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Parenting During Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Parenting has ever been a demanding and challenging task for parents and caretakers of our children worldwide. Also, there have been a lot of deliberations and debates about healthy and effective parenting. The present situation of Covid-19 pandemic has turned this task more demanding and critical. Due to close down of schools for nearly four months now, children are really facing problems of loneliness because of missing physical interactions with their peers. Missing of sports and outdoor activities has made them physically and psychologically idle. Under this situation, only help extended to our children is online or from cyber world. This world is really helping them both academically and psychologically. It is worth mentioning that this situation has also been exploited by the cyber attackers and bullies who are trying their best to target everybody in general and children in particular.

In the present study, I tried to reveal certain precautions to be used both by parents and children in cyberspace along with certain other advisories issued by international agencies such as UNICEF, WHO etc.

Keywords: Covid-19, pandemic, parenting, online learning.

1. Introduction

There have been observed various social and psychological changes in the society during present pandemic situation of Covid-19. Children are also badly affected at their psychological level. They are missing face to face peer interactions, amusements and excitements during group outdoor games etc. The present lockdown due to covid-19 has more severe impacts on children of today as compare to the similar situation occurred about one century ago. Today, children are under enormous pressure of studies to assure their future career. This pressure is initially buildup by parents which automatically shifts to children in later stage. Parenting has been a demanding and challenging task worldwide. In developing countries like India, parenting become more career oriented. As a result, both child and parent are involved in rat race where such pressures are more visible. Now, under present situation, a child is under enormous academic and psychological pressure. Schools are

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conducting online classes regularly followed by coaching or tuition online classes (for secondary and senior secondary children in particular). Now, electronic gadgets such as mobile, laptop, book reader etc have become the source for academic learning as well as entertainment. Since, all such gadget interaction are online, parenting become more crucial. In the present study, I tried to reveal certain precautions to be used both by parents and children in cyberspace along with certain other advisories issued by international agencies such as UNICEF, WHO etc for appropriate parenting.

2. Open Communication and Features of Technology

Today, cyber space is equipped with all types of learning material related to almost every field of life. This means all good and evils are being served online to its users. All this information with virtual demonstrations (in many cases) is one click away from your child from each nook and corner of the globe in the absence of any restrictions posed on the used device as privacy settings. Hence, guided and controlled net surfing becomes inevitable for the parents of school going children particularly. In this open information era, certain precautions are to be taken by the parents may help child to take away relevant material and not harmed psychologically.

- Always develop an honest dialogue with children about their contacts i.e. to whom they talk and how.
- Be alert if your child appears to be upset or secretive with online activities or if they are experiencing cyber bullying.
- Work with your child to frame rules on how, when and where internet gadgets can be used.
- Check that your child's net accessing device is running the latest software and antivirus programs, and that privacy settings are on.
- Keep webcams covered when not in use. For younger children, tools such as parental controls, including safe search, can help keep online experiences positive.
- Beware of free online educational resources. Your child should never have to provide a photo or their full name to use these resources. Remember to check the privacy settings to minimize data collection.
- Connecting virtually with others should be more important than ever at present situation and can be an excellent opportunity for you to model kindness and empathy.

- Children should be appropriately informed about present Covid-19 situation. Age-inappropriate content can cause anxiety about this virus.
- For authentic information related to present pandemic, government authorised digital sources such as UNICEF, WHO and Setu application etc. should be referred.
- Spend time with your child to identify age appropriate apps, games and other online entertainment.

3. Encourage Healthy Online Habits

A child should be advised and taught about healthy online habits so that he/she did not become victim of cyber crime or bullying. Certain precautions are to be taken when a child is online such as promote and monitor good behavior online particularly on video calls. Encourage your children to be kind and respectful to classmates, to be mindful of what clothes they wear and to avoid joining video calls from a bedroom. Educate yourself and child with school and government policies and help lines to report cyber bullying or inappropriate online content. During online time of your children, they are exposed to more advertising that may promote unhealthy foods, gender stereotypes or age-inappropriate material. They can be helped with what is wrong with some of the negative messaging parents see. Spending time at home can be a great opportunity for your children to use their voices online to share their views and support those in need during this crisis under the parental guidance. Encourage your child to take advantage of digital online tools that can help them moving, like online exercise videos for kids and video games that require physical movement.

4. Disadvantaged Children

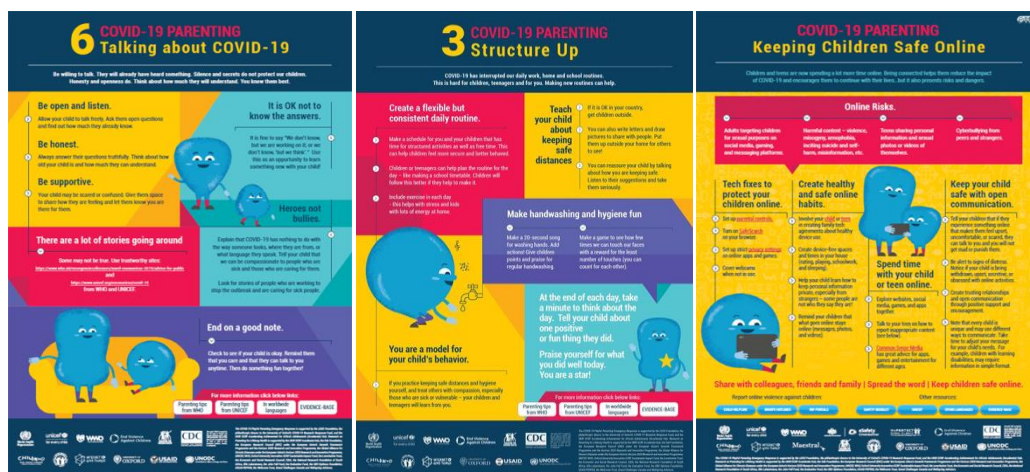
The present pandemic situation has affected every child of the world. However, it has been observed that children who are already disadvantaged are at highest risk. Job loss or reduction in the salary of their parents will cause increased economic pressure to such economically weaker families. Even, such disadvantaged group has started struggling for their regular and hygienic food. Under the present situation, these children are neither able to take online learning nor any kind of entertainment due to inability to possess or maintain any electronic gadget such as mobile, tablet etc. Another, highly vulnerable group of children and adolescents are with chronic disorders, for which important support and therapies may have been reduced or cancelled. For children with mental disability, it can be difficult to understand the situation and the necessity for the restrictions, with consequent increase in anxiety and agitation. Parenting of such children has become really difficult and challenging.

Besides, children with disabilities are at higher risk for child maltreatment. During the pandemic, due to lack of impaired ability to communicate, this risk can increase. Children and adolescents having experienced adverse events before the pandemic occurred are especially vulnerable for consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. The experience of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) is associated with higher risk for mental health problems. Maltreatment has been found to be associated with consequent heightened neural response to signals of threat. Moreover, in these children, emotional reactivity is increased but emotion regulation is decreased. Hence, children and adolescents who have experienced adversity before the pandemic are at higher risk to develop anxiety and adopt dysfunctional strategies to manage the COVID-19-associated challenges.

5. Conclusion

With the above mentioned advisories and precautions, we can contribute positively to develop psychological strength among our children under present pandemic situation. This will not only keep our children safe but also keep them motivated towards better tomorrow during these lockdown days. Rearing of disadvantaged children under present pandemic situation should be done taking help of government and non-government organizations serving for this cause. COVID-19-associated mental health risk has disproportionately hit disadvantaged and marginalized children and adolescents. A special focus should be set on these children in order to prevent aggravating pre-existing disadvantages.

There are numerous mental health threats associated with the current pandemic and subsequent restrictions. Child and adolescent psychiatrists must ensure continuity of care during all phases of the pandemic. COVID-19-associated mental health risks will disproportionately hit children and adolescents who are already disadvantaged and marginalized. Research is needed to assess the implications of policies enacted to contain the pandemic on mental health of children and adolescents, and to estimate the risk/benefit ratio of measures such as home schooling, in order to be better prepared for future developments. Followings are few posters taken from WHO website for awareness among the global society.



Source: <https://www.who.int/campaigns>.

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