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NCTSN The National Child
Traumatic Stress Network

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Supporting Children and Adolescents Isolated Due to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The coronavirus is a major epidemic. However, relatively few children have been directly affected and, if they are, cases have tended to be mild. Of all the cases reported, a little over one percent have occurred in youth ages 10-19 years and a little under one percent in children ages 9 or younger. Here are some of the ways youth may be affected & ways you can help.

Common Behaviors of Youth Exposed to Trauma

1. When youth are exposed to a traumatic event
 - They depend on adults
 - They depend on protection
 - They depend on support
2. They need parents and other adults to be emotionally available to listen to them and to hear their concerns
3. Parents, teachers and others need to share accurate information with youth
4. Common behaviors
 - Aggression
 - Withdrawal
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Dysregulation - regression
5. Youth of all ages experience stress including the stress experienced by parents and other caregivers.
6. Stress may affect their ability to regulate their behaviors and emotions.
7. Adults can buffer children from absorbing some stress that is happening around them.

Interventions for Youth Impacted & Isolated

1. **Routines are very important** for children and adolescents. Disasters, forced isolation, school closures will disrupt usual routines. Creating new routines is important: doing virtual schoolwork, finding time to play and exercise, keeping in touch with friends remotely. Routines can include keeping set mealtimes, bedtimes, and finding a time to talk and do enjoyable things.
2. **Support from parents or caregivers**, even when they are worried, is very important during the isolation. However, parents also need to practice self-care so that they will be both physically and emotionally present to help with increases in stress. Remember to make time to listen to children of all ages and accurately respond to their questions.
3. **Explain why things are different, give youth time to talk and listen to their worries** – they need to understand that the epidemic will end and why they can't go to school, visit their friends, and be extra careful washing hands, and avoiding exposure to the virus.
5. **Do your best to support children in a way that is appropriate for their age.** All children can have important roles helping others with necessary tasks and older children can help younger children.