Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

Coronavirus-related recommendations for psychologists

(Based on the upcoming material of the European Federation of Psychologists´ Associations /EFPA, as of March 15, 2020, completed by co-author)

As psychologists (not only in health care) we see a priority in using psychological knowledge to assist in communicating properly about the virus, to help alleviate anxiety and to support people who are affected by increased uncertainty and anxiety.

Appropriate tips on communication on the topic, crisis communication and the principles of Psychological First Aid can be used.

1) **Keep things in a local perspective**: The situation varies greatly from country to country, so adapt to the circumstances and situation of your country. Promote the official evaluation and guidelines of the country´s health authorities (e.g. in the Czech Republic, see the website of the Ministry of Health and those of other central authorities).

2) **Deliver facts:** Help people convey valid information. The government provides citizens in the country with objective facts through dedicated websites. In our country, these are, for instance: www.vlada.cz or https://koronavirus.mzcr.cz   You can draw facts from there. Another source is e.g. the European Center for Disease Prevention (ECDC), which has set up a specialized COVID-19 website where you can also find updated information. See www.ecdc.europa.eu/en

3) **Encourage communication with children:** Open discussion on news adapted to the age of the child helps. Parents can help children against stress by focusing them on routine activities and plans. Emotional support and emphasis on safety help. Children observe and imitate the emotions and behaviour of adults.

4) **Promote connections with others:** Maintaining social relations and networks helps maintain a sense of normality and is an opportunity to share emotions and relieve stress. Encourage people to share with friends and acquaintances useful information from the official website of the government or ministries. In a quarantine situation, encourage people to maintain contacts remotely.

5) **Encourage people to benefit from further assistance:** Individuals who experience extreme nervousness or anxiety, persistent sadness, or other long-term reactions that adversely affect their work performance or interpersonal relationships may consult with mental health professionals.

6) **Promote safe behavior:** This includes hygiene, personal protection, environmental measures, keeping distance from others, and travelling countermeasures. See e.g. ECDC: https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/novel-coronavirus-guidelines-non-pharmaceutical-measures_0.pdf

7) **Promote individual and community resilience and coping.**

8) **Promote people´s self-help and mutual assistance, a sense of solidarity and community support.**

9) **Do not forget especially vulnerable groups** (elderly people, people with disabilities, homeless people, minorities, foreigners, people in collective facilities, etc.).

10) **Work with the media** to promote coping, calm emotions, encourage interpersonal solidarity, etc.

Many guidelines are modified by the authorities of each country, and psychologists adapt their procedures accordingly. WHO also prepared close guidelines, see: The COVID-19 Risk Communication Package For Healthcare Facilities

https://iris.wpro.who.int/handle/10665.1/14482

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