elements of a safety plan can Olena put into place?

Putting it into Practice this Week

We've talked today about some difficult topics. Let's all take a minute to practice a new tool for calming. When your brain is anxious, it can interpret things around you as threats and make you feel more anxious. Using a "5-4-3-2-1" mindfulness technique can help to calm and relax you.²² I will guide you through this practice now. Pay attention and quietly consider what you notice.

- Find five things to look at in your surroundings.
- Listen to four sounds you can hear.
- Identify three things you can feel (for example, this be an item you can stroke, like a cushion, or it may be the feel of your bag on your shoulder or the chair holding your weight).
- Find two things you can smell.
- Discover one thing you can taste.

Thank you for practicing together! Would anyone like to share how this felt for them?

As we wrap up today's session, I want us all to remember that we will make decisions about sex over and over again throughout our lives. It is important to make these decisions before we are in a sexual situation. Every time you face one of these sexual situations, it will help you to STOP, THINK, and then ACT! You will need to have good communication with the other person, if you want to have a safe and healthy relationship. It is important to remember that sometimes we do not have a choice in what happens to us, because we cannot control other people. The good news is that research shows us that the skills we have been working together on today – when put into practice – make life much safer for women, adolescents, and children.

For Reflection with Your Partner

Take some time this week to talk with your partner about this session. It's important that you choose a time when you are both well rested and calm. If you have concerns about safety in your relationship, talk with your facilitator first, before having this conversation with your partner (and ask them for resources or referral options).

For those whose partners did not join the group discussion today, this session is one that you can talk about with your partner/spouse, if you feel it is safe. In your discussion, you may want to plan to discuss any warning



²² Dempsey, K. (n.d.). Five instant ways to soothe somatic anxiety. The Awareness Center. Retrieved June 7, 2023, from <https://theawarenesscentre.com/somatic-anxiety/>

signs you each see in your relationship, how each of you might practice new skills in responding to anger, and how you might practice saying “NO” in a way that is clear to each other.

If you have experienced violence in a relationship, please talk with your facilitator one-on-one. They can help you find resources to support you in working through healing.

Note for adaptation in your context: You should insert the contact phone numbers and websites for expert local resources that help in situations of sexual and/or domestic violence and abuse.

Preparing for Talking with Your Children About Staying Safe in their Relationships

The Extra Tools for Supporting Children that follow this session will help you talk with your child/children about how they can stay safe in their relationships. Please remember that if your child discloses any abuse they have experienced, you should speak calmly, gently, and with compassion, and you should assure them of these truths:

- This was NOT your fault.
- I love you so much.
- Nothing could ever change my love for you.

Note to the parent/caregiver: Remember: The perpetrator is the cause of sexual violence, not the child’s behavior! A child who is

sexually abused is NEVER to blame. Young children are not able to consent to have sex or engage in any sexual activity, because they do not understand what is being asked of them. While older children may understand what is being asked of them, adults have more power and authority than children, which may make older children feel that they can not say no.

It is important for us, as parent(s)/caregiver(s), to understand some common myths and truths about sexual abuse.²³

Myth

Adolescents, teenagers, or children may act seductively and cause adults to be sexually aroused.

Truth

No matter how a child/adolescent acts, the adult is responsible for their own behavior and how they react to the child. Even if a child or adolescent does exhibit behaviors that seem ‘seductive’ or sexual – which is most often NOT the case in scenarios of abuse – it is important for us to understand that this may happen because the child is simply copying something they’ve seen in the media, or perhaps they experienced abuse earlier in their life, or perhaps they are lacking love and connection.

Myth

Sometimes when children, adolescents, or teenagers are abused or raped, it is because they trusted an adult they shouldn’t have, or they were somewhere they should not have been.

Truth

Children, adolescents, and teenagers should never be blamed for abuse. Even adults have difficulty identifying an abuser before they commit abuse, so it is even more unrealistic to expect this of children. Abuse is NEVER the fault of a child who trusts an adult, or who goes to a certain location.

Myth

Sometimes when adolescents, teenagers, or children are abused or raped, it is because they were wearing seductive clothing, or they were drunk, or they were walking alone in a secluded place.

²³ PEPFAR Faith and Community Initiative (2019, March). Preventing and responding to sexual violence against children. (Presentation).

Truth

Being drunk, wearing a short skirt, or walking alone does not cause sexual violence. It is NEVER the fault of a child; sexual violence is wrong and a crime. THE PERPETRATOR IS THE CAUSE OF ABUSE, NOT THE CHILD'S BEHAVIOR.

Myth

Boys do not experience rape or any other type of sexual violence.

Truth

Anyone can be forced to have sex or engage in sexual activity, no matter their sex or age. That is the definition of rape: being forced into sexual activity.

Lastly, it is important to know that children who are inappropriately touched often go on to inappropriately touch other children. As parents/caregivers, we see all the time that our children repeat the behaviors they see or experience. Copying adult behavior is how children learn. Children who are abused often repeat these behaviors without realizing what they are doing. It's important to tell a child: "What happened to you was not ok, and I am so sorry this happened to you. You should never have been touched in ways that make you uncomfortable, and other children shouldn't be touched this way either. Children shouldn't be touched in ways that make them uncomfortable or touch other children in ways that make those others feel uncomfortable. If you ever see this happen to someone else, please, tell an adult, so that the adult can stop the abuse." This will help

children to know that this behavior was not ok; it shouldn't be repeated; and they can intervene by telling an adult to try to stop it happening, if they see it happen to someone else.

**This ends Session 11.
Thank you for your participation.
We look forward to meeting
again soon!**

Below are extra tools that you can use, including example questions to help you talk with your own or other children about staying safe in their relationships



SESSION 11

EXTRA TOOLS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN

This tool is a practical guide for parents, caregivers, or trusted friends to use when talking with older children, especially teens. You should use this conversation guide with a child who is 10 years old or older and not with a child younger than that. The guide includes specific statements, questions, and ideas for talking with their child about how to stay safe in relationships and how to make healthy decisions about sex. It's best for you to have these conversations one-on-one with a child, and not with a group of children. *You will see the words "parent" and "parents" in the tool. If you are the parent or caregiver going through this tool with your own child, you can say "me" and "we", instead.*

Note to the parent/caregiver: YOU can be part of helping to prevent sexual violence against children. Adolescents face risks that can negatively impact their lives well into adulthood. Starting sexual activity and sexual violence both occur at the age of 15 or younger, at high rates. As parents and caregivers, you can provide your children with the information and skills to make informed decisions about sex throughout their lives and to understand the issues of sexual violence/abuse. The following conversation guide and activities will support your child's ability to understand healthy and unhealthy relationships (including when unhealthy behaviors cross the line into violence and abuse, and where to get help if needed), and can increase their understanding of sexual consent as a foundation for the prevention of sexual violence. The materials below were developed for children as young as nine years.



**Live Conflict/
Disaster**



On the Move



Settled

These are the included tools:

- Talking with Children about Staying Safe in Our Relationships
- Making Healthy Decisions About Sex
- Skills for Staying Safe

Begin the time with your child with regular check-in questions, such as

1. What was the best thing that happened this week?
2. What was something funny that happened this week?
3. What was hard about this week?

Talking with Children about Staying Safe in Our Relationships (for ages 10 and older)



Say to your child: We are going to talk about sex today (let them express any giggles or laughter or other reactions). In general, sex has to do with touching private parts of the body, and it can also be how people who care about each other romantically express that caring through physical touch.

Sex, sexual activity, and physical affection include many behaviors from hugging, kissing, to touching genitals (your private parts), to sexual intercourse. Sex is a normal part of life. But, you have probably heard or been told that people your age should NOT have sex.

For Reflection with Your Child

Why do you think that is – if sex is a normal part of life, why do we and other adults in your life warn you NOT to have sex right now?

Give your child time to think and answer, and be sure to praise them for their ideas. If your child does not give any of the following answers, be sure to point these out:

- You may experience deeper emotional connection if you wait to have sex at a later age.
- You can get pregnant/get someone pregnant.
- You can get HIV and other STIs from having

sex, which are infections you can get from having sex.

- You can avoid emotional heartache if you wait to have sex.
- You may experience deeper emotional connection if you wait to have sex at a later age.
- Waiting until marriage is part of my personal/community's/family's beliefs.

That's right – these are all reasons that adults might tell you that it is not a good idea to have sex at your age. Pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV are all things that can happen. People who have sex very young are also more likely to miss school and to use alcohol and drugs.

For Reflection with Your Child

How could getting pregnant or becoming a father affect your life at this age? (Allow your child to brainstorm answers. If they do not say the following, bring them up yourself):

- Would make it hard to stay in school
- Would have more responsibility
- Would need more money
- For young girls, pregnancy and delivery can result in more medical complications than for adult women

Why should you worry about getting HIV or another STI? (Allow your child to brainstorm answers. If they do not say the following, bring them up yourself):

- Some infections can have harmful effects on your body.
- Some infections, including HIV, do not have a cure; so, you would have to deal with them for the rest of your life.
- You can give infections to other people.
- For girls, the germs that cause HIV are more likely to infect younger girls than older girls.
- Starting to have sex when you are under the age of 15 will make it more likely that you will have more partners throughout

your life. The more people that you have sex with during your life, the more chance you have of getting HIV or other STIs.

Making Healthy Decisions About Sex (for ages 10 and older)



Say to your child: We talked recently about making healthy decisions about sex and sexual consent. One of the most important tools you have, to keep yourself safe sexually, is to make those healthy decisions and to know your own boundaries. It's important to make these decisions before you are faced with the situation of whether or not to have sex, and what type of sexual activity you are comfortable with.

For Reflection with Your Child

- What do you think is the healthiest sexual choice for you right now – delaying, abstaining, or protecting?
- Have you ever felt pressure from another person to hug, kiss, or participate in some kind of physical or sexual activity that you did not want to do?

If so, I am so sorry. You matter so much to me, and I love you so much. Do you want to tell me what happened?

Note to parent/caregiver: If your child shares about any pressure or abuse that has occurred, make sure to respond calmly and supportively. Assure your child that this was NOT their fault, that they are not in trouble, and that you love them and want to help keep them safe. You can also contact the hotline below for support:

Ask your facilitator to insert the phone number here:

Skills for Staying Safe (for ages 10 and older)



Say to your child: We're going to talk now about some skills you can practice to help keep you safe, if someone ever pressures or tries to force you to do something you don't want to do.

Let's remind ourselves some of the behaviors that can make a relationship unhealthy and unsafe. *Review some of the things which you discussed together using the Session 10 Extra Tools.*

Know It

Know the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships. Remember what we have discussed about healthy and unhealthy behaviors in a relationship. If you are pressured or attacked, know that it is never your fault. You are allowed to say and do whatever is needed to stay safe and get away – don't worry about what others may think. You are worth being defended. You are strong and powerful.

See It

When someone makes you (or someone else) feel uncomfortable with what they say or do, that is never ok! We all have the right to feel safe, especially at home. See the warning signs and follow your intuition. When you feel attacked with words or actions, your goal is to get away.

Say It

Your voice can stop many attacks. Yell "NO!", call for help, warn of consequences, name the behavior, act crazy, pretend to go along to buy time, use humor, calm them down, or negotiate. Be clear, confident, and direct. Speak using your voice, body language, and eye contact.

Do It

When using our voice is not fixing the situation, we can use our bodies. Know the 'weapons' on your body and know the 'targets' on the attacking person's body. Use what is free on your body that you can fight with, and what is open on the attacking person's body to hit.

The primary, or best, targets on an attacking person's body are the eyes, throat, groin, and knees. The secondary, or next best, targets are the temples, ears, nose, space between the ribs, fingers, shins, and tops of the feet. Some of the ways you might defend yourself is to target those areas of the attacking person's body and scratch, pull, punch, kick, or twist (for example, the fingers). *Show your child the pictures of targets from your main session.*

Wrap up: What can we do together this week?

Say to your child: When we really like someone or are in love, it can be hard to recognize that something is wrong in our relationship. This is one reason it is so important for you to think about and know what makes a healthy or unhealthy relationship. Also, thinking beforehand about your physical and sexual boundaries, and knowing how to say "NO" with your voice and your body, can help to keep you safe. You can also help friends stay safe by sharing this information with them. If you or someone you know ever experience violence, there are organizations and people that can help you.

Insert here contact details for organizations offering expert services in your local area.

Below is a quick online test that you can take to help you think about any violence or unhealthy behaviors that might be in your relationships.²⁴ After you take this, we will talk together about the results and any changes you might need to make or skills you might want to practice in your relationships.

Note to parent/caregiver: be sure to talk with your child about their results and respond if any concerns are revealed.

Note for adaptation in your context: This book was originally developed to support

participants impacted by the war in Ukraine. We included local Ukrainian language resources, which can be found below, but you should adapt this section for your own context with local resources that are recognized as evidence-based, expert resources in your area. Please ask your facilitator to help you with this.

Ukrainian online test



Online test: [find out if there is violence in your life \(la-strada.org.ua\)](https://la-strada.org.ua)

For Reflection with Your Child

- Can you tell me about the options you have for staying safe sexually?
- Can you tell me some of the skills you can use, if someone ever pressures or forces you to do something you don't want to do?

Thank you for sharing with me. I want to remind you that if someone pressures or forces you to do something, it is NEVER your fault. I hope you feel comfortable that you can come and talk to me, if you ever feel unsafe or worried about someone's behavior. I will try to get the help needed for your healing and protection. I will also always support and love you, and nothing will change that love. I will help you come up with a plan to stay safe!

Note to parent/caregiver: The SaveChild site includes animated videos for teaching children of different ages about safety, abuse, and warning signs. See the tab called "children" for videos broken down by ages 4-7, 8-11, and 12-15. Have a look and decide if you would like to share these videos with your child:



<https://savechild.com.ua/4-7>

This ends the tools "Talking with Children about Staying Safe in our Relationships", "Making Healthy Decisions About Sex", and "Skills for Staying Safe". We look forward to hearing how it went!



²⁴ La Strada Ukraine. (n.d.). *Violence: find out if it is in your life*. Retrieved July 27, 2023, from <https://la-strada.org.ua/online-test#0>

SESSION 12

RESILIENCE

PARENTING TIPS
FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

WVO PARENTING FOR LIFE'S CHALLENGES
HopeQGroups

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

- Look after yourself as much as possible and try to rest when you can.
- Take a moment each day to listen to your breath as it goes in and out.
- Connect with loved ones as often as you can.
- Taking care of yourself also helps you to help your family.



Parents and Caregivers are HEROES
Protecting our children in a crisis

No.1

For Reflection

What have been the best parts and most difficult parts of the last week?

Your Feelings Matter

How are you feeling today?

We usually say we are “fine” – but this doesn't always express our true feelings. This is a stressful time. We need to take care of ourselves, so we can support our children.

For Reflection

- Can you think of anything that has made you feel happy either recently or since the crisis began?
- And what are some of the more difficult feelings you have had, during this time of family loss and crisis?

- Can you think of something that made you feel worried, stressed, or sad? What do you do when you have difficult feelings like this?

We tend to think some of our feelings are ‘good’ and others ‘bad’, but all our feelings are ok! As parents/caregivers, we might be tempted to try to ignore or push away our feelings, but when we don't take care of ourselves, we get gradually worn down, and it gets harder to care for our children. Stress can build up and then burst out in unhelpful ways, when we don't expect it.

For Reflection

Do you have any strategies to help you, when you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed?

(Some ideas include: Take a break or time-out / Breathing exercise / Talk to someone / Exercise)

When we feel overwhelmed it can be difficult to stay focused on the present – we might find ourselves thinking about what has gone wrong, or be unable to focus. When you feel like this, it's good if you can notice, pause, and take a moment to ground yourself.

Activity: Breathing Exercise

We practiced a breathing exercise in an earlier meeting of our Hope Group (pages 23-24). It can be helpful to revisit these types of practices to notice how they are helping us and to remind ourselves to keep using these types of coping skills.

Here is one simple exercise you can try when you are feeling overwhelmed:

When the stress is too much, take 30 seconds for yourself. Let's try this together now.

- Listen to your breath as it goes in and out.
- You can put a hand on your stomach and feel it rise and fall with each breath.

- Then just listen to your breath for a while.
- Try this every day.

How did that feel?

For Reflection

What are some of the ways you already try to take care of your own needs? Is there a time in the day where you could take some time for yourself?

Some ideas could be:

- Spend sometime outside
- Get some exercise that you enjoy
- Listen to music
- Get enough sleep
- Do something that makes you laugh
- Talk to a friend
- Pray or write in a journal
- Do something creative

We recognize that some of these things might not be possible or realistic in our circumstances. Let's make a note of those which feel possible and useful for us to use in our current circumstances.

For Reflection

Is there something we've talked about that you want to try to put into practice this week?

Spiritual Health as Part of Resilience

Spirituality is about the way a person finds meaning, hope, comfort, and inner peace. For many people, spirituality involves a sense of a relationship with God that gives them

hope and strength. Also, for many people, caring for spiritual aspects of health is important for strengthening resilience. There are times, especially when we experience suffering or trauma, when we struggle with spiritual distress, feeling empty and detached, questioning our beliefs, and feeling angry or afraid over questions about life and death.²⁵ These are all normal reactions, and learning how to care for our spirit in these inner struggles can increase our resilience.

From a health perspective, spiritual care is when we respond to the needs of our spirit as we deal with trauma, loss, illness, or sadness. From a faith perspective, spiritual care typically involves seeking comfort from things that decrease stress and strengthen resilience, and make us feel full, rather than empty. Effective tools may include music, gratitude, nature, or perhaps mindfulness-based interventions, such as meditation, prayer or connecting with trusted friends. It has to do with encouraging us to be part of compassionate relationships.²⁶ Spiritual healing is a journey, with many unexpected turns in the road. We can't always change our circumstances, but healing can help us to make peace with the life we are living. Remember when we talked about the phases of grief and making sense of our new reality. There's *always* hope for healing.

Here are some actions and practices that research has shown to be helpful on your journey toward spiritual health:²⁷

- Ask yourself: what relationships and connections are important in your life?
- Ask yourself: what relationships, activities, interests, values, or beliefs give you meaning and purpose?
- Journal. Consider writing your thoughts, emotions, and questions in a journal.
- Lament. Take time to pour out your complaints, questions, sadness, or anger over the injustices you see or experience. Write them in your journal, speak them



²⁵ Puchalski, C. M. (2012). Spirituality as an essential domain of palliative care: Caring for the whole person. *Progress in Palliative Care*, 20(2), 63–65. <https://doi.org/10.1179/0969926012Z.00000000028>

²⁶ NHS Education for Scotland, 2009

²⁷ Donovan, D.W. (2012). Assessments. In Roberts, S. (ed), *Professional Spiritual and Pastoral Care: A Practical Clergy and Chaplain's Handbook*, Woodstock, V.T. Skylight Paths Publishing, 42-60.

aloud, or in prayer, or share them with a trusted person. Many sacred texts include lamenting, which can help us feel that we are not alone in our questioning.

- For those who are part of a religious community or faith, it may help to spend time with others who share your faith, read the sacred text of your faith, or pray.

For Reflection

- Is there someone in your life who is willing to simply listen to you, to be present with you in your questions, sadness, or suffering, as well as in your celebrations, hopes, dreams, and joys?
- Is so, would you like to make a plan this week to spend time with that person?

As you consider these ideas, remember that an important resource for your spiritual care is the hope we feel, from the compassionate presence of someone we can trust. Let's look for people like this, and take care of ourselves, so that we can together grow to become people who can give this deep trust for others in their time of need.

Helping My Children to Cope

This section is relevant for parents, grandparents, teachers, children's ministry leaders in religious settings, such as for example Sunday school teachers and others, and others who regularly interact with children.

For Reflection

- What have you noticed about how your child/children have responded during this time?
- If they have been finding it difficult, have they talked about it with you?
- Have you seen changes in their behavior?

Children respond to stress in different ways, such as being more clingy, anxious, withdrawn, angry, or agitated. They might seem to move backwards in their development, for example

begin wetting the bed again, or be unable to do tasks they had been able to do before the crisis.

It can make a big difference to children's ability to cope if we are able to be supportive and reassuring and help our children to feel safe. They may often communicate their feelings through their behavior, and so it's good to be alert to any changes or new patterns.

For Reflection

What ways have you found to help your child/children to be calm and feel safe and supported during this time?

These are great ideas! Some other tips are:

- Give children extra time and attention.
- Listen to children and speak kindly to them.
- Make opportunities for children to play and relax.
- Even in times of loss and grieving, conflict, or crisis, spending just 5 minutes playing a familiar game can really help children to restore a sense of hope and stability.
- In new family circumstances after losing a loved one, or in a new home or place, try to make time to help children do familiar activities they enjoyed before the loss or crisis (for example, a hobby like a sport, music, or art that they really loved or spent a lot of time on before, or games they used to enjoy).
- Keep to regular schedules and routines, as much as possible. Even just maintaining simple routines in the morning (breakfast – dress – brush teeth) and evening (clean up – pajamas – brush teeth – story time – prayers – lights out) can help to create a sense of normality.
- Give children clear information and facts about what is going on, share with them your plans for the coming days or weeks, and respond to their questions honestly and sensitively.
- Praise your child/children every day for something they do well.

Putting it into practice this week

Think about how you can tell each other how you feel every day at home:

- In stable settings: Could you create a chart together, with faces showing different feelings, and then show each other which face matches your feelings on that day?
- In crisis/transition settings, or on the move: How could you set aside 5 minutes to listen to your child/children each day?

Wrap Up

What do you plan to do this week to take care of yourself, and to help your child/children deal with their emotions?

(Some ideas include: Take more time for myself / Talk about my feelings / Breathing Exercise / Talk to child/children about how they feel/ Create a feelings chart)

Anonymous Online Survey

Your answers to a few short questions will help us serve many other people who are experiencing crisis all over the world. All answers are 100% anonymous. We will combine the participants' survey responses and your facilitator's survey responses to create a one-page report that your facilitator can share with you, showing how this group impacted all of you.



<https://forms.office.com/r/jwr3rrb85f>

Thank you for your answers.

Below are extra tools that you can use, including example questions to help you talk with your own or other children.

This ends Session 12 and this Hope Group. We are so glad you have participated in this Hope Group!

We look forward to hearing how these sessions help you and your family continue to adjust and thrive. It was a great honor to meet you and learn together how to strengthen ourselves, our relationships, and our families.

Some groups decide to celebrate the completion of their Hope Group together. You can do this with a simple ceremony, where you applaud each participant, or you can arrange an informal gathering and simply laugh, celebrate, and enjoy each other's company. Take time to talk about how these meetings have affected your life and how they have given you hope in your lives and strengthened your relationships.



SESSION 12

EXTRA TOOLS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN

This tool is a practical guide for parents, caregivers, or trusted friends to use when talking with children, in various settings, about their crisis experience. It includes specific statements, questions, and ideas for talking with and helping their child deal with the trauma and transition. You will see the words “parent” and “parents” in the tool. If you are the parent or caregiver going through this tool with your own child, you can say “me” and “we”, instead.

You will see the following symbols, which show if the tool is for use with children in live conflict/disaster zones, children on the move, or those who are settled.



**Live Conflict/
Disaster**



On the Move



Settled

These are the included tools:

- Talking with Children about Feelings and Emotions
- My Feelings and Emotions
- How Do I Feel?
- What Can I Do with my Feelings?

Talking with Children about Feelings and Emotions



Beginning your time together with your child

Begin with your usual check-in questions, such as:

- What was the best thing that happened this week?
- What was something funny that happened this week?

- What was hard about this week?

Remind the child/children that you are talking together about how you are each doing, giving each of you a chance to talk and share how you are feeling, and sharing ideas together which can help you and your family.

My Feelings and Emotions

For Reflection with Your Child

How are you feeling today?

Explain that you will start with a quick game about our feelings. You will say a feeling (for

example, “scared”, “happy”) and the child/children should quickly tell you something that makes them feel that way.

For example, You: “Scared” – Child: “Spiders”; You: “Happy” – Child: “When my sports team wins a competition.”

What is something that makes you feel:

- Happy?
- Excited?
- Surprised?
- Bored?

Let the child/children also ask you some of these questions for you to give your answers! Explain that today we’ll be looking at how we can recognize our feelings, and what to do when we have difficult feelings.

Here is an alternative or additional game you can play, one-to-one or with a group of children: Write different feelings on sheets of paper and spread the papers around the room. Then shout out a situation, and the child/children can run to the sheet which expresses how that situation makes them feel. (Possible example situations: Seeing my friend when I didn’t expect to meet them/ Walking into the classroom at my new school for the first time/ Waiting for my mother to finish texting on her phone/ etc.)

How do I Feel?

For Reflection with Your Child

- Can you think of something that happened this week that made you feel good?
- What was it and what feelings did you have? (for example: happy, excited, joyful) *(Be ready to share your own example first if needed.)*
- Can you think of something that made you feel bad?
- What was it and what feelings did you have? (for example: sad, angry, bored, worried, scared) *(Be ready to share your own example first if needed.)*

It’s normal to have difficult feelings when we go through a hard or confusing time, or when lots of things are changing around us.

We might:

- Feel more worried
- Not want to be away from our family
- Not want to talk to people or to play with other children
- Be more angry
- Not be able to stay still and concentrate
- Do things we did when we were younger, like wet the bed, or forget things we have learned
- Feel afraid of what might happen

This is totally normal and ok – all our feelings are ours and we don’t have to feel bad about having them. It’s good to talk about how we feel, so that others can help us and understand us better. It can sometimes be hard to say how we are feeling.

For Reflection with Your Child

Can you think of some ways we can share our feelings with our family?

It can sometimes be hard to use words to say how we feel. Let’s try some other ways to share our feelings. *Below are some activities that can help your child/children express their feelings.*

Activity 1: Ask your child/children what sound a car would make when it is a happy car. The child/children should create the sound, and you repeat it and ask the child/children if they agree that this is a happy car sound. Next, ask the child/children what sound a car might make if it’s starting to get upset. When the child makes/children make the sound, repeat it and ask if this is the sound of a car that is getting upset. Repeat this process with other feelings, like anger. You can then ask your child regularly, “How is your car running today?” (You could also use the sounds of the child’s/children’s favorite animal, music sounds, or hand clapping.)

Some examples of feelings your child/children might express are sad, happy, scared, bored, worried, angry, surprised, or others.

Activity 2: Cut out shapes of a child and leave the faces blank. Have an envelope for each child with their name on it. The child/children can pick a shape and draw a face on it to show how they feel. They will then place the shape into their envelope(s), leaving the head facing out. This gives the parent(s)/caregiver(s) an opportunity to talk with their child/children about how they feel. The child/children can pick a new shape and draw a different face at any time of the day, to show when their feelings change.

If paper is not available, this activity can be done by making a game out of it. You ask the child/children to draw the face showing how they are feeling on your back with their finger, and then you guess what feeling it shows. Now take turns and you draw the face of your feelings on the child's back/children's backs and have them guess. Afterwards say, "I am so proud of you! We are learning together to talk about our feelings!!"

What Can I do with My Feelings?

For Reflection with Your Child

What do you usually do when you have a difficult feeling (*referring to a difficult feeling which you talked about earlier*) or when you are feeling worried or scared?

It's great if we can think ahead, to have some ideas of things we can do when we feel sad, worried, or upset. Then we'll be ready to take actions that help us to feel better.

For Reflection with Your Child

What might be some things you can do, that could help you when you have a difficult feeling?

Here are some ideas (if you need them):

- Talk about your worries to your parent(s)/caregiver(s), a friend, or someone you trust
- Write down your feelings

- Do some exercise that you enjoy
- Listen to music, dance, or sing
- Do something that makes you laugh
- Play a game together with your family
- Draw a picture of how you are feeling
- For difficult feelings, you could draw or write these, then scrunch them up and throw them away

Wrap up: What can we do together this week?

For Reflection with Your Child

- What can you do this week to help you and your family share your feelings?
- What is one thing you will do this week, if you feel sad/scared/worried/upset?

(Some ideas might be: Make a feelings chart with my family / Talk to someone about my feelings / Try something new if I feel sad or upset)

This ends the tools "Talking with Children about Feelings and Emotions", "My Feelings and Emotions", "How Do I Feel?" and "What Can I Do with My Feelings?". We hope that you and your child/children have found it helpful.

Hope Groups

