

EPISODE 14: NEED FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

People who are sick or others whose lives have been disrupted through loss of jobs, school closures, financial troubles and increased isolation often feel worried, sad or depressed. They may suffer from mental health issues, and they need emotional support. How can we assist them?

RADIO:

Start with playing the 'COVID-19 – Together we can beat it' song.

Welcome to the 14th of our 'COVID-19 – Together we can beat it' radio programmes.

These programmes are brought to you by MIET Africa in partnership with the Ministry of Education, to strengthen the SADC Region's response to COVID-19, with funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many challenges for our country, our communities and every one of us. In this programme, we talk about these and find solutions together.

Keep listening and have your say! Phone us on XXX, SMS us on XXX or send a WhatsApp message on XXX to be part of this conversation.

And remember that we have PRIZES for lucky winners! At the end of this programme, we'll ask a question about today's topic. The first FIVE listeners who SMS or WhatsApp the right answer, will get a Future Life-Now! drawstring backpack and water bottle. So keep listening, and send us your answers!

Over the past 12 weeks, we've discussed the COVID-19 disease and how to protect ourselves against it. We've also looked at some of the other challenges which the COVID-19 pandemic has brought. We've talked about myths and misinformation; school closures and how people with disabilities get left behind.

This week we talk about the fact that many people – older and younger adults, youth and children - experience anxiety and stress at this time. Some have serious psychological challenges. How can we help ourselves and others through this time?

We're delighted to have two great panellists with us today: A psychologist/social worker (???) who will share her/his wisdom with us. And our dynamic youth representative who will share the perspective of young people.

<Introduce panellists>

So, let's talk about it! And keep your calls coming.

We've all been through a lot this year! First there was the uncertainty about this new, unknown disease and the fear of infection. And then the stress of not being able to go to school or work, see friends, move around freely, play sport or do the other things that we enjoy.

And more recently, other challenges have created stress for many of us. Here are some:

- Some of us lost our jobs, trading opportunities and family income.
- Learners have worried about the loss of learning time during school closures, and how that will affect their future.

- Girls and women have been more at risk of violence and sexual abuse. Some may battle to deal with distressing experiences, or worry about an unplanned pregnancy.
- You may also be worrying about a child, friend or elder who seems depressed.

How has this time been for you? Let's hear from you. Stay tuned in and join the conversation.

It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis. But we can help ourselves to get through it. Here are some tips:

- **Talk to people you trust.** Stay in contact with your friends and family.
- **Don't use alcohol, smoking or other drugs** to make you feel better. If you feel overwhelmed, talk to someone you trust, a health worker or counsellor.
- **Don't keep listening to, reading or watching distressing news** about COVID-19 and other depressing topics. Only go to trusted sources, once or twice a day.
- **Be kind to yourself and others.** If you do a good deed for others, it will help them but also lift your spirits. For example, check on neighbours or people in your community who may need help.
- **Share good-news stories** about local people who have been sick or had other setbacks, and recovered.
- **Think of simple exercises or games which** you and your family can do at home, to stay active.
- **Have a routine and stay busy.** Keep on cooking, cleaning, doing daily chores, exercising and doing things like reading, singing and exercising. Stay in touch with loved ones.
- **Pay attention to your own feelings and look after yourself well.** Do things which you enjoy, exercise, keep regular sleep routines and eat healthy food.

QUESTIONS TO THE PANELLISTS:

<Maybe alternate questions between panellists, and only ask all the questions if you don't get many questions from listeners. Their questions come first!>

Psycho-social support specialist

- 1 Do you agree that more people than usual are anxious or feeling depressed at this time? What has been your experience?
- 2 What can people do to feel more positive or reduce stress and anxiety?
- 3 How can we tell if family members or close friends experience anxiety, depression or other psycho-social problems? And what can we do to help them?
- 4 And how do we recognise serious depression or anxiety which may need professional help?

Youth

- 1 How has this time been for you? Have you felt any anxiety or stress? And if you have, what has it been like and why what were the reasons?
- 2 And if you have been feeling down, what have you done to try to get out of it?
- 3 What about your friends and family? Have any of them battled? And have you and others been able to help them in any way? If so, tell us about it!

<AT END OF PROGRAMME:>

The moment that you've waited for - Our prize-winning question:

Will drinking alcohol, smoking or taking drugs help if you feel anxious or depressed? YES or NO?

SMS or WhatsApp your answer to us NOW. Also give us your name, age and where you live. We'll announce the lucky winner's name next week, and tell you how we'll get your prize to you.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO DRAW ON:

How to help children who may need psychosocial support

- **Children need your love, kindness and understanding** at this time. Make time to listen to them and give them focused time and attention.
- **Help children to find positive ways to express feelings such as fear and sadness.** Every child has a different way to express feelings. Sometimes a creative activity, such as playing or drawing can help them to do that. Children feel relieved if they can express their feelings in a safe and supportive environment.
- **Keep children close to their parents and family** if that is possible, and don't separate children from their carers if possible.
- **Maintain children's your usual daily routines** as much as possible, especially if they must stay at home. Provide fun activities for children, including learning activities. Where possible, encourage children to continue to play and socialize with others
- **Children could become more clingy** and demand more from their parents during stressful times. Give them love, time and sympathy. Discuss their worries with them in an honest and age-appropriate way.

SMSes TOPIC 15:

SMS 1

This is a tough year for young people. The COVID-19 pandemic and school closures have created many challenges. You may feel anxious or depressed and worry about friends who seem down. Then look after yourself, talk to people you trust, and listen to friends. To get more advice on this, tune in to XXXXXXXX THIS XXXXday from XXXXXXXX. To stop getting the SMSes send 'stop' to XXXXX (310 characters no spaces).

SMS 2

If you are feeling anxious or depressed, or know someone who is battling, then this can help: Exercise. Eat healthy food. Get enough sleep. Stay in touch with friends. Talk to people you trust. Do something you enjoy every day. Be kind to others – it helps them and lifts your spirits. Don't keep listening to bad news. Remember alcohol, smoking or other drugs won't help. (Characters without spaces 267, with spaces 310)



Coping with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.

Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family.

If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.



Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions.

If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.

Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency.



Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.

Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak.



Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



Children may respond to stress in different ways such as being more clingy, anxious, withdrawing, angry or agitated, bedwetting etc.

Respond to your child's reactions in a supportive way, listen to their concerns and give them extra love and attention.

Children need adults' love and attention during difficult times. Give them extra time and attention.

Remember to listen to your children, speak kindly and reassure them.

If possible, make opportunities for the child to play and relax.



Try and keep children close to their parents and family and avoid separating children and their caregivers to the extent possible. If separation occurs (e.g. hospitalization) ensure regular contact (e.g. via phone) and re-assurance.

Keep to regular routines and schedules as much as possible, or help create new ones in a new environment, including school/learning as well as time for safely playing and relaxing.



Provide facts about what has happened, explain what is going on now and give them clear information about how to reduce their risk of being infected by the disease in words that they can understand depending on their age.

This also includes providing information about what could happen in a re-assuring way (e.g. a family member and/or the child may start not feeling well and may have to go to the hospital for some time so doctors can help them feel better).