

LIVING WITH THE TIMES

A MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TOOLKIT FOR OLDER ADULTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



TRANSLATIONS, ACCESSIBLE FORMATS AND ADAPTATIONS

Please contact the IASC Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (mhps.refgroup@gmail.com) for the coordination of translations and preferred formats. All completed translations and versions will be posted on the IASC MHPSS RG website.

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For an overview of all completed translations and formats of Living with the Times: a mental health and psychosocial support toolkit for older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic, see: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-resources-covid-19>

INTRODUCTION

Living with the Times: a mental health and psychosocial support toolkit for older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic has been developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings (IASC MHPSS RG).

This resource includes posters with key messages for older adults on how to take care of their well-being and how they can provide support to those around them during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. It includes instructions for facilitators of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) on how to conduct guided conversations with older adults using these posters. The posters build upon the guidance sections for older adults in the [IASC Interim Briefing Note Addressing Mental Health and Psychosocial Aspects of COVID-19 Outbreak](#), and the [IASC Guidance on Operational Considerations for Multisectoral Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Programmes during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

The production of this toolkit involved an iterative and participatory development process, which began with pilot-testing to understand what style of illustrations and designs worked best for older adults. A total of 199 older adults aged between 60 and 90 years, from 51 countries, provided inputs to the design and content via an online survey and a number of focus group consultations. Based on this feedback, the IASC MHPSS RG revised the posters and developed this facilitator guide through a thematic ad hoc steering group, in close collaboration with agencies specializing in the well-being of older adults, including colleagues from the International Federation on Ageing, HelpAge International and Alzheimer’s Disease International. The process was a unique inter-agency collaboration between experts from different disciplines, including dementia, MHPSS in humanitarian settings, and ageing and disability. Through a network of country-level MHPSS Technical Working Groups, the posters were then tested with 80 older adults from a wide range of countries, based on geographical location and different income groups and contexts. This testing phase included older adults living in humanitarian settings from a total of 10 countries. The facilitator guide was reviewed based on inputs from Member Agencies of the IASC MHPSS RG. The posters with key messages require minimal reading skills, are culturally diverse and aim to engage older adults in conversations and activities. The IASC MHPSS RG collected feedback on different designs for the posters to arrive at the style you will find in this IASC product.

Our sincere appreciation goes to all the older adults who guided and informed the development of this toolkit. This is a tool to be used by all COVID-19 and humanitarian responders to help treat the mental health and psychosocial well-being of older adults as a priority.



BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on older women and men, who are at a higher risk of developing more severe symptoms of the disease, and of dying as a result. This increased risk is partly due to age-related changes to the immune system, which make it harder to fight off diseases and infection. Older adults are also more likely to have underlying health conditions, such as lung, kidney, cardiovascular or cerebrovascular disease or cancer, and to take multiple concurrent medications that make it harder to cope with, and recover from, illness, including COVID-19.



The stress, economic hardship and social isolation associated with both short-term and long-term measures put in place to contain COVID-19 may affect psychological well-being, exacerbate underlying mental health or neurological

conditions, including common conditions such as depression and anxiety, and also potentially increase the risk of worsening cognitive decline and/or of suicide. Older adults, especially women who live alone or have limited social contact in normal situations, or older adults living in vulnerable situations (e.g. poverty, refugee settings, violence and abuse, or frailty), may also be at higher risk of experiencing newly presented symptoms of mental health and neurological conditions. Some older adults may react more strongly to

stressful events and take more time to recover from stress, which can affect both their mental and physical health. Measures put in place to contain the spread of COVID-19 and to protect older adults (such as shielding) have created additional economic pressures and burdens for them. Financial worries include families facing unemployment or job losses and higher out-of-pocket expenditure for health and social welfare services as resources are diverted to COVID-19 response efforts.



Within the group of older women and men ("older adults") there is a great diversity of ages and abilities. The diversity of this population, as with any age cohort, will have a determining effect on their level of vulnerability. Gender, age, disability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation (LGBTQI+), social connectedness, literacy levels, poverty, work opportunities and other factors will all play a key role in the extent to which an individual is at risk or can be a support for their community. For example, older adults who have migrated to their current country of residence may have fewer social connections or may not have access to the main language of information about the pandemic. Other older adults may be proactively supporting their friends or be part of emergency response efforts through running hotline/helpline services.



Due to their health risk profile, older adults may be one of the last population groups for whom lockdown measures are lifted, potentially resulting in more time spent in social isolation. If COVID-19 transmission rates remain high, older adults may also remain at higher risk of infection once disease-related measures are lifted. Older adults may be particularly afraid of

becoming infected with COVID-19 or of infecting family and friends. Stress related to COVID-19 may also exacerbate pre-existing fears and anxieties related to dying or dying alone. For these reasons, it is important that older adults remain mentally healthy and active during the pandemic.



PURPOSE

The purpose of this activity toolkit is to share recommendations with older adults on how to protect their health and well-being, as well as how they too can provide support to those around them during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. The toolkit contains five large poster illustrations to print out or show on a screen, each addressing one of the following questions:

1. How can I stay healthy?
2. What can I do to improve my mood?
3. How can I feel connected to my family and community?
4. Where can I get help if I need it?
5. How can I cope with grief and loss?

The posters aim to provide answers to these questions in an accessible format that requires minimal reading ability. They are universal in nature, representing different cultures, settings and regions; however, discussions arising from the illustrations should take socio-cultural, economic and gender contexts into consideration. The facilitator notes for each poster expand on this point and were developed so that each poster can be discussed stand-alone. As a result the instructions may feel somewhat repetitive at times. However, this was done to allow for the separate use of each poster. The illustrations can guide conversations and invite the viewer(s) to interact with the image. Each poster can be used as an activity; older adults can spend time with them and find solutions to the five key questions by themselves or in a group setting.

The activities are best facilitated by a group leader, a mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) worker or a volunteer who is familiar with the needs of older women and men in a specific community or context. However, older adults can also review the posters in their own time, engage in conversations with one another or use them as discussion points in social gatherings.



FACILITATOR NOTES

Before you start, here are some generic instructions and tips for facilitating the activity:

- Familiarize yourself with the content of the toolkit and the illustrations. Reflect on how to introduce the themes in the posters in relation to your specific community or context.
- You can run the activity in groups or through individual sessions. Where culturally or socially indicated, the activity should be arranged in gender-segregated groups.
- The posters do not have a set order. The posters and instructions in this toolkit were designed so that each poster can also be used stand-alone. It is recommended that you start with the poster that is most relevant to your specific audience of older women and men. This could be based on context (e.g. urban versus rural setting, or refugee versus host population), gender-specific differences, preferences or religious practices as well as any specific issue that the older person(s) might have.
- Posters are best printed on A3 paper (minimum size A4 paper) or shown on large screens (note not mobile phones or tablets). Choosing which format or medium to show the posters will be determined by the characteristics of your specific audience.
- During group or individual sessions, ensure physical distancing (as per nationally recommended guidelines) and ensure that COVID-19 safety and hygiene measures are in place. These include:
 - Wash your hands often. Use soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand rub.
 - Maintain a safe distance from anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
 - Wear a mask when physical distancing is not possible.
 - Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
 - Cover your nose and mouth with the inside of your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
 - Stay home if you feel unwell.
 - If you have a fever, cough or difficulty breathing, seek medical attention.
- Create a warm and friendly atmosphere, listen to what the older person(s) share(s), and validate their feelings.
- Make sure that chairs or spaces are adapted and adequate for the comfort of people with any disability, including ramps at the entrance to allow entry for older adults with reduced mobility.
- Make sure that you are able to face the older person(s) so that you can communicate with your eyes and gestures as well as talking together, also bearing in mind that you might have to wear a mask. Speak loudly and clearly so that older adults who might be hearing-impaired can understand you. Check whether they require reading glasses to look at the posters.
- Allow plenty of time to listen and be sure that the information shared is well understood by recapping yourself and asking the older adult(s) to recap what they understand. For example, you can ask "Am I clear? Do you want me to repeat the information?" or check "How would you like to proceed?"



POSTER 1: HOW CAN I STAY HEALTHY?

Why is this important?

It is natural to feel anxious, worried, distressed or lonely at times in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This may particularly be the case for older women and men who live alone or have limited social contact in everyday situations. However, there are many activities that older adults can do to protect their mental well-being during times of stress. Staying physically healthy and active is particularly important for older adults since COVID-19 measures may require them to remain in lockdown for longer. An active and healthy lifestyle may help them maintain their physical and mental health over the long term, remain flexible and mobile and reduce any functional or cognitive decline¹.

Key messages

To stay physically and mentally healthy during the pandemic, it is important for older women and men to:

- Keep to daily routines or create new ones
- Sleep and eat at the same time every day
- Stay hydrated and eat healthily
- Be physically active (aim for at least 30 minutes of low-impact exercise each day)²
- Be mentally active. Suggestions for activities include doing puzzles, crosswords or mental fitness exercises, playing musical instruments, chess or dominoes, etc.)
- Take all their medication as prescribed by their health care professional, and not stop taking their medication unless told to do so by their doctor.

In the poster, you can see a person or a group of people doing the following:



1. Jogging
2. Waking up and going to bed at regular times
3. Gardening and doing housework
4. Reading a newspaper
5. Eating healthily and at regular times
6. Riding a bicycle
7. Playing games at a safe distance to keep mentally active and socially engaged. Physical distancing does not mean social isolation
8. Walking
9. Making tea
10. Drinking plenty of water, also when outside (e.g. while sitting on a park bench)
11. Taking prescribed medicines. It is important to take medication as prescribed: do not stop taking medicines unless told to do so by your health care professional
12. Doing outdoor relaxation exercises/tai chi
13. Picking up prescription medication from the pharmacy: plan your medication refills and prescription renewals in advance. Set a reminder for yourself
14. Buying groceries to keep daily routines and eat healthily. You may need to adapt your routines (wear a face mask, avoid busy times at the local market, ask others for help).

1 WHO guidelines: Risk reduction of cognitive decline and dementia. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2019. <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/risk-reduction-of-cognitive-decline-and-dementia>

2 WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2020. <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/336656/9789240015128-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

INSTRUCTIONS

1

Before showing the poster, ask the older adult(s):

How are you keeping yourself healthy?

2

Give the older person(s) some time to reflect and take notes of what they say.

3

Now show them the poster. If printed, it should be at least A4, better A3 paper. Tell them:

Take a look at this poster and spend a few moments thinking about it.

4

Give them time to review the poster. Watch their reactions while looking at the illustrations.

5

After a few moments, ask guiding questions to start the conversation. Here are some suggestions:

Are you already doing any of the activities that you see in the poster?

Which of the activities that you see in the poster would you consider doing in the future to stay healthy?

Did looking at the poster trigger any other ideas? What else could you be doing to stay physically healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic?

What questions might come up?

The people, environment and cultural context do not look familiar. Does that mean the activities do not apply to me?

How can I undertake the activities shown in the poster in the context of COVID-19-?

Do I need to undertake all of the activities depicted in the poster to stay healthy?

Does engaging in volunteering work at a community level contribute to keeping me healthy?

Why are the people shown alone in their homes not wearing a mask?

Proposed responses

The illustrations are meant to be universal. They can be used by people all over the world. Some scenes/people may look more familiar than others. Use your imagination: what might activities, women/men or houses look like in your local setting?

Adhere to local restrictions as much as possible; this might include practising physical distancing and wearing a face mask.

No, the poster is meant to provide you with a range of ideas. Pick activities that you find interesting and that best fit your daily routine.

Engaging in volunteer or faith-based activities or women's or men's groups can help you feel connected, motivated and valued.

Wearing a mask protects you and others from infection. If you are at home alone, you do not need to wear a mask.

TIPS- ALERTS

While there are many other things that are important for maintaining good physical health during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as regular hand hygiene, physical distancing, cough etiquette, mask wearing, etc., this poster and the activity toolkit in general focus on mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). For general health tips for older adults, see:

“Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Risks and safety for older people”

<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-on-on-covid-19-for-older-people>

“Older people & COVID-19”

<https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/covid-19>

Some older adults may feel confused by the fact that many different scenes, locations and cultures are depicted in the poster.

- Encourage them to interpret these scenes and consider which ones are most relatable to them.
- Make sure to mention that there are many different ways to stay healthy, and not all are depicted in the poster.
- Ask older women and men what they are doing to stay healthy and what new ideas the poster suggests, including activities they may not have considered before to help them stay healthy.
- Encourage older women and men to think about the activities depicted in the poster that might work best for them. Which activity would they like to try out?

For more health advice for older adults visit WHO’s website on COVID-19 and older adults, see: <https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/demographic-change-and-healthy-ageing/covid-19>

POSTER 2: WHAT CAN I DO TO IMPROVE MY MOOD?

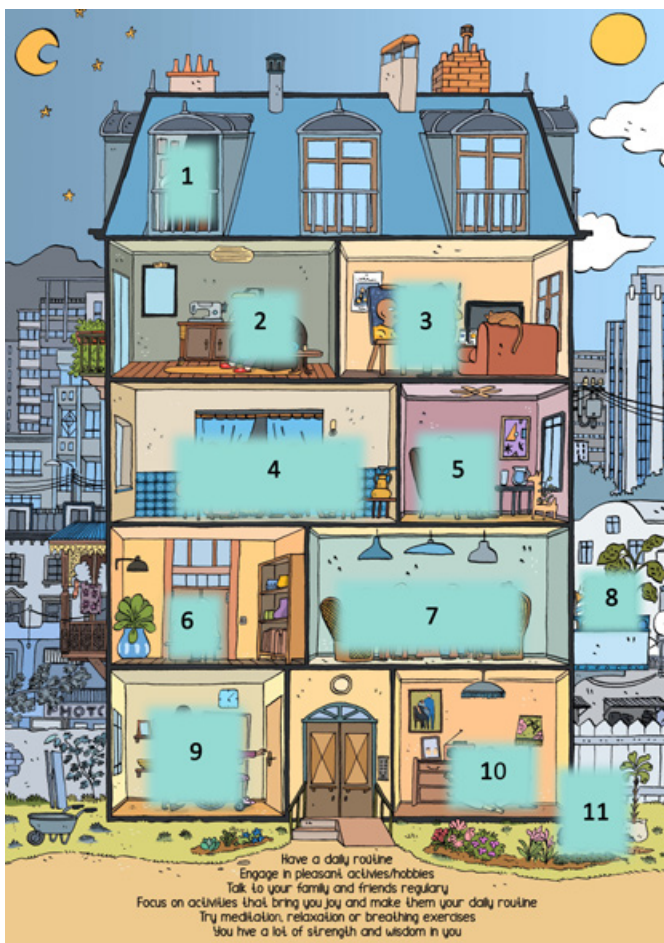
Why is this important?

Given that older adults are at an increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, they may be particularly afraid of becoming infected, of dying or dying alone, or of infecting family and friends. They may also experience the loss of close friends or family and may not be able to attend their funeral. Older adults may feel socially isolated as a result of restrictions and may spend a longer time in lockdown or being shielded due to their high-risk profile. Older adults are also at higher risk for abuse and neglect. Together, these factors may increase older adults' risk of experiencing symptoms of new, or exacerbate underlying, mental health issues and/or neurological conditions, which may affect their sense of motivation and psychological well-being.

Key messages

To help improve the mood of older women and men during the pandemic, it is important that they:

- Have a daily routine
- Engage in activities that are enjoyable
- Talk to their family and friends regularly
- Focus on activities that bring them joy and make these activities part of their daily routine
- Try relaxation, meditation, breathing and low-impact exercises
- Consider cutting down on news updates (or at least find a balance) to give their mind a break from panic-inducing, stressful media reports.
- Draw on (or use) their strength, experience and knowledge to deal with the situation.



In the poster, you can see a person or a group of people doing the following:

1. Looking at the stars, being mindful, reflecting on the positive things in your life, feeling and practising gratitude
2. Knitting, sewing
3. Painting/drawing
4. Enjoying a meal with family or friends
5. Regularly speaking with family and friends over the phone
6. Doing pottery or other craft activities
7. Playing cards with family or friends
8. Reading a book
9. Going out and/or helping others to go out
10. Relaxation/meditation/breathing exercises
11. Gardening

INSTRUCTIONS

1

Before showing the poster, ask the older adult(s):

What can you do to improve your mood?

2

Give the older person(s) some time to reflect and take notes of what they say.

3

Now show them the poster. If printed, it should be at least A4, better A3 paper. Tell them:

Take a look at this poster and spend a few moments thinking about it.

4

Give them time to review the poster. Watch their reactions while looking at the illustrations.

5

After a few moments, ask guiding questions to start the conversation. Here are some suggestions:

What thoughts or ideas did the poster trigger?

Are you already doing any of the activities that you see in the poster?

Which of the activities that you see in the poster would you consider doing in the future to improve your mood?

How does watching/reading/listening to the news make you feel?

What questions might come up?

How can I improve my mood if COVID-19-related measures do not allow me to visit friends and family?

What are breathing and relaxation exercises? How do they work?

The people, environment and cultural context do not look familiar. Does that mean the activities do not apply to me?

Do I need to undertake all of the activities depicted in the poster to stay healthy?

Why are the people shown alone in their homes not wearing a mask?

Proposed responses

There are many different ways to improve your mood, including establishing daily routines, engaging in pleasant activities and speaking with friends and family over the phone or face to face as much as possible, while adhering to local restrictions including physical distancing and wearing a face mask.

These exercises help you to focus on relaxation and your breathing, which helps you to reduce tension and sleep better.

Would you like to practise an exercise together?

The illustrations are meant to be universal. They can be used by people all over the world. Some scenes/people may look more familiar than others. Use your imagination: what might activities, women/men or houses look like in your local setting?

No, the poster is meant to provide you with a range of ideas. Pick activities that you find interesting and that best fit your daily routine.

Wearing a mask protects you and others from infection. If you are at home alone, you do not need to wear a mask.

TIPS- ALERTS

There have been reports of increased levels of violence occurring in the home during the COVID-19 pandemic, including violence against older adults. Look for signs of violence and offer support as appropriate. You may find useful information in this WHO brief that contains key actions for relevant stakeholders to prevent or mitigate interpersonal violence: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Violence_actions-2020.1

Some older adults may feel confused by the fact that many different scenes, locations and cultures are depicted in the poster.

- Encourage them to interpret these scenes and consider which ones are most relatable to them. Make sure to mention that there are many different ways to think more positively and improve their mood.
- Ask older adults what new ideas the poster elicits, including activities they may not have considered before to improve their mood. Which activity would they like to try out?
- Encourage older women and men to think about the activities depicted in the poster that might best work for them.
- Ask older women and men where and how they access news and whether or not this meets their needs. If necessary, assist them in finding a balance between staying informed and watching/reading too much panic-inducing, stressful media.

You can find more information on how to cope with stress during the COVID-19 pandemic, see: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a_8

POSTER 3: WHAT CAN I DO TO FEEL CONNECTED WITH MY FAMILY AND COMMUNITY?

Why is this important?

Being socially active lessens the effects of stress on your body. Remember, physical distancing is not the same as social isolation and does not have to lead to loneliness. Staying socially connected is very important to maintain psychological well-being and cognitive health.

Key messages

For older adults to feel connected with their family and community, it is important that they:

- Help others if they can (e.g. become a volunteer: engaging in meaningful work or tasks can make an older person feel valued)
- Talk to their family and friends regularly
- Maintain community, religious and/or spiritual involvement. For example, you can follow services on the television, radio or the Internet if available
- Join community or peer support groups or use telephone helplines or groups on social media, if available.



In the poster, you can see a person or a group of people doing the following:

1. Engaging in prayers with their religious/spiritual group
2. Chatting with their community groups
3. Reading to children
4. Watching television as part of family time
5. Staying in regular contact with family/friends, e.g. connecting via the Internet or telephone
6. Staying in touch with family and doing activities together, e.g. three generations building a bird house
7. Staying in touch with neighbours or friends: a brief chat over the fence
8. Walking with a friend who needs assistance or setting up a walking group.

INSTRUCTIONS

1

Before showing the poster, ask the older adult(s):

How do you currently stay connected with your family and community?

2

Give the older person(s) some time to reflect and take notes of what they say.

3

Now show them the poster. If printed, it should be at least A4, better A3 paper. Tell them:

Take a look at this poster and spend a few moments thinking about it.

4

Give them time to review the poster. Watch their reactions while looking at the illustrations.

5

After a few moments, ask guiding questions to start the conversation. Here are some suggestions:

What thoughts or ideas did the poster trigger?

Are you already doing any of the activities that you see in the poster?

Which of the activities that you see in the poster would you consider doing in the future to stay connected?

What questions might come up?

Proposed responses

How can I stay connected to my family and community if COVID-19-related measures do not allow me to visit friends and family?

There are different ways of staying connected to your family and community. These may include speaking with friends, family and neighbours over the phone, online or at a distance while adhering to local restrictions (including physical distancing and wearing a face mask).

The people, environment and cultural context do not look familiar. Does that mean the activities do not apply to me?

The illustrations are meant to be universal. They can be used by people all over the world. Some scenes/people may look more familiar than others. Use your imagination: what might activities, women/men or houses look like in your local setting?

Do I need to undertake all of the activities depicted in the poster to stay healthy?

No, the poster is meant to provide you with a range of ideas. Pick activities that you find interesting and that best fit your daily routine.

Why are the people shown alone in their homes not wearing a mask?

Wearing a mask protects you and others from infection. If you are at home alone, you do not need to wear a mask.

TIPS- ALERTS

Some older adults may feel confused by the fact that many different scenes, locations and cultures are depicted in the poster.

- Encourage them to interpret these scenes and consider which ones are most relatable to them. Make sure to mention that there are many different ways to feel connected with their family and community.
- Ask older adults what new ideas the poster elicits, including activities they may not have considered before to feel connected to their family and community.
- Encourage older women and men to think about the activities depicted in the poster that might best work for them.
- Be mindful of the digital divide affecting older women and men, which might prevent them from using digital platforms not only in the context of social interactions but also to access services such as telemedicine, grocery shopping, etc. Offer resources if available and applicable in your context.

For information on where, when and how to wear masks visit WHO's page on mask-wearing, see: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>

POSTER 4: WHAT CAN I DO TO GET HELP IF I NEED IT?

Why is this important?

Older adults may not know where or how to seek help, particularly if care services are closed. Some older adults, including those with disabilities, cognitive impairment or dementia, who rely on others to carry out basic activities for daily living and functioning, may not be able to access the support they need during lockdown or in situations where their caregiver becomes ill. At the same time, older adults who are care-dependent may be at an increased risk of infection from caregivers and their living environment (e.g. in humanitarian settings). They may also have difficulty following the guidelines for infection prevention and control, particularly those who have disabilities, cognitive impairment or dementia. Females (whether older adults themselves or younger) are often (informal) caregivers for older adults, which places them at an increased risk of infection and disease transmission. Many grandparents are part-time caregivers for their grandchildren; their ability to take on family caregiving roles is likely to have decreased due to COVID-19-related restriction measures, with negative impacts on family coping strategies and support options.

Some older adults may not have access to key essential services and protection during lockdown, such as food, medicine, shelter, sexual and reproductive health services and other resources, due to a fear of becoming infected and/or reduced mobility due to COVID-19-related measures.

Key messages

For older adults to get help if needed, it is important that they:

- Contact their health or social care worker, particularly if stress, worry or sadness get in the way of their daily activities for several days in a row
- Talk to their family and friends
- Turn to their community leaders or religious or spiritual leaders.



In the poster, you can see a person or a group of people doing the following:

1. Visiting a health or social worker
2. Speaking with a community, religious or spiritual leader
3. Seeking social support by talking to family and friends
4. Receiving a home visit from a health or social worker

INSTRUCTIONS

1

Before showing the poster, ask the older adult(s):

What can you do to get help if you need it?

2

Give the older person(s) some time to reflect and take notes of what they say.

3

Now show them the poster. If printed, it should be at least A4, better A3 paper. Tell them:

Take a look at this poster and spend a few moments thinking about it.

4

Give them time to review the poster. Watch their reactions while looking at the illustrations.

5

After a few moments, ask guiding questions to start the conversation. Here are some suggestions:

What thoughts or ideas did the poster trigger?

Are you already doing any of the activities that you see in the poster?

Which of the activities that you see in the poster would you consider doing in the future to get help if you needed it?

What questions might come up?

How can I get help if COVID-19-related measures do not allow me to leave my house?

The people, environment and cultural context do not look familiar. Does that mean the activities do not apply to me?

Do I need to undertake all of the activities depicted in the poster to stay healthy?

Why are the people shown alone in their homes not wearing a mask?

Proposed responses

There are different ways of getting help if you cannot leave your house. These may include speaking with your health or social worker over the phone, utilizing telephone helplines or community and peer support groups, or calling friends and family.

The illustrations are meant to be universal. They can be used by people all over the world. Some scenes/people may look more familiar than others. Use your imagination: what might activities, women/men or houses look like in your local setting?

No, the poster is meant to provide you with a range of ideas. Pick activities that you find interesting and that best fit your daily routine.

Wearing a mask protects you and others from infection. If you are at home alone, you do not need to wear a mask.

TIPS- ALERTS

Some older adults may feel confused by the fact that many different scenes, locations and cultures are depicted in the poster.

- Encourage them to interpret these scenes and consider which ones are most relatable to them. Make sure to mention that there are many different ways to get help.
- Ask older adults what new ideas the poster elicits, including activities they may not have considered before to seek help.
- Encourage older women and men to think about the activities depicted in the poster that might best work for them. Which activity would they like to try?
- Write down local numbers and contact details of agencies/partners on the ground that can help.

You can find useful tips for when you are going to a healthcare facility, see: https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/health-care-facilities_8_1-01.png?Status=Master&sfvrsn=823c9ad5_3/

POSTER 5: HOW CAN I COPE WITH GRIEF AND LOSS?

Why is this important?

Like all people, when an older adult loses a family member or a friend to COVID-19, they may experience a wide range of emotions, including sadness, guilt, loneliness, anger, and (ambiguous) loss.⁴ They may have difficulty sleeping, feel fatigued or experience low levels of energy. They may dwell more on thoughts related to their own death and mortality, which may cause more anxiety. All these feelings are natural and there is no right or wrong way to feel grief or to manage loss. Depending on national or local measures, it may not be possible to visit the deceased person; funeral services may also not be permitted. It is natural to feel distress around this, and it makes the mourning process more difficult. Enabling, as far as possible, appropriate cultural, spiritual and religious practices and rituals can ease distress, begin to address the (ambiguous) loss and help mourning and grief in the community.^{5,6}

Key messages

For older adults to cope with grief and loss, it is important that they:

- Give themselves time. They may think that the sadness and pain they feel will never go away, but in most cases grief eases over time. The intensity of grief usually correlates with the intensity of love that they felt for the person when they were alive.
- Acknowledge that losing a family member or friend is a very difficult situation that can trigger many different feelings. All these feelings are natural and there is no right or wrong way to feel or process grief.
- Remember the happy moments and memories of time spent with the deceased person
- Speak regularly about their feelings with people whom they trust. Contact with friends, family or community volunteers can help people with the grieving process and help them feel connected.
- Turn to their community leaders or religious or spiritual leaders. Such leaders are skilled at helping people manage grief and loss and find meaning, and can help them work through the grieving process.
- Focus on activities that are enjoyable and make them feel happy.



In the poster, you can see a person or a group of people doing the following:

1. Remembering happy moments and time spent with the deceased person
2. Maintaining daily routines while thinking of and remembering the deceased person
3. Talking about happy moments and memories of time spent with a deceased family member
4. Looking at a photo album
5. Playing music
6. Talking about happy moments and memories of time spent with a deceased friend
7. Visiting a community or religious or spiritual leader
8. Walking in nature
9. Looking at photos on a computer or phone

4. Ambiguous loss refers to situations where people cannot – for various reasons – find closure in their grieving process which leaves them searching for answers

5. WHO mhGAP Humanitarian Intervention Guide. Geneva: WHO; 2015. https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/162960/9789241548922_eng.pdf;jsessionid=C59290F0F882248BE1FC7CEAD638D0BB?sequence=1

6. IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings. Geneva: Inter-Agency Standing Committee; 2007. Action Sheet 5.3: Facilitate conditions for appropriate communal cultural, spiritual and religious healing practices (pp. 106-109); and Action Sheet 8.2: Provide access to information about positive coping methods (pp. 163-167). https://interagencystanding-committee.org/system/files/iasc_guidelines_on_mental_health_and_psychosocial_support_in_emergency_settings.pdf

INSTRUCTIONS

1

Before showing the poster, ask the older adult(s):

How do you cope with grief and loss?

2

Give the older person(s) some time to reflect and take notes of what they say.

3

Now show them the poster. If printed, it should be at least A4, better A3 paper. Tell them:

Take a look at this poster and spend a few moments thinking about it.

4

Give them time to review the poster. Watch their reactions while looking at the illustrations.

5

After a few moments, ask guiding questions to start the conversation. Here are some suggestions:

What thoughts or ideas did the poster trigger?

Are you already doing any of the activities that you see in the poster?

Which of the activities that you see in the poster would you consider doing in the future to cope with grief or loss?

What questions might come up?

How can I cope with grief and loss if I cannot visit a dying friend or family member, or attend funeral services?

Proposed responses

There are different ways of coping with grief and loss if you cannot visit a dying friend or family member, or attend funeral services. These may include regularly calling friends and family, speaking with your community, religious or spiritual leader and focusing on activities that are pleasurable and make you happy

You could also perform a personal ritual to help the grieving process or if, for example, the deceased person was a friend, call their family members to offer your condolences and show them how you are feeling.

The people, environment and cultural context do not look familiar. Does that mean the activities do not apply to me?

The illustrations are meant to be universal. They can be used by people all over the world. Some scenes/people may look more familiar than others. Use your imagination: what might activities, women/men or houses look like in your local setting?

Do I need to undertake all of the activities depicted in the poster to stay healthy?

No, the poster is meant to provide you with a range of ideas. Pick activities that you find interesting and that best fit your daily routine.

Why are the people shown alone in their homes not wearing a mask?

Wearing a mask protects you and others from infection. If you are at home alone, you do not need to wear a mask.

TIPS- ALERTS

Some older adults may feel confused by the fact that many different scenes, locations and cultures are depicted in the poster.

- Encourage them to interpret the scenes depicted in the poster and consider which ones are most relatable to them. Make sure to mention that there are many different ways of reacting to, and coping with, grief and loss.
- Ask older women and men what new ideas the poster elicits, including activities they may not have considered before to cope with grief and loss.
- Encourage older women and men to think about the activities depicted in the poster that might best work for them.
- Encourage older women and men to draw on their own strength and experiences, identifying strategies that have helped them to cope with grief and loss in the past.
- Identify older women and men who show signs of complicated grief or may be at risk of depression or self-harm. Provide additional guidance and refer them to social services, protection agencies, health care providers or other available services.

For more information on how to cope with grief and loss during the COVID-19 pandemic visit WHO's Q&A page for older adults, see: <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-risks-and-safety-for-older-people>

POSTERS

The posters are best printed on A3 paper (minimum size A4) or shown on large screens (not on mobile phones or tablets).

For the five posters in high-resolution format and for printing instructions, see: <https://app.mhpss.net/toolkit-for-older-adults-during-covid-19-pandemic> or email: mhpss.refgroup@gmail.com.



Challenge your brain

Keep your daily routines or create new ones

Sleep and eat at the same time every day

Stay hydrated and eat healthy

Be physically active (aim for 30 minutes per day)

Take all your medication as prescribed by your doctor, Do not stop your medication unless told to do so by your doctor



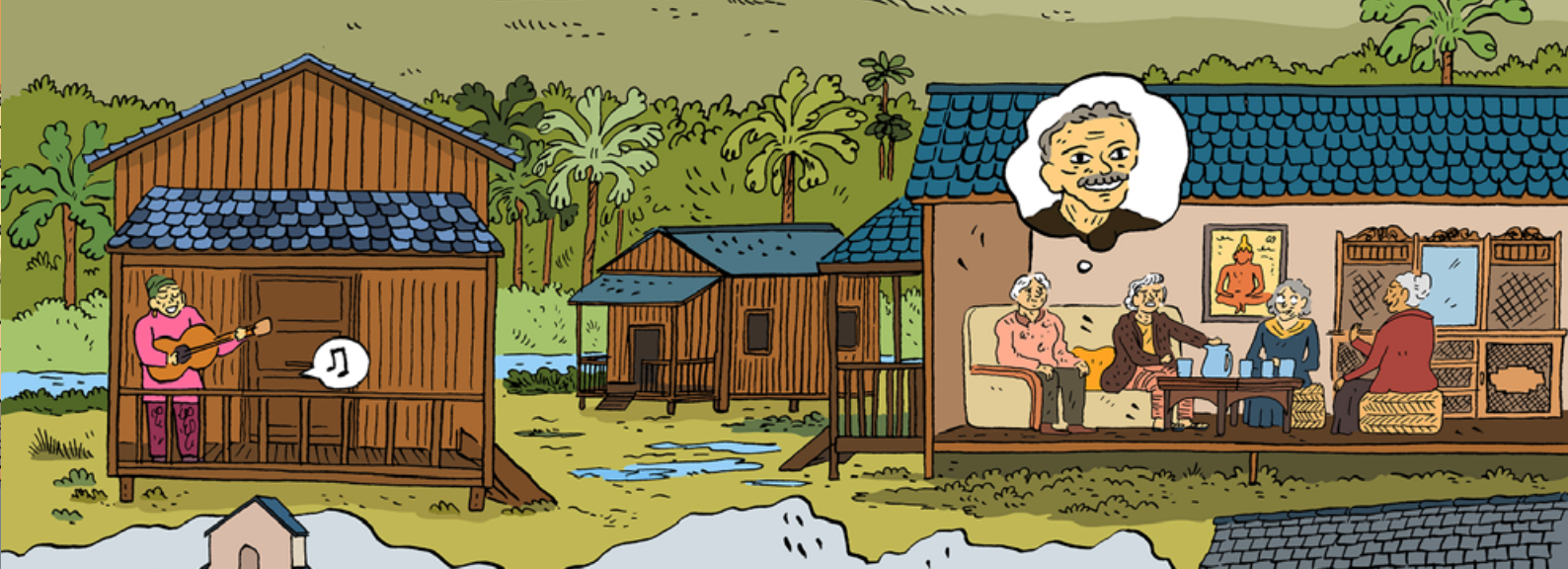
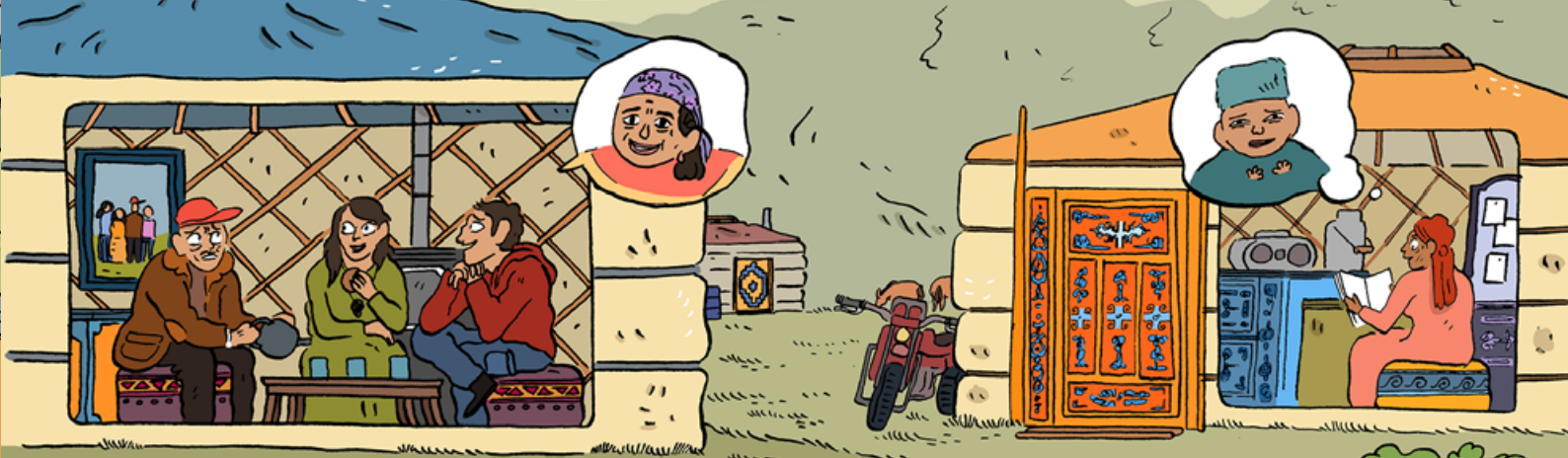
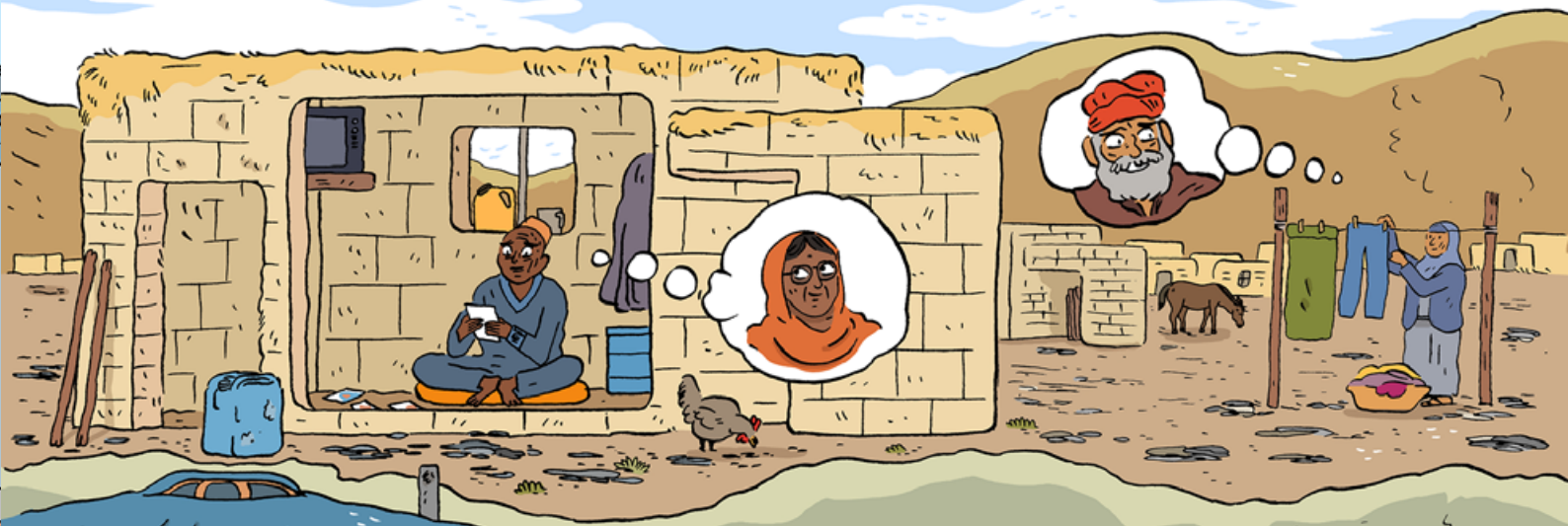
Have a daily routine
 Engage in pleasant activities/hobbies
 Talk to your family and friends regularly
 Focus on activities that bring you joy and make them your daily routine
 Try meditation, relaxation or breathing exercises
 You hve a lot of strength and wisdom in you



Help other if you can
Talk to your family and friends regularly
Maintain community, religious and/or spiritual involvement
Follow services on the television, radio or internet
Join community and peer-support groups or use telephone helplines



Contact your health, social care worker, if stress or sadness get in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.
Talk to your family and friends
Turn to your community leaders or religious or spiritual leaders.
It is natural to feel anxious, worried, stressed or lonely at times. Speaking about it can help you !



Give yourself time. You may think that the sadness and pain you feel will never go away, but in most cases, grief lessens over time. Remember the happy moments and memories of time spent with the family member. Turn to your community, or spiritual leader. They are skilled at helping people manage grief and loss and can help you through. Focus on activities that also make you feel good this time.

