

Basic psychosocial support

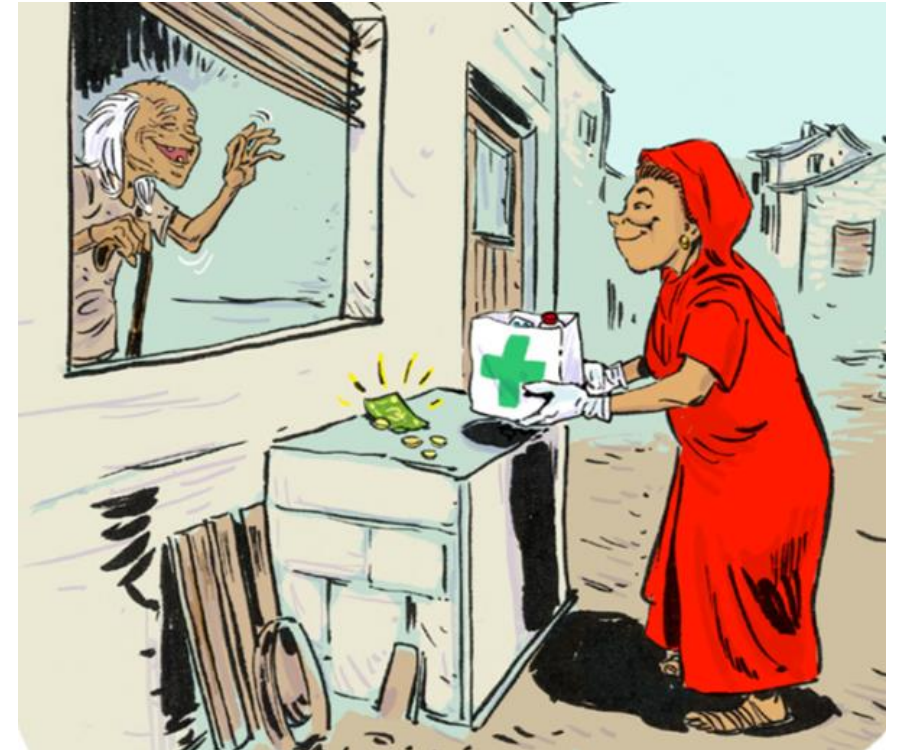
Basic Psychosocial Skills A Guide for COVID-19 Responders



- What are basic psychosocial skills?
- Who can use basic psychosocial skills?
- When and where do we use basic psychosocial skills?
- How to take care of ourselves so we can help others
- How to use basic psychosocial skills in the COVID-19 response to help others feel supported

What are basic psychosocial skills?

- Supportive communication in everyday interactions:
 - Helping others feel comfortable with you
 - Active Listening
- Practical support:
 - Providing practical support
 - Linking with other services or organizations
 - Helping people to manage their own problems
- Supporting people who are experiencing stress
 - Using supportive communication skills
 - Encouraging people to help themselves
 - Providing suggestions to help them
 - Helping those who are seriously distressed






Where and when do we use basic psychosocial skills?

- Can be used anywhere with anyone to provide emotional and practical support to those in distress
- Not a psychological ‘intervention’ or therapy
- Can be integrated into your daily work, whatever it is
- Can be used in your community and family life

Anyone can use basic psychosocial skills!

Why are basic psychosocial skills important in the COVID-19 pandemic?

-  Most people will feel stressed in some way during the COVID-19 pandemic
-  Supporting the emotional well-being of others during this challenging time is important. People will cope better and recover more quickly when they feel supported.
-  You can make a difference to the well-being of people through how you interact and communicate during the COVID-19 response, even if the interaction is only brief



Your well-being: how it's affected



- Longer working hours, without adequate resources or protection
- Dealing with COVID-19-related stigma and discrimination
- Fear for your own and loved ones' safety and well-being
- Being confronted with illness, suffering or death
- Caring for family members or being in quarantine
- Finding that stories of those you help remain with you after work.

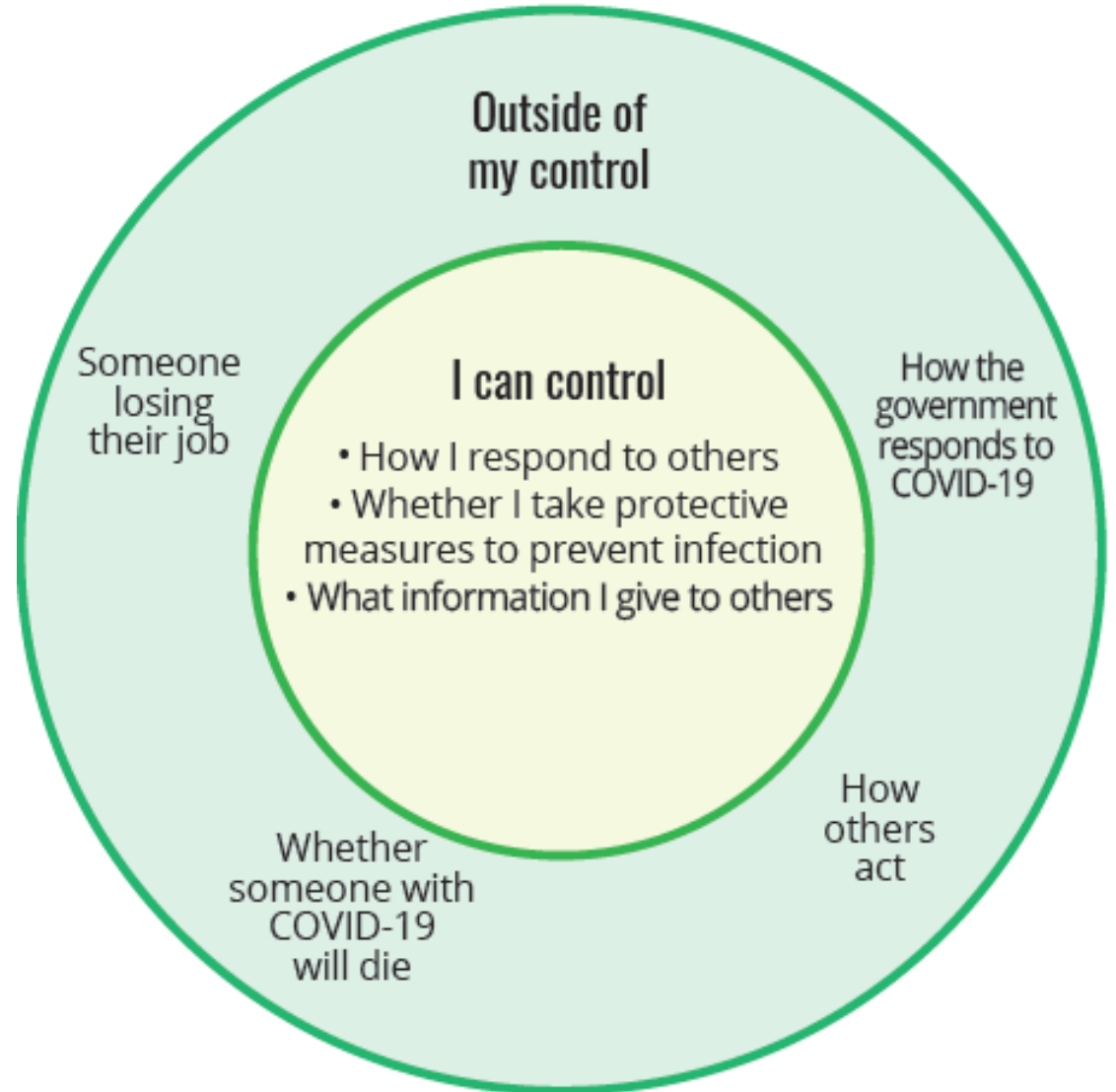
Before you can help others, you need to look after yourself.

What helps:

- Stay up to date with accurate information about COVID-19 and follow safety measures to prevention infection.
- Take “breaks” from COVID-19 media when needed
- Eat well, get enough rest and exercise physically
- Do an activity you find meaningful every day (e.g. art, reading, prayers, talking to a friend)
- Take five minutes out of your day to talk to a friend or family member
- Establish daily routines and stick to them

Your well-being: circles of control

- Be realistic about what you can and cannot control
- Drawing circles can help with this.
- Put aside what is outside your control

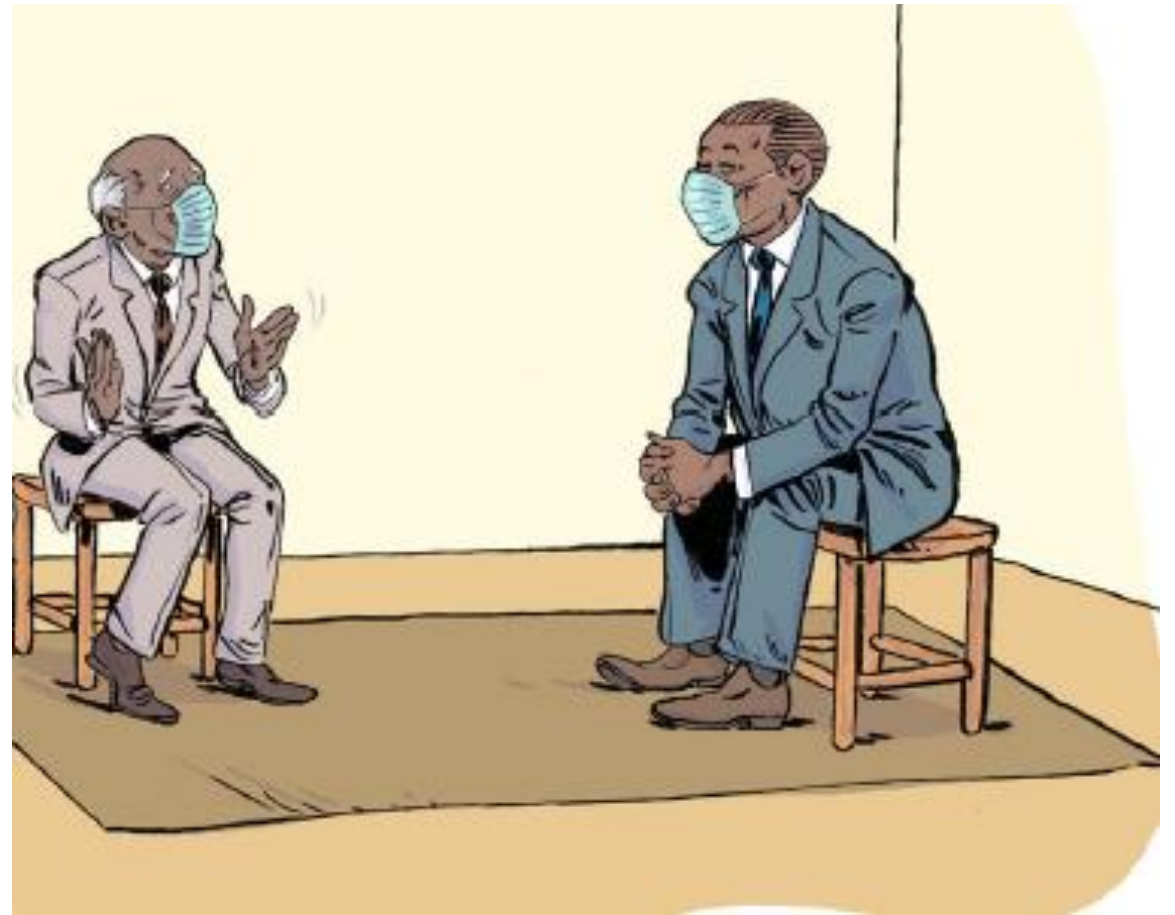


Supportive Communication in Everyday interactions

A.



B.



Everyday interactions: Helping others feel comfortable with you

Do	Don't
Keep an open, relaxed posture	Don't cross your arms
Look at the person	Don't look away, down at the floor or at your phone
Use culturally appropriate eye contact to support the person to feel relaxed and heard	Don't use culturally inappropriate eye contact, e.g. don't stare at the person
Clearly introduce yourself – your name and role	Don't assume that the person knows who you are or what your role is in the response
Maintain a calm and soft tone of voice with a moderate volume	Don't shout or speak very quickly
If the person cannot see your face, try to have a photo of yourself attached onto your clothing (e.g. if you are using personal protective equipment such as a mask)	Don't assume that the person knows what you look like if you are wearing personal protective equipment (e.g. mask)
Confirm that they are comfortable speaking with you, e.g. "Are you comfortable speaking to me (a man)? If you would like to speak to a woman, I can arrange for my colleague to speak with you"	Don't assume that the person is comfortable speaking to you
If someone speaks a different language from you, try to access an interpreter (or family member) and to reassure them	Don't assume that the person speaks the same language as you
Maintain physical distance to reduce COVID-19 infection and explain why, e.g. meet in a large room, through a screen or over the phone	Don't put yourself or others at risk of COVID-19 infection by ignoring physical distancing rules

Everyday interactions: Active Listening



Listen attentively

- Really try to understand the person's point of view and feelings.
- Let them talk; remain quiet until they have finished.
- Block out distractions – is it noisy around? Can you go somewhere quieter? Can you calm your mind and focus on the person and what they are saying?
- Be warm, open and relaxed in the way you present yourself.



Repeat

- Repeat messages and key words the person has said, e.g. "You say looking after your children while working can be overwhelming."
- Ask for clarification if there is something you didn't understand, e.g. "I didn't quite understand what you said just then, could you please explain again?"



Summarize at the end what you have understood

- Identify and reflect key points you heard the person say, so that they know you have heard them and to be sure you have understood them correctly, e.g. "From what you have just said, I understand that you are mainly worried about [summarize main concerns they have expressed], is that correct?"
- Describe what you have heard, rather than interpreting how they feel about the situation (e.g. don't say: "You must feel horrible/devastated"). Don't judge them or their situation.

Practical support: Providing support yourself



- Provide information (e.g. about the situation)
- Provide support yourself (e.g. food, water, shopping)

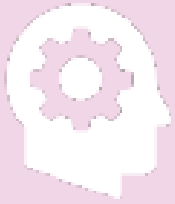
Don't feel pressured to provide direct support if you are not able to.

Practical support: Linking with other organizations



- Create a list of all organizations operating in your area and their contact details. Keep this with you at all times.
- Quickly link people in distress or those who need food, water, shelter or urgent medical or social services.
- Follow up with people if you agree to do so.

Practical support: Helping people to manage their own problems



THINK Encourage the person to think of ways to manage that problem.

The following questions may help:

- What have you done in the past to overcome problems like this?
- What have you already tried doing?
- Is there someone who can help with managing this problem (e.g. friends, loved ones or organizations)?
- Do other people you know have similar problems? How have they managed?



GO Help the person to choose a way to manage that problem and try it out. If it doesn't work, encourage the person to try another solution.



Supporting People Who are Experiencing Stress

- Emotional reactions (feeling sad, angry, scared)
- Behavioural reactions (lack of motivation, avoiding doing activities, becoming violent)
- Physical reactions (headaches, muscle pain, back pain, difficulty sleeping, lack of appetite)

Supporting People Who Are Experiencing Stress

A. Supportive communication skills

- Help the other person to feel comfortable with you
- Actively Listen
- Show that you care

B. Encourage the person to think of something they can do to feel better.

- “What has helped you previously when you have felt this way?”
- “What do you currently do to help yourself feel better?”
- “Is there anyone who can help you?”
- “Are there any activities you used to enjoy doing that you could do now?”

Supporting People Who Are Experiencing Stress

C. Offer a relaxation action activity such as **SLOW BREATHING**



Supporting People Who Are Experiencing Stress

C. Provide suggestions to help them

- Do an activity you enjoy or find meaningful (e.g. pray, sing, observe nature, spend time in natural surroundings)
- Exercise, walk, bike or dance
- Do something creative, such as art, singing, crafts or writing
- Listen to music or the radio
- Speak to a friend or family member
- Read a book or listen to an audiobook
- Make a list of all the things you are grateful for (in your head, on paper).