



Care for children after lockdown.

**How has the pandemic altered
our relationships?**

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«Every child's life is unique, meaningful and precious and every child has a right to dignity and safety»

*Pope Francis,
Declaration of Rome
6 October, 2017*

Children's rights and COVID-19: possible effects on their well- being

Children's rights

- Children are human being and as such they have the same general human rights as adults.
- Nevertheless, children need rights to protect they special needs. For this reason, in 1989 the UN created the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The Convention describes the child **as an individual and a member of his family and community**, not a property of his parents nor helpless subjects of protection.
- The Convention recognizes the fundamental human dignity of all children and the need to guarantee their well-being and development.

Children's rights in the time of Coronavirus

- Measures taken to contain the spread of the Coronavirus has radically changed the context in which children live.
- These measures have damaged the economy of many countries. Millions of parents are struggling to maintain their livelihoods, and this is affecting children's lives on many levels.
- Moreover, school closures is jeopardising not only children's education but also other fundamental aspects, such as nutrition, health, safety and social relations.
- Thereby, Covid-19 pandemic is likely to threaten children's rights (UNICEF, 2020), even if the harmful effects of this pandemic are expected to be more damaging for children who already live in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations.

Adverse effects of school closures

- Over 90% of the world's students has been affected by school closures, and 67% still are (UNESCO, 2020).
- Online learning has been adopted to ensure the continuity of education, but this method is leaving many children behind, e.g. those who live in disadvantaged socio-economic situation.
- Many households encounter technological barriers to online learning, as they cannot afford a stable internet connection or electronic devices.
- Moreover, home learning depends on housing quality as well. Adolescents in Mexico (34%), Chile (30%) and the United States (27%) are most likely not to have a desk and place to engage in home learning (OECD, 2020).
- This situation risks widening the divide between advantaged and disadvantaged children.

Negative consequences of social distancing

- School closures have radically limited children relations.
- Children could no longer, or still cannot, enjoy positive interactions with their teachers, friends and peers, and the support of other family members, such as grandparents, has also fallen away.
- Social distancing might not affect all children in the same way. Those who are living with high functioning families and who have positive relationships with their parents will be less affected than children living in family with negative interactions, or who are living alone (Orben et al., 2020).
- Feeling insufficiently connected to others is associated with profound negative consequences on physical and mental health that could last even after social distancing ends, especially for young people (Orben et al., 2020).

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on well-being

- The experience of living through the COVID-19 pandemic is seriously impacting the well-being of children around the world (UNICEF, June 2020).
- Research and surveys so far indicate that the pandemic has, and will continue to have, a negative impact on children mental health.
- Children are likely to be experiencing worry, anxiety and fear, including fear of dying or fear that a family member could die.
- These are typical symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), an anxiety disorder caused by traumatic events.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on well-being

- Children react to lockdown in several ways. They may experience also symptoms of sleeping difficulty, irritability, boredom, feeling of loneliness (Orgilés et al., 2020).
- Emotional difficulties among children are exacerbated by family stress, social isolation, with some facing increased abuse, disrupted education and uncertainty about their futures (UN, 2020).
- To make matters worse, mental health services have been less available, even for those who are in need of professional help (Clemens, 2020).

Useful resources

- OHCHRO, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>.
- UNICEF, 2020. [Technical Note: Protection of Children during the Coronavirus Pandemic \(v.1\)1](#).
- UNESCO, 25 May, 2020, [School closures caused by Coronavirus \(Covid-19\)](#).
- OECD, May 2020. [Combatting COVID-19's effect on children](#).
- UNICEF, June 2020. [COVID-19 and children](#).
- Orben, A., Tomova, L., & Blakemore, S. J. (2020). The effects of social deprivation on adolescent development and mental health. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*.
- Orgilés, M., Morales, A., Delvecchio, E., Mazzeschi, C., & Espada, J. P. (in press). Immediate psychological effects of the COVID-19 quarantine in youth from Italy and Spain.
- UN, 14 May, 2020. [Policy Brief: COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health](#).
- Clemens, V., Deschamps, P., Fegert, J. M., Anagnostopoulos, D., Bailey, S., Doyle, M., ... & Jacobs, B. (2020). Potential effects of "social" distancing measures and school lockdown on child and adolescent mental health. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*.
- WHO, 2018. [Adverse Childhood Experiences International Questionnaire \(ACE-IQ\)](#).



Risk and protective factors

COVID-19 and online risks

- Internet-related technologies, such as social media and online games, also gave children and young people the opportunity to keep their relationships alive, as well as to express their opinions and beliefs.
- Nevertheless, young Internet users were more exposed to the oversharing of private information and intimate content, but also to screen time issues. Spending more time online might have exposed them to the risk of being groomed by predators (EUROPOL, 2020; e-safety Commissioner, 2020)

Quarantine and domestic abuse

- COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown measures have seen an impact on the rise in domestic abuse, physical and psychological violence, child sexual abuse
- Many victims were left unheard, especially the most vulnerable ones, such as children living in poor socio-economic conditions and children with some form of disability
- Job loss, isolation, excessive confinement and worries over health may have contributed as risk factors for the increase in domestic violence, abuse and exploitation against children, especially in situations with pre-existing vulnerabilities (UN, 2020).

Consequences on Psychopathology

- Highly stressful events during childhood can lead to long-lasting consequences in individual mental health and well-being (WHO, 2018).
- In order to prevent possible negative consequences, it is important to intervene immediately and recognise symptoms of distress in the child.
- Children who are experiencing emotional difficulties or symptoms of PTSD may not talk about it, either because they are too young or they are having a hard time opening up to adults.
- In this case, an important tool to help is **to actively listen** to the children, letting them know we are there to support them, with no judgment or evaluation of what the child is saying.

Resilience

Resilience offers the promise of a paradigm shift in many fields of research, clinical practice, and policy. A lens on resilience shifts the focus of attention – from efforts to appraise risk or vulnerability, towards concerted efforts to enhance strength or capability. It also shifts the focus of analysis – from asking relatively limited questions regarding health out-comes, such as what are the linkages between risk exposures and functional deficits, to asking more complex questions regarding wellbeing, such as when, how, why and for whom do resources truly matter.



Editorial Commentary: Resilience in child development – interconnected pathways to wellbeing

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Useful resources

- [Victims' Rights: New Strategy to empower victims](#)
- [How parents can support their child through COVID-19 losses;](#)
- UN News. “UN chief calls for domestic violence ‘ceasefire’ amid ‘horrifying global surge’”
[https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061052.](https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061052)
- Europol. “Pandemic profiteering: how criminals exploit the COVID-19 crisis” <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/pandemic-profiteering-how-criminals-exploit-covid-19-crisis>



Protect and support children: the importance of listening

The role of professionals

- Although sometimes just **feeling heard, accepted and not judged** can help children overcome difficulties, sometimes their problems can be more serious, and just listening won't be enough.
- In these cases children need competent and professional support
- **Peer to peer support** should be included in the programs, in order to help young people share their stories and support each other

The importance of Child Helplines all over the World







































UN has recently warned that the coronavirus crisis is turning into a **child-right crisis** (UN, 2020)

Over the last decade, child helplines have become increasingly important in responding to concerns raised by children and young people on a range of issues affecting their lives.

Child helplines all over the globe are committed to provide qualified support to help children through the COVID-19 pandemic (Child Helpline International 2020)



Coronavirus (COVID-19)

| | | |
|---|--|--|
|  1-TOK Kaunselin Helvim Lain Papua New Guinea childfund.org.au |  113 Protection Hotline Taiwan worldvision.org.tw |  116 111 - Helpline for Children and Youth Poland 116111.pl |
|  116 111 Kanner Jugendtelefon Luxembourg kjt.lu |  116111 Telefon Copilului Moldova telefonucopilului.md |  119 - Ali6 Enfance En Danger France allo119.gouv.fr |
|  147 Rat auf Draht Austria rataufdraht.at |  2ndfloor USA 2ndfloor.org |  African Movement for the Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect Ghana |
|  AGUIAS 116 Guinea |  Alarmtelefonen for barn og unge Norway 116111.no |  Allo 1011 Togo |
|  Allo 116 Burkina Faso action-sociale.gov.bf |  Allo 116 Senegal facebook.com |  Allo Enfance en Détresse Cote d'Ivoire famille.gouv.ci |
|  ALO 116 - Albanian National Child Helpline (ANCH) Albania alo116.al |  Arab Human Rights Foundation Yemen ahf-ye.org |  AMSME Mauritania amsme-dei.org |
|  Awel Belgium awel.be |  Azerbaijan Child Helpline Service (Reliable Future Youth NGO) Azerbaijan reliablefuture.org |  Bahrain Child Helpline Bahrain social.gov.bh |
|  Bantay Bata 163 Philippines bantaybata163.com |  BEAT United Kingdom b-eat.co.uk |  Beratung + Hilfe 147 Switzerland 147.ch |
|  ICBF - Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar Colombia icbf.gov.co |  Børns Vilkår Denmark bornsvilkar.dk |  Boys Town National Hotline USA |
|  Brave Phone Croatia hrabritefon.hr |  BRIS Sweden bris.se |  C-Sema Tanzania sematanzania.org |
|  California Youth Crisis Line USA calyouth.org |  Cece Yara Foundation Nigeria ceceyara.org |  Child and Adolescent Helpline 116111 Latvia bti.gov.lv |
|  Child Emergency Hotline China |  Child Helpline 108 Mongolia |  Child Helpline 110 Jordan jordanriver.jo |

**Child Helpline 116111**
Saudi Arabia
rifsp.org.sa

**Child Helpline 121**
Palestine
sawa.ps

**Telefon 150**
Kazakhstan
telefon150.kz

**Child Helpline 16000**
Egypt
facebook.com

**Child Helpline 9896**
Sudan
fcpu.gov.sd

**Child Helpline Cambodia (CHC)**
Cambodia
childhelpline.org.kh

**Child Helpline Fiji**
Fiji
msp.org.fj

**Child Helpline Gambia**
Gambia

**Child Helpline Lesotho**
Lesotho

**Child Helpline Mauritius**
Mauritius
helplinemauritius.org

**Child Helpline Nepal**
Nepal
cwin.org.np

**Child Helpline Vietnam**
Vietnam
tongdai111.vn

**Child Rights Defenders League**
Kyrgyzstan
crdl.kg

**Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline**
USA
childhelp.org

**Childhelp Sierra Leone**
Sierra Leone
childhelpsl.org

**Childline Botswana**
Botswana
childlinebotswana.org

**Childline India Foundation**
India
childlineindia.org.in

**Childline Ireland**
Ireland
childline.ie

**Childline Kenya**
Kenya
childlinekenya.co.ke

**Childline South Africa**
South Africa
childlinesa.org.za

**Childline Sri Lanka 1929**
Sri Lanka
childprotection.gov.lk

The complete list of the helplines can be consulted here:

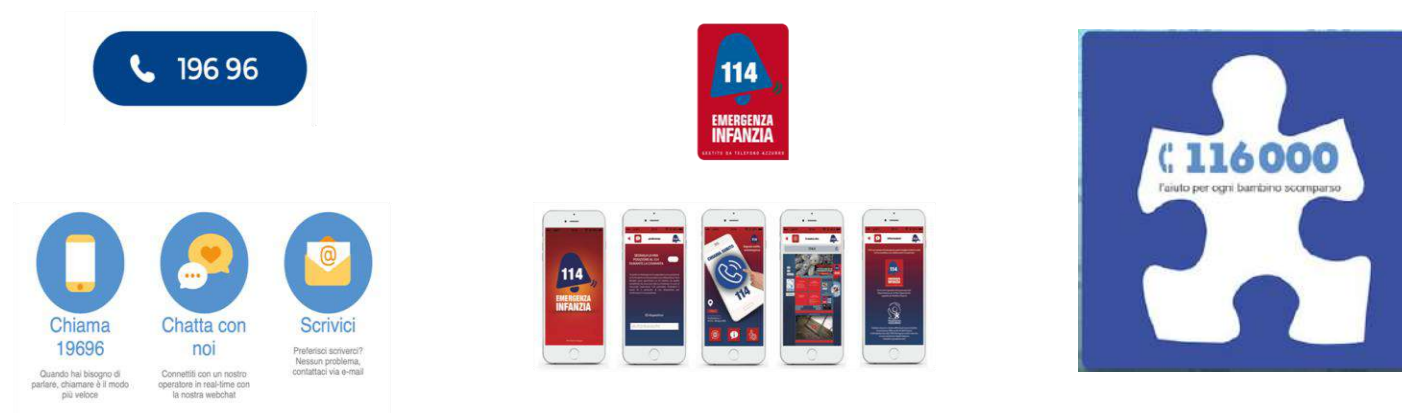
<https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/child-helplines/child-helpline-network/>

The protection of children during the Coronavirus pandemic in Italy

Telefono Azzurro's services continued their work - 24/7 through phone and chat - during the lockdown. During this period:

- The helpline **1.96.96**, dedicated to children and adolescents, registered an increase of requests for mental health issues of the 14,4% and an increase of the 22,6% of contacts by chat.
- The **114** Emergency Service, co-funded by the Department for Family Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, saw an increase of the 21,5% of cases managed for abuse and violence, 23,5% of problems happened in the online, and of 38,5% of mental health issues.

^[1]Data and statistics by SOS II Telefono Azzurro Onlus – www.azzurro.it



Tips on how to [stay safe online](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic

< Key issues

COVID-19

Advice booklet for parents and carers

Advice for young people

Open letter to parents and carers

Media, misinformation and scams

Open letter to

COVID-19

Tips for staying safe online during the COVID-19 pandemic

Staying connected online has never been more important, now that many of us are physically isolated from family members, friends, colleagues and support networks.

The internet is a great way to socialise, learn, work, play and be entertained. But there are also risks.

So eSafety is adding new content every day to help you stay safe online.

Advice and tips for children, adolescents and families



Telefono Azzurro
Dalla parte dei bambini

Coronavirus: how to deal with fear



Check the news and keep yourself informed on the topic, but be careful to do so with moderation: a continuous exposure to alarming information will most likely increase your fear and make you feel more anxious, rather than well informed.

C Observe the indications about personal hygiene: wash your hands often!

O Remember you can talk with your parents, your family or any adult you trust, if you have any doubts or questions. They may not have an answer to everything, but they will be able to stay close to you and support you while you find your answer.

R Organise your day and stick to your routine, make sure to follow meal and bed times.

O Never be afraid to talk about your fears with others. Even if it's not easy, it is always worth to share your feelings with others.

N Allow yourself some time to keep in touch with friends and relatives, even from home! Stay in contact with your loved ones: web and social networks can help shorten distances!

A Virus information can be overwhelming: evaluate with care and beware of fake news!

V It's important to start your day with positivity! Listen to your favourite song or do something you love!

I Respect and follow the guidelines and regulations released by the Ministry of Health and the rules given by adults.

R Use your time efficiently, balancing leisure and studies: it can be useful to make a schedule to organise your activities and to keep yourself active.

U Still, if you feel the need to talk to someone, you can reach us through the number **1.99.50**: it's free and active 24/7! You can also find us on our chat, active at any time on the website www.azzurro.it

S

www.azzurro.it



Telefono Azzurro
Dalla parte dei bambini

Children's questions about Coronavirus

1 "What is Coronavirus? Why can't we leave the house?"
Coronavirus is a new virus which is spreading around the world. It's like a tiny monster, only visible under a microscope, which causes a disease similar to the flu, called COVID-19. This tiny "creature" is very shy and fast: it can jump from one person to another without being seen!
This new disease spreads when people stay really close to each other: just like what happens in school! For this reason, the Government has decided to protect everyone by closing schools and suspending classes for the time being.
But don't worry, there are a few small things you can do to stay safe: for example, wash your hands often and don't leave your house.
How can you know if you have washed your hands properly? We'll teach you a little trick: pick a song you like (e.g. Happy Birthday) and only raise your hands once you've finished singing... repeat this many times a day and you're sorted!
If you have any questions or doubts about Coronavirus, ask someone close to you. There are no right or wrong questions: it is just important to share them with someone!

2 "Who is taking care of the people who are sick?"
Don't worry about it, there are many people who are helping the ones who are feeling unwell. For example, doctors, nurses, but also many volunteers, keep working hard to take care of and support the people who need help in this situation.

3 "Sometimes, I am a bit worried, sometimes I feel a bit anxious...but I don't know why and I don't know how to explain it!"
This is a new and difficult situation for many people: it's normal to struggle to find the right words to explain how we feel. However, the most important thing is to share this feeling with the people who are close to you, like your mum and dad, even if it's not easy to do so. If you can't sleep, if you don't feel well, speak with someone. Did you know that even drawing or telling a story can help you feel better?

4 "When I'm watching TV, I see things I don't understand and I get scared!"
Hearing the news about Coronavirus on TV can sometimes be scary. If you feel anxious, don't keep everything bottled up and talk about it with your family: they are there for you to explain what is happening. Together, you can gather information, understand it and find programmes that suit you, in order to spend time together and learn new things.

www.azzurro.it



Telefono Azzurro
Dalla parte dei bambini

How to recognise fear and how to deal with it with children and teenagers

1 Give importance to their thoughts, their feelings and be aware of their psychosomatic signals
Offer a space in which they can talk freely about their fears and reassure them: explain them that it's normal to feel anxious or scared in situations like this one. Children could ask repetitive and unending questions: be patient and give an answer to all of their doubts. Moreover, younger children could show their fears through physical signs (headaches, frequent stomach-aches, or struggling to sleep). On the other hand, respect their silence if they don't feel like talking.

2 Children tend to worry a lot about theirs and their relatives' safety, especially if they are far away
One of the most common fears among children is the worry for their parents' and loved ones' wellbeing. During these difficult times, reassure them about everyone's safety and allow them to keep in touch with friends and relatives they can't meet in person at the moment.

3 Children often struggle to verbalise their fears: help them to express themselves and to communicate their feelings through drawings or other activities
Even if children can't express their mood and their worries in words, they are eventually able to express them through other channels: the most common ways are games and drawings, but also acting and plays are good ways.

4 Reassure them and be positive, but try not to give answers that could turn out to be too optimistic and unrealistic in the long run
Even if children can't fully comprehend the meaning of this emergency, it's crucial that the information you provide is true and conveyed by an age-appropriate language.

5 Try to minimise their exposure to the news and social media
If you are watching or reading the news together, make yourself available to explain to children the meaning of what they have learnt, creating a place in which kids feel free to express their doubts and opinions. Children struggle to fully understand the meaning of the information given out by the news and the confusion could increase their fear.

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Useful resources

- [Coronavirus Emergency: here we are](#)
- [One-on-One Time](#)
- [Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak](#)
- [Coping with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak](#)
- <https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/child-helplines/tools/coronavirus/>
- <https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/blog/covid-19-protecting-children-online-abuse>
- [COVID-19: 7 key ways to keep children safe online.](#)
- [Tips on Listening to Your Child.](#)



Key messages for the future

Ensure victim's rights

- 1. Effective communicating with victims and providing for safe environment to report crime**
- 2. Improving protection and support of the most vulnerable victims**
- 3. Facilitate victims access to services and professional help**
- 4. Strengthening cooperation and coordination among actors on victims' rights**

(European Commission, 2020)

Key points and new perspectives

- **Helplines and hotlines** are crucial both in terms of contributing to process of reporting the exploitation and of the support provided to the victims of the abuse: the online tools have the power to be used to help who seeks for help.
- We should not forget to enhance the standard of the **trainings** for professionals who deal with children
- **Research** can give us insights into the issues and their effects on children's lives
- **Awareness and prevention** are some of the key element to respond to children's rights issues. Therefore, we have to unify forces to fight child abuse on global basis. We must speak together in a strong, loud voice, demanding change and calling upon world leaders to act.

«We must ban from the face of the earth violence and every form of abuse against children. Let us look into their eyes: they are your sons and daughters; we must love them as God's masterpieces and children. They have the right to a good life. We have the duty to do everything possible to ensure that right»

*Pope Francis
Child Dignity in the Digital World
14 November, 2019*

**Thank you for your
attention**