



## Supporting Children During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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## **Supporting Children During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The negative conditions emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic have placed significant changes in the lives of both parents and children. For example, in order to reduce the spread of the virus, people were advised to stay in quarantine at home, and many people started to spend more time at home than prior to the pandemic. Being in quarantine for a long time in home environment has brought about some changes in the emotions and behaviors of both parents and children (Wang et al., 2020). Due to the differences in the temperament, living environment, living conditions and needs of each child, they may have been affected at different levels by the quarantine process. In this process, in general, children may feel some negative emotions such as anger, fear, sadness or anxiety and may express these emotions in different ways. (Boelen & Spuij, 2013; Scheeringa, Zeanah, & Cohen, 2011; Wang et al., 2020).

In this process, it is very “normal” for children to miss their school, their friends and the play they engaged. For this reason, children may have social and emotional difficulties in the process of getting used to the pandemic period. In order to minimize the effects of this period on children, it is important parents to support their children (Wang et al., 2020). In this context, routines and programs organized by parents can help children adapt to the "new normal" and feel safe. The purpose of this paper is to explain the importance of social and emotional support for children during the pandemic period.

Since the restrictions included children's play and socialization areas along with other contexts, they reduced their interactions with their peers, which may have led them to display behavioral and emotional problems (Lee, 2020). According to studies examining the effects of pandemic conditions on children, quarantined children may experience post-traumatic stress disorder four times more than children who are not quarantined (Sprang & Silman, 2013). Therefore, government policies should consider the effects of quarantine on children's psychological health and urgently introduce supportive interventions for children's well-being (Spinelli et al., 2020).

It is known that the pandemic process is a new era that parents also have experienced for the first time, and it is not easy for parents and caregivers to manage this process. On that ground, parents who report more difficulties in coping with quarantine may show more stress, and their children may be more adversely affected by this stressful environment. Insufficient family support

in such a difficult period may cause more distinct psychological symptoms (Russell et al., 2020). Prolonged staying at home; boredom; not being able to meet face-to-face with friends, relatives and friends; stress factors such as having insufficient information about the pandemic may cause participatory stress-induced consequences in children.

It is important for children to regain the basic sense of safety and security through family support, which is negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic process, to prevent secondary trauma, and to gain skills to cope with this process (Jongsma, Peterson, McInnis, & Bruce, 2014; WHO, 2020). Support given by families to their children will facilitate the return of the child to the life before the pandemic. In addition, families will be able to help their children cope with behavioral problems in the future (Boelen & Spuij, 2013; Scheeringa, Zeanah, & Cohen, 2011). Parents and caregivers supporting children emotionally and psychologically can contribute to the development of their children's self-regulation skills (National Association of School Psychologists, 2020). For example, when parents create a context where children can freely express their feelings and concerns regarding the pandemic process, children could establish a sense of safety and security, which in turn could lead them to develop better self-regulation.

In summary, the pandemic process has led to many changes in the lives of both parents and children. This change is expected to have some emotional and behavioral effects on children and their families. Basically, families can inform their children about this process by considering their children's developmental trajectory and individual characteristics so that children can express their feelings and thoughts, develop sense of security and safety, and establishing relatively stable daily routines. Thus, parents can reduce the negative effects of the pandemic process by supporting and helping their children manage their own emotions and behaviors. Overall, the main responsibility of parents and caregivers is to ensure that children are affected by this process as little as possible (Spinelli et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Of course, firstly, caregivers should support their own psychological health and then begin supporting their children.

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