

EPISODE 16: HOW CAN PARENTS AND OTHER ADULTS SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE DURING THIS TIME?

As was discussed in the previous programme, COVID-19 has increased the challenges faced by children and young people. Yet with the right information and support from families, schools and communities, youth can be positive leaders, protecting themselves and others. Let's discuss how parents and families can give positive support to girls and boys at this time.

RADIO:

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

Welcome to the 16th of our 'COVID-19 – Together we can beat it' radio programmes. Hard to believe that we have been together for this long already!

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.

As you all know, 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 our 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 FutureLife-Now! drawstring backpack and water bottle. So keep listening, and send us your answers!

Over the past 15 weeks, we've shared information about COVID-19 and how to protect ourselves against the disease. We've also discussed other challenges which the COVID-19 pandemic has brought. Last week we talked about children, adolescents and youths – the young people who are our country's future – and about the COVID-19 pandemic's devastating impact on them.

In the discussions, we agreed that we want our country's children and young people to be healthy and resilient. We want them to make their dreams come true and reach their full potential, because they are the future of our communities and our country. They can also be positive leaders now, protecting themselves and others.

So let us look at how parents, families and other adults can support children and youth, to get them through this tough time.

We are very lucky that our two panellists this evening can help us to understand the challenges from both a youth and an adult perspective. This will help us to come up with some solutions.

<Introduce panellists.>

So, let's talk about it! And keep your calls coming, so that you can be part of the conversation.

Last week we discussed the challenges facing children and youth right now. Let's quickly summarise:

- Children and youth lost a lot of learning time and youths' studies have been affected.
- Access to school feeding schemes, health services and medication was interrupted.
- Financial difficulties make it difficult for some learners to get back to school.
- Young girls have been more at risk of sexual abuse and gender-based violence. There are more unintended pregnancies and marriages of young girls with older men, and HIV infections are expected to increase.
- Our economy has been affected, and young people are less likely to get a job after school.
- All this has led to anxiety and depression, with some learners not wanting to go back to school.

It's a lot! Children and youth need help from their parents and other adults around them. So, let's look at how they can be supported.

Before we go to our panellists and hear from you as listeners, a few thoughts from me as your host:

<Hosts to select from this list what makes sense to you>

- Maybe the most important thing for parents and other adults is to be there for youth and children. Even if they won't always show it, they need you.
- Make time to listen to them. Listening is more important than giving advice, so listen more than you talk.
- Try to ask questions that encourage young people to talk, rather than give advice. It can be hard!
- Try not to judge. Accept that what your children tell you is real to them.
- No matter what happened to them, show that you accept them. Let them know you will always love them, no matter what.
- Maybe your child was a victim of gender-based violence, fell pregnant, made a girlfriend pregnant, contracted a disease, suffers from depression or refuses to go back to school? You may be in shock yourself, but your child needs your acceptance, help and unconditional love more than ever.
- Perhaps ask them what help they need, rather than decide for yourself how you will step in.
- Listen carefully to what they say, and get help from other community members and professionals if you feel they (and you) need that.

So let's see what our expert panellist, and you as listeners have to say. Do you agree with me or not?

QUESTIONS TO THE PANELLISTS:

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

Adult

- 1 We've talked about all the challenges that COVID-19 has created for youth and children. We ask parents and adults to support children but of course adults have also been affected. Do you want to share some of the challenges that parents and other adults face?
- 2 If we accept that there have also been huge challenges for parents, it is fair to expect them to give strong support to their children at this time?
- 3 From your perspective, what are the things that make it difficult for parents to talk to their children and give them support?
- 4 Do you think all youths want support from parents and other adults? Or show that they do? What advice do you have for parents whose children don't seem to want their help?
- 5 Any other useful advice for parent and other adults? Or for young people?

Youth

- 1 You've now listened to what adults have to say. What do you want to share? How has it been for young people?

- 2 Do you agree that children and youths need support from parents and other adults? If so, what types of support do you think they need?
- 3 Would you say that most young people realise they need their parents' support?
- 4 Do you think young people who realise they need support find it easy to ask for that support? What could be the things that prevent them from reaching out for help?
- 5 What advice do you have for your peers? How can they best get the support that they may need from adults? And what advice do you have for adults who want to support their children?

<AT END OF PROGRAMME:>

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

What is the best way for parents to support children who have been negatively affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic? Should they

- (1) Give them advice?
- (2) First listen to them?

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:

There is a lot of guidance for parents and other adults online. Here are some tips from UNICEF:

ONE-ON-ONE TIME DURING COVID-19

Can't go to work? Schools closed? Worried about money? It is normal to feel stressed and overwhelmed.

- **School shutdown** is also a chance to make better relationships with our children and teenagers. One-on-One time is free and fun. It makes children feel loved and secure, and shows them that they are important.
- **Set aside time to spend with each child**
It can be for just 20 minutes, or longer – it's up to us. It can be at the same time each day so children or teenagers can look forward to it.
- **Ask your children what they would like to do**
Choosing builds their self-confidence. If they want to do something that isn't OK with physical distancing, then this is a chance to talk with them about this.

Ideas for interacting with your young child

- Read a book or look at pictures.
- Make drawings with crayons or pencils.
- Dance to music or sing songs!
- Do a chore together – make cleaning and cooking a game
- Help with school work.

Ideas with your teenager

- Talk about something they like: sports, music, celebrities, friends.
- Cook a favourite meal together.
- Exercise together to their favourite music.

- Listen to them, look at them. Give them your full attention. Have fun!

Keeping it positive during the coronavirus outbreak

It's hard to feel positive when our children or teenagers are driving us crazy. We often end up saying "Stop doing that!". But children are much more likely to do what we ask if we give them positive instructions and lots of praise for what they do right.

- **Say the behaviour you want to see**
Use positive words when telling your child what to do; like "Please put your clothes away" (instead of "Don't make a mess").
- **It's all in the delivery**
Shouting at your child will just make you and them more stressed and angrier. Get your child's attention by using their name. Speak in a calm voice.
- **Praise your child when they are behaving well**
Try praising your child or teenager for something they have done well. They may not show it, but you'll see them doing that good thing again. It will also reassure them that you notice and care.
- **Get real**
Can your child actually do what you are asking them? It is very hard for a child to keep quiet inside for a whole day but maybe they can keep quiet for 15 minutes while you are on a call.
- **Help your teenager stay connected**
Teens especially need to be able to communicate with their friends. Help your teen connect through social media and other safe distancing ways. This is something you can do together, too!

Get structured

COVID-19 has taken away our daily work, home and school routines. This is hard for children, teenagers and for you. Making new routines can help.

Create a flexible but consistent daily routine

- Make a schedule for you and your children that has time for structured activities as well as free time. This can help children feel more secure and better behaved.
- Children or teenagers can help plan the routine for the day – like making a school timetable. Children will follow this better if they help to make it.
- Include exercise in each day - this helps with stress and kids with lots of energy at home.

Teach your child about keeping safe distances

- Get children to play outside.
- You can also write letters and draw pictures to share with people. Put them up outside your home for others to see!
- You can reassure your child by talking about how you are keeping safe.
- Listen to their suggestions and take them seriously.

Make handwashing and hygiene fun

- Make a 20-second song for washing hands. Add actions!
- Give children points and praise for regular handwashing.
- Make a game to see how few times we can touch our faces with a reward for the least number of touches (you can count for each other).

You are a model for your child's behaviour

- If you practice keeping safe distances and hygiene yourself, and treat others with compassion, especially those who are sick or vulnerable – your children and teenagers will learn from you.
- At the end of each day, take a minute to think about the day. Tell your child about one positive or fun thing they did. Praise yourself for what you did well today. You are a star!