

**European**

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**SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY CENTRE FOR TRAINING**

*Affiliated with the International School Psychology Association (ISPA)*



Dear colleagues,

ESPCT trained you for dealing with critical incidents. Corona crisis is a global one affecting many people around the world and schools as well. It is called by health authorities a pandemic.

Trained helpers, like you, can support schools as you do in other crises by offering the evidence based effective strategies and tools. As always it will be useful to think of *the circles of vulnerability and support* to manage the crisis. It will be most helpful to activate the individual's and the *group's coping strategies*. And it will make students feel safe when they know how they can cope with situations they did not face before.

Maslow, a USA psychologist said that basic human needs are addressed during a crisis. First are physical needs (e.g. food, shelter and clothing. Second, are safety and security needs, and lastly are belonging or social connectedness needs. Your purpose is to take care of these needs and activate coping in the students and yourself.

We can make use of our experience in dealing with crises in this global pandemic by offering our assistance to principals, teachers, students, and parents.

We recommend a protocol for talking with classes when they return to school after a lockdown for several weeks. It could be useful for teachers to start school with a class. In principle, it is the one we always use after a crisis with students, teachers, or others who

were affected. Knowing this protocol, you may answer questions which colleagues many have and coach them using the protocol.

This way we work for solidarity and for support for each other in schools and society. We have to offer expertise as experienced crisis managers who can make a difference.

Thank you for all the important work you do.

### **Protocol for a Class Talk**

#### **When School Opens after Corona Lockdown**

You might understand the following class protocol better when you start by going through the same steps for yourself. Be sure to understand the protocol, coping strategies, and how Maslow fits into the overall plan.

Preparing for this task is an important for each teacher. School personnel can teach this way how to deal with crises. Coping is a life skill for everyone and can be learned.

You are on the front line to help others cope with a situation that we have not have before.

#### **1. Reflection for yourself going along the same steps as the class protocol.**

##### **Better understanding of facts**

(Answer each question for yourself before the class meeting. If unsure, find the accurate information.)

Do I understand all the regulations that were given out by the government or school administration?

Where could I get open questions answered?

What do I need to cope with regulations I cannot accept?

What rumors exist in the school/community about the lockdown?

Do I need to get medical clarification about what I do/do not understand?

## **Reactions**

(Reactions are what people do in a crisis. They can be very different from person to person. Accept them as they are presented as common/natural for this situation.) *It is important to understand that in crises strong emotional reactions occur like fear, confusion, anger and wrath, guilt feeling and blaming, needing solidarity or company, shame. This is natural in exceptional situations. None of them is ridiculous or wrong but at first needs to be accepted.*

What was difficult for you when there were restrictions and new requirements? Were there positive reactions and experiences as well?

How was the reactions for others in your family, your kids, partners, elders? Did their reactions impact you? How?

Have these reactions CHANGED since your first started? How?

What is your circle of support when you have problems? (Safety & Belonging)

How do you cope with problems in the past? (Safety)

## **How will it go on in school?**

What are the plans for you the next days? What is different from your regular activities?

What will be most stressful? Most calming?

Will you have to deal with Corona deaths or severe illness among colleagues, school family, your family?

Will there be new tasks? Who will assist me?

How can you deal with new challenges?

What support would you need? Can you ask someone for help?

Can you make things easier for yourself?

What will be interesting? Challenging?

Do I have a "crisis buddy" or friend to talk with?

Can I use some self-care or others to help me?

Am I well enough to help others?

## Coping strategies (BASIC Ph) Active Coping

(The purpose is to identify coping strategies each student has used before and activate them.

It they do not have coping strategies – teach them.)

What helped you to cope with difficult situations in the past? The following categories (BASIC Ph) of stress coping strategies might help to identify your favourite ones and help think of some new ones which could be tried as well.



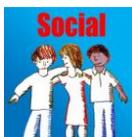
Do you **believe** in your ability to cope with the new challenges? Do you have a religious belief that will help you to be optimistic or support you?

*Frankl: "When you have meaning you can suffer almost anything."*



Is it **helpful** for you to express your **emotions**, your **affects**, your **feelings**?

*Freud: "Emotions whether conscious or unconscious are at the bottom of our experience of meeting the world"*



Do you feel relieved when you can talk with family, friends, colleagues about challenges?

*Adler: "The human is first and foremost a social animal."*



Does it help you to create attractive fantasies, **imaginations** or humorous ideas?

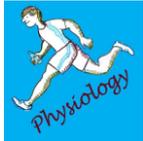
Does art, dancing, music, etc. help you?

*C.G. Jung: "Imagination is the flame of life"*



**Understanding** the situation from different aspects and afterwards create a plan how to deal with it realistically.

*„Have overview of the situation“*



It is important to fulfil your **physical** needs: eating, drinking, sleeping, sports, routines. Be active.

*P. Levine: „Somatic responses are essential in trauma therapy“*

*BASIC-Ph stress coping model, Mooli Lahad, Israel*

## **2. Protocol for a class talk**

(This session should be class sized, private, and not interrupted. If you need someone to help, ask a trusted colleague or school psychologist. It is better in pairs.)

If you do not feel comfortable that you can moderate a talk with a class perhaps someone else of the colleagues teaching in this class will like to do it.

It might feel good when you have had a chat with your students individually through the social medium (e. g. Text, Zoom, FaceTime, etc.) that you can use with them before they return to school.

Be developmentally and culturally sensitive. Use SIMPLE language.

For some affected in a special way it could be useful to offer individual talks or refer to special counselling. (Identify special counsellors beforehand.)

### **STARTING:**

Tell the class what the intention of the talk is:

1. Share fact information about the Corona/COVID-19 crisis
2. Share how they experienced the lockdown of school and then learning at home.
3. Talk about how school will go on and how they can deal with challenges.
4. What helped them so far to deal with difficulties and own irritating emotions, behaviours, or actions?

### **Better understanding of the facts**

Children sometimes do not get enough explanation about the situation which they can understand well. Being able to understand makes them secure and feel part of the community.

## Reactions

If the teacher gives some report of his/her own impressions and reactions it will make it easier for the students to share their own reactions .

How did it start to become clear that there was something unusual going on? What happened next? How was it staying at home and learning there? What was difficult? What did you like?

How is it now/today? Are your reactions different? Do think you need help in some school subject or with special tasks? Who could help?

Let us make a plan for what is needed?

When strong emotions are mentioned it is important to repeat that these “unusual” reactions occur in situations which are extreme. And it is important to accept the emotions of others to feel supported and not be alone with all the unusual things happening. Keeping together in accepting each other will help very much to feel safe and secure in the community which is especially important in an exceptional situation.

(Point out what reactions are common to the group.)

## Next steps

What is going on in school now?

What are the plans for the next hours and days? What are the plans for exams?

Who will need support for what? Who might be able to offer that support, perhaps from other students?

What else do they need to know? Whom can they ask for support in special regards?

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## **Coping strategies**

What has helped you before or in the past to cope with difficulties? What people helped?

Collect suggestions on the white/blackboard or a flipchart paper to be kept in the classroom to remind them of options they have.

*You may have the BASIC-Ph in mind but we do perhaps rather rely on what the kids mention themselves assuring themselves of their own abilities. You may have the BASIC-Ph system in mind and add some activity or thought not mentioned by them.*

*Different human beings have different strategies. (All suggestions have potential to help someone. No judgments at this time.)*

Who seems to be different/impacted compared with the time before the lockdown, seems more affected?

Would an individual private talk with the someone be useful?

Problems at home? Problems with learning and tasks that you did not feel okay/comfortable to talk about in front of the class?

Anxieties/fears concerning getting infected, concerning economic or food insecurity in the family?

## **Closing**

**Thank** students for cooperation and going on supporting each other. Summarize the common fears/anxieties and review the coping strategies of everyone from writings

Give information where and with whom students who feel they want **individual support** whom they can ask. (Develop a handout with specific information.)

## **More information**

For older students more information going in more depth could be useful. Some of it could be given and discussed with the class by the relevant subject teacher. Many facts students will know and can tell from Internet or news on TV. To share the facts allows everyone to find out the rumours or fakes.

## **Possible Discussion Topics**

Infection

Global dissemination

Slowing down is necessary

Vaccination and medication

Social, political impact of the global crisis

People's reactions that confuse you

## **Attachment 1**

### **Some examples for BASIC-Ph channels**

Most people have about three favourite channels. Listening to others, they may think of one they seldom use and may be helpful for them to try, too

#### **Belief**

It will be okay again.

We should not give up.

We can cope better when back to routine.

I feel good when being optimistic.

Praying makes me feel comforted.

Adults can be helpful to me

#### **Affect**

Fear and worry about something you don't understand is common

It is alright to express our feelings.

Different within me feelings are okay.. They can change over time.

Fear, confusion, anger, guilt, shame, grief are common in crises.

#### **Social**

Talking with others feels good.

Being with others makes me feel good.

It is very important to have time together with friends and family.

Sometimes it is good to be for me alone for a while.

Be friendly with others.

Play together.

Connect with helpful others and avoid those who are NOT helpful

## **Imagination**

Listen to music feels good.

Imagine myself in a safe place.

Songs, stories, movies, pictures of a good time or future

Precious memories

Painting/Art

Imagining a good future

Humour

## **Cognitive**

Understand the situation.

Make plans for dealing with tasks.

Make sure I get facts.

Update information.

Make reasonable plans.

Check out information to see if anything has changed; turn off media if it upsets you

## **Physiological**

Keep physical routines: eating, drinking, sleeping, moving.

Calming down at times. (Breathing mindfully)

Different relaxing activities

Sports, muscle relaxation

Dance, skate, bike ride, hike, etc.

Be active!

## **Attachment 2**

There are quite some stories for children to explain what is happening in Corona times: Just one example here. You may find similar ones in your language

### **Immi, the health dog's story**

Hallo! I am the health dog Immi. My friends and I take care in your body, that enemies do not get into you. They could make you sick.

Usually I do not talk to you. Now I will make an exception. Because the Corona Thornball causes problems everywhere.

This bad fellow creeps into people through wet parts of the mouth, nose, and eyes. When it succeeds in getting in it first goes to the throat and lungs.

Then you feel a scratching there and have to cough.

Then it tries to multiply in order to cause more mischief.

Here we come in: the health dogs. I notice there is something wrong with these Thornballs.

They do not belong here. Kill them.

When I notice them very early they will not come down to your throat and will not feel anything about it. Perhaps there will be a little fever, Because when we health dogs start to hunt, it will become a bit hot.

In children like you mostly this works well. With older people like your granny and grandfather it does not. Or with already sick people.

When these Thornballs manage to get further down in one's lung it becomes dangerous.

People cannot breathe properly and need support in a hospital.

Oh, almost I had forgotten. You can do something yourself to help defend yourself. You can wash hands with soap. Soap will kill Thornballs every time (Wash for 20 seconds with soap and warm water [Sing Happy Birthday three times])

And there is something else you can do. When you feel scratching in your throat and have fever **stay at home**. Thornballs could have got into you and staying home will prevent infecting others. Tell someone, because you may need to see a doctor.

And there is another rule: Stay far away from other people. As far as from the bottom of your home to the ceiling. At this distance Thornballs cannot pass/jump over from one person to the other. Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough. This is the most important behaviour!

Now you know everything I can teach you and what you need to know about preventing infections. If you keep to these rules you will be an important person to help master the situation for you and for everyone.

Another point, I have a friend in the government. His name is Logo. He thinks it would be good to understand more.

When it is so easy to cope why are so many grownups and perhaps your parents, too, worried? You can see and feel it.

That's easy: Grownups need to earn money. Some are not allowed to work anymore because they would be too near to others and pass the virus. So they do not get money anymore and worry how they can pay for food and other necessary thing.

Government has told them that they will care for them in this case. Still, they will have to wait if it works.

For some who live with many others in small homes it is difficult for them. They get nervous and easily angry at each other. When school and work starts now again it will help. Just keep to the rules and enjoy meeting your friends again.

That's it from Immi and Logo. Take care!"