

department of education



**psychosocial support for education in emergencies
- training and resource package for teachers and counsellors**

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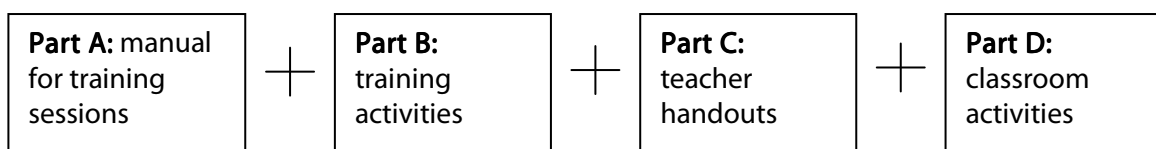
introduction

In many UNRWA Fields of operation children are exposed to violence, conflict, loss and displacement. In these exceptionally difficult circumstances **education is of great importance as it brings children a sense of normalcy, hope for the future and an opportunity for developmentally appropriate activities.** It is crucial that educators understand this, and that schools provide a child-friendly environment that fosters psychosocial well-being, resilience and coping.

The aim of this training and resource package is to equip teachers and counsellors with basic skills for supporting the psychosocial well-being of children affected by conflict and emergencies. The training package covers the following topics:

- ❖ Key concepts and principles of psychosocial support
- ❖ How do children react to a crisis situation?
- ❖ The role of teachers in promoting the psychosocial well-being of students
- ❖ How to discuss a crisis with children
- ❖ Activities for improved learning and recovery
- ❖ How to manage challenging behaviour and maintain positive discipline
- ❖ Identifying and assisting children who may need more advanced support
- ❖ Teachers' well-being

The training and resource package includes four parts:



- **Part A:** outlines of training sessions to guide the facilitators of training
- **Part B:** training activities that can be photocopied and used during the training sessions
- **Part C:** teacher handouts on the different topics. These can be given as independent reading or they can be discussed during a training session.
- **Part D:** a set of recreational, creative and life skills activities that promote healing and recovery. These are activities that can be implemented with students in the classroom or in an out-of-school programme. **(still under development)**

The training package can be used flexibly depending on needs and time available. Each session can be delivered on its own or as part of a training covering all sessions. The handouts can also be given as independent reading for teachers.

This package is still under development, and the UNRWA Department of Education very much welcomes your remarks and comments in order to improve future versions of the training material.

The training package is compatible with INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies and the IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings.

In addition the following references have been used to compile the package:

- ❖ Conceptual Framework for Psychosocial Support in UNRWA Schools (Draft, 2013)
- ❖ Teachers' Toolkit for Identifying and Responding to Diverse Needs (Draft 2013)
- ❖ Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance Toolkit (2013)
- ❖ IRC Teacher's Guide for Creating Healing Classrooms

Link: www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/migrated/resources/hci-teachers-guide.pdf

- ❖ Psychological First Aid Guide for Field Workers, WHO

English Link: http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2011/9789241548205_eng.pdf

Arabic Link: http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/44615/22/9789246548200_ara.pdf

- ❖ Managing Stress in the Field - International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Link: www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/Health/managing-stress-en.pdf

part A: manual for training sessions on psychosocial support





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1 session: key concepts and principles of psychosocial support

Time: 1-2 hours

purpose	The purpose of the session is to introduce the key concepts and principles of psychosocial support.
key messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychosocial support is about helping individuals cope with, and overcome difficult life situations. • You do not have to be an expert to be able to provide psychosocial support. • There are many ways in which schools and teachers can promote psychosocial well-being and provide psychosocial support. • Good psychosocial support is comprehensive and focuses on protection, resilience and coping mechanisms.
resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ handout 1: key concepts and principles of psychosocial support ➤ training activity 1: matching key concepts of psychosocial support with their definitions

1. **Introduce** the key concepts of psychosocial support. (see *handout 1: key concepts and principles of psychosocial support*)
2. **Ask participants** to match the key concepts of psychosocial support with their definitions. (see *training activity 1: matching key concepts of psychosocial support with their definitions*)
3. **Ask participants** to answer the following 10 true and false statements that you may read aloud:
 - 1) Psychosocial well-being is important for learning and development.
 - 2) Only professionals such as psychosocial counsellors and psychologists can provide psychosocial support.
 - 3) It is not useful for teachers to know of psychosocial support.
 - 4) Psychosocial support should help individuals to maintain their resilience, encourage ways of coping and promote positive aspects of life.
 - 5) Good psychosocial support focuses on correction of problems and deficits.
 - 6) Good psychosocial support recognizes children's needs and abilities.
 - 7) Psychosocial support is only about counselling.
 - 8) By making schools and classrooms more child-friendly educators can foster children's psychosocial well-being.
 - 9) The way a teacher interacts with students will influence their psychosocial well-being.
 - 10) Children have the right to be protected from harm and violence at school.

4. **Introduce** the principles of psychosocial support (*handout 1*) going through participants' answers to the true and false statements. The following are the correct answers and their explanations:

statement	true/false	comment
1	true	principle: holistic
2	false	psychosocial support can be provided by anyone with some basic awareness and a sense of empathy
3	false	teachers can benefit a lot if they know how to support their students' psychosocial well-being. This will help managing the class and enable students learning.
4	true	principle: enabling
5	false	a focus on problems and deficits may lead to blaming individuals for their situation and expecting them to correct their behaviours instead of providing support
6	true	principle: child-centred
7	false	psychosocial support can be many things: for example a teacher who listens to the students or an opportunity to participate in recreational activities
8	true	principle: child-friendly
9	true	principle: comprehensive
10	true	principle: rights-based

5. **Highlight the key messages:**

- ❖ Psychosocial support is about helping individuals cope with and overcome difficult life situations.
- ❖ You do not have to be an expert to be able to provide psychosocial support.
- ❖ There are many ways in which schools and teachers can promote psychosocial well-being and provide psychosocial support.
- ❖ Good psychosocial support is comprehensive and focuses on protection, resilience and coping mechanisms.

2 session: how do children react to a crisis situation

Time: 1-2 hours

purpose	The purpose of the session is to explore children’s reactions to a crisis situation, in order to better understand these reactions and the basic principles of recovery from crisis.
Key messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a range of reactions and feelings that children may have as a normal response in a crisis situation. • The way children react to a crisis depends on their age, development and personality as well as the way others interact with them. • Children cope better if they have a stable, calm adult around them. • Not all children will be traumatised. • The majority of children will be resilient and recover if their basic psychosocial needs are met through normal developmental activities such as schooling, recreation and play.
resources	➤ Handout 2: how do children react to a crisis situation?

1. **Introduce** *handout 2: how do children react in a crisis situation?* highlighting the key messages:
 - ❖ There is a range of reactions and feelings that children may have as a normal response in a crisis situation.
 - ❖ The way children react to a crisis depends on their age, development and personality as well as the way others interact with them.
 - ❖ Children cope better if they have a stable, calm adult around them.
 - ❖ Not all children will be traumatised.
 - ❖ The majority of children will be resilient and recover if their basic psychosocial needs are met through normal developmental activities such as schooling, recreation and play.

2. **Ask participants** to think of their students and share examples of their reactions, behaviours, needs and challenges. Discuss the possible differences between reactions of:
 - ❖ the majority of children / a few specific children
 - ❖ boys / girls
 - ❖ young children / older children and adolescents



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3 session: the role of teachers in promoting psychosocial well-being

Time: 1-2 hours

purpose	The purpose of the session is to understand the ways in which teachers, through their daily interaction and activities in the classroom, can promote student’s psychosocial well-being.
key messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children have common basic psychosocial needs, that is, things they need for a healthy and balanced development and well-being. • There are many ways teacher’s can respond to these needs through their classroom practices and daily interaction with students. • In an emergency situation children may face uncertainty and many of their basic psychosocial needs may be unmet. • In an emergency situation it is of particular importance that teachers find ways to promote their students’ psychosocial well-being.
resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ handout 3: the role of teachers in promoting psychosocial well-being ➤ training activity 2: self assessment checklist for supportive classroom interaction

1. **Highlight that** for a healthy and balanced development and well-being, children need:

- ❖ to have a secure attachments with caregivers
- ❖ to have meaningful peer relations and social competence
- ❖ to form a sense of identity and belonging
- ❖ to develop a sense of self-worth and value, self-esteem
- ❖ to have access to opportunities
- ❖ to be able to trust others
- ❖ intellectual and physical stimulation
- ❖ physical and psychological security
- ❖ hopefulness / optimism about the future
- ❖ to develop responsibility and empathy
- ❖ to have adaptability and creativity

2. **Introduce** *handout 3: the role of teachers in promoting psychosocial well-being*, and highlight that there are many ways teachers can respond to students’ basic psychosocial needs through their classroom practices and daily interaction with students.

3. **Discuss** the strategies given in the handout and ask participants to think about why they are important.
4. **Ask participants** to complete training activity 2: *self-assessment checklist for supportive classroom interaction*, to identify what they are already doing well in their classrooms and what they could improve on. Tell participants that you will not look at their answers but the checklist is for self-reflection.
5. **Ask participants** to select a number of items from the self-assessment checklist that they would attempt to improve on in their classroom practices and interaction.

4 session: how to discuss a crisis with children?

Time: 1-2 hours

purpose	The purpose of the session is to practice an appropriate way of talking with children about a crisis situation.
key messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children want and need as much factual information as possible – give simple answers without scary details. • Children may have feelings of guilt – emphasise that they are not responsible for the bad things that happened. • Do not ask students to disclose their individual experiences in front of the class – this may be very distressing and harmful! • Group discussions about the crisis and about children’s feelings may help children feel less alone with their worries. • The first days after return to school / a time slot in the mornings may be used for group discussions
resources	➤ handout 4: how to discuss a crisis with children

1. **Introduce** *handout 4: how to discuss a crisis with children?* Highlight the basic principles of talking to students about a crisis:
 - ❖ Children want and need as much factual information as possible, give simple answers to their questions however without scary details.
 - ❖ Tell your students it is ok to feel sad, afraid, confused, angry and guilty. These are normal responses to a very abnormal crisis or tragedy.
 - ❖ Emphasize that they are not responsible for the bad things that happened.
 - ❖ Initiate group discussions about distressing events that many may – or may not – have experienced. Even those who would not have experienced the events are likely to have heard of them. This will help affected children feel less alone with their worries.
 - ❖ Allow your students to share their own ideas about what happened so that they can begin to master the events.
 - ❖ Listen carefully to your students’ thoughts and fears without being judgmental.
 - ❖ Do not ask students to tell their own individual stories in front of the class - instead you can let students know that you are there for them and ready to listen any time later if they have worries which they would like to share with you confidentially.
 - ❖ Emphasize to your students that they are safe at school / that everything possible is done to make sure the school is a safe space.
 - ❖ Emphasize that you care for your students’ health and wellbeing.

2. **Arrange a role play** to practice a possible situation that may happen in a classroom:
- ❖ **the roles:** one participant will be ‘the teacher’ and other participants will be ‘the students’.
 - ❖ **the scenario:** many of the students have seen on TV or have heard stories about a recent big explosion in Damascus. Some students may have relatives affected by the event. Other students may have witnessed a similar situation earlier. Students are anxious to discuss the event in class.
 - ❖ **the task:** ‘the teacher’ will lead a discussion on the event. ‘Students’ may ask questions and raise their comments.
 - ❖ **time:** allow participants 10 minutes before the role play to read handout 4: How to discuss a crisis with children, then use 10 minutes for the role play and then 20 minutes for a discussion on how the role play went.
3. **Emphasize the key messages:**
- ❖ Children want and need as much factual information as possible – give simple answers without scary details.
 - ❖ Children may have feelings of guilt – emphasize that they are not responsible for the bad things that happened.
 - ❖ Do not ask students to disclose their individual experiences in front of the class – this may be very distressing and harmful!
 - ❖ Group discussions about the crisis and about children’s feelings may help children feel less alone with their worries.
 - ❖ The first days after return to school / a time slot in the mornings may be used for group discussions.

5 session: activities for improved learning and recovery

Time: 1-2 hours

purpose	The purpose of the session is to understand the importance of recreational, creative and life skills activities in helping children recover from a crisis, and to gain confidence in applying these activities in the classroom.
key messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play, playful, recreational and expressive activities will help children’s learning and recovery following a distressing event. • Play is the work of children. Play allows children to master thoughts and emotions related to events around them. • Play, recreational, creative and life skills activities can be integrated into the regular curriculum and lessons. • If possible, arrange co-curricular recreational and creative activities as well.
resources	➤ handout 5: activities for improved learning and recovery

1. **Introduce** handout 5: activities for improved learning and recovery, and highlight the key messages:
 - ❖ Play, playful, recreational and expressive activities will help children’s learning and recovery following a distressing event.
 - ❖ Play is the work of children. Play allows children to master thoughts and emotions related to events around them.
 - ❖ Play, recreational, creative and life skills activities can be integrated into the regular curriculum and lessons.
 - ❖ If possible, arrange co-curricular recreational and creative activities as well.

2. **Ask participants** to:
 - ❖ plan a lesson / an after school activity based on the ideas given in the handout
 - ❖ present / demonstrate the lesson or activity to others
 - ❖ explain why this activity is important for supporting children’s psychosocial well-being



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6 session: how to manage challenging behaviour in the classroom?

Time: 1-2 hours

purpose	The purpose of the session is to explore some ways of positive behaviour management, and understand the importance of structure, rules and routines in successfully managing the classroom.
key messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased violence, aggression, disruptive behaviour and difficulties in concentration are likely reactions to a crisis situation. • Establishing predictable routines and clear classroom rules will prevent discipline problems and make classroom management easier. • Good discipline is about reinforcing and encouraging positive behaviour • If you have to discipline a student for bad behaviour do not judge the student as a person but make sure he/she understands that his/her actions were wrong.
resources	➤ handout 6: how to manage challenging behaviour in the classroom?

1. **Introduce** *handout 6: how to manage challenging behaviour in the classroom?* and highlight the key messages:
 - ❖ increased violence, aggression, disruptive behaviour and difficulties in concentration are likely reactions to a crisis situation
 - ❖ establishing predictable routines and clear classroom rules will prevent discipline problems and make classroom management easier
 - ❖ good discipline is about reinforcing and encouraging positive behaviour
 - ❖ if you have to discipline a student for bad behaviour, do not judge the student as a person, but make sure he/she understands that his/her actions were wrong
2. **Ask participants** to describe positive behaviour management techniques that they have found effective in their classroom.
3. **Ask participants** to think of reasons why verbal or physical violence / corporal punishment is harmful for children's psychosocial well-being and development.
4. **Demonstrate or allow participants to try** the different behaviour management techniques described in the handout.



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7 session: identifying and assisting children who may need more advanced support

Time: 1-2 hours

purpose	The purpose of the session is to learn how to identify children who may need more advanced support in addition to what teachers can provide in the classroom.
key messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most children will be resilient if their basic psychosocial needs are met through normal developmental activities such as schooling, recreation and play. • Some children may need some additional support such as a person to talk to about their feelings, help with a difficult situation at home or group activities that help to build coping mechanisms. • Only a few children may require specialised intervention due to losses, trauma or unresolved grief.
resources	➤ handout 7: identifying and assisting children who may need more advanced support

1. **Introduce** *handout 7: identifying and assisting children who may need more advanced support*, and highlight the key messages:
 - ❖ **Most children** will be resilient if their basic psychosocial needs are met through normal developmental activities such as schooling, recreation and play.
 - ❖ **Some children** may need some additional support such as a person to talk to about their feelings, help with a difficult situation at home or group activities that help to build coping mechanisms.
 - ❖ **Only a few children** may require specialised intervention due to losses, trauma or unresolved grief.

2. **Highlight that** all children benefit from the support teachers can provide in the class. However some children may, in addition, need more advanced support. This includes:
 - ❖ children who continue to show signs of distress for a lengthy time / when others in the class already begin to heal (note that distress signs during the first month upon school return following a crisis are a part of the normal healing process)
 - ❖ children whose signs of distress are much more severe /whose behaviour differs significantly from others in the class: e.g. completely refusing to talk or not able to interact with others at all due to fears, despite being in a safe and protective environment
 - ❖ children who have been directly exposed or forced to witness acts of violence including rape, torture and killing
 - ❖ children whose parents or caregivers are too sick or distressed to be able to care for them

3. **Ask participants to** share their experiences and observations of students in their classroom who may have shown such signs. Ask participants how they dealt with the situation.

4. **Ask participants to** identify available sources of additional and more extensive supports (UNRWA staff and other individual people, organizations and services).



8 session: teachers' well-being

Time: 1-2 hours

purpose	The purpose of the session is to discuss the challenging role of teachers in dealing with a crisis situation, and the importance of taking care of their own well-being.
key messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a teacher you are likely to feel some stress due to your responsibilities, and the reactions and experiences your students are demonstrating. • In addition, you and your family members may be directly affected by the distressing events, and you may need some support to process your own grief. • Stress is a natural reaction in response to the physical and emotional challenges you encounter. • Taking note of your stress reactions may help you manage your stress better. • It is possible to manage stress and take care of your own well-being.
resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ handout 8: teachers' well-being ➤ training activity 3: self-assessment questionnaire for stress

1. **Introduce** *handout 8: teachers' well-being* and highlight the key messages:
 - ❖ As a teacher you are likely to feel some stress due to your responsibilities, and the reactions and experiences your students are demonstrating.
 - ❖ In addition, you and your family members may be directly affected by the distressing events, and you may need some support to process your own grief.
 - ❖ Stress is a natural reaction in response to the physical and emotional challenges you encounter.
 - ❖ Taking note of your stress reactions may help you manage your stress better.
 - ❖ It is possible to manage stress and take care of your own well-being.

2. **Ask participants** to fill the *self-assessment questionnaire for stress* (training activity 3), to evaluate their present stress level.

3. **Discuss** the importance of taking care of one's own well-being. Emphasize that each individual has different ways of managing their stress. Note that the following advice may be helpful:
 - ❖ Accept your feelings: they are legitimate and they are not signs of personal weakness or lack of professionalism.
 - ❖ Accept the situation you are in and adjust to the fact that there are things beyond your power to change.
 - ❖ Take it easy, know your limits and do not place unreasonable demands on yourself.

- ❖ Recognize your reactions to stress and situations causing you stress.
- ❖ Seek support from colleagues, friends and relatives and talk to someone about your needs, emotions, doubts and fears.
- ❖ Maintain your daily routines as far as possible, have sufficient sleep and rest and try to maintain a healthy diet.
- ❖ Allow yourself to laugh, smile and maintain a sense of humour.
- ❖ Socialize with colleagues, friends and family members.
- ❖ Maintain a positive outlook on life: appreciate your strengths and abilities, recognize your daily achievements and try to look ahead for the future.

part B: training activities for psychosocial support training





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1 training activity 1: matching key concepts of psychosocial support with their definitions

→ Cut out the cards and ask trainees to match the key concepts with their definitions

the growth of thoughts, emotions, behaviours, memories and social competence shaped by the child's temperament, the socio-economic context, social, cultural and religious values, major life events, interaction with others, and the way the child is being treated by other people.	basic elements children require for a positive social, emotional and intellectual development, such as a secure attachment to caregivers, meaningful peer relations and social competence, sense of belonging, sense of self-worth and value, trust in others and hope about the future.	a situation in which children's basic social and emotional needs are sufficiently met. It is crucial for effective learning and a healthy and balanced development.
things caused by the outside environment and other people that negatively impact a child's psychosocial well-being such as lack of parental support and guidance, harsh teacher attitudes, bullying from peers, stigma, discrimination, exposure to conflict and violence, neglect or abuse.	external issues that support well-being and development: for example protective and child-friendly school environments, opportunities for learning, play and recreation, friendships with peers, supportive parents and teachers.	is about helping individuals cope with and overcome difficult life situations. It does not require mental health specialists and it is not about treating mental illness. Rather it is about practical actions that can be done to enhance well-being, respond to needs, and provide protection, healing and comfort.
behaviours and thoughts that help a person to master, tolerate or minimize stressful or difficult situations, these include for example ways of thinking about oneself, others and different situations.	a person's ability to cope with difficult life situations, adapt to change and have a positive outlook for the future.	psychosocial well-being
emotional resilience	copied mechanisms	protective factors
psychosocial development	psychosocial support	psychosocial needs
		barriers to psychosocial well-being



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2 training activity 2: self-assessment checklist for supportive classroom interaction

→ Fill in this self-assessment checklist to identify how well your classroom interaction and practices support students psychosocial well-being, and to identify areas of improvement.

☹ = I don't really do this / I need to improve on this a lot	☺ = I do this sometimes but I could improve	☺ = I do this often / I am good at this
--------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------

needs:	statement:	☹	☺	☺
secure attachments with caregivers	1. I have a caring relationship with my students.			
	2. I have established stable and predictable routines in my classroom.			
	3. I have discussed with parents the importance of showing love, care, and support to their children.			
meaningful peer relations and social competence	4. In my class there are clearly established classroom rules that I discuss frequently with students.			
	5. I teach my students about what is acceptable behaviour, and how to interact with adults and peers.			
	6. I engage students in group/team activities that require cooperation and dependence on each other.			
	7. I teach about conflict resolution and tolerance.			
identity and sense of belonging	8. I make sure all students feel welcome and socially included in the classroom.			
	9. I promote my students' identity as learners.			
	10. I engage students in dialogue, listening and sharing information.			
	11. I promote students' Palestinian identity by teaching about our culture and heritage.			
sense of self-worth and value, self-esteem	12. I recognize, encourage and praise my students.			
	13. I provide my students with opportunities for self-expression, e.g. drawing, writing, drama, music, poetry.			
	14. I encourage my students to form independent opinions.			
	15. I allow my students to participate in decisions affecting their life.			
	16. I display students' work in the classroom.			
trust in others	17. I tell my students they can come to talk to me confidentially about their worries.			
	18. I keep the promises I give to my students.			
	19. I treat my students fairly and I am consistent with the rules I give.			

needs:	statement:	☹	☺	😊
access to opportunities	20. I value each student regardless of their gender, abilities, disabilities or socio-economic status.			
	21. I make sure all students have an equal chance to participate in classroom activities.			
intellectual and physical stimulation	22. My lessons include a variety of active and motivating learning activities.			
	23. My lessons include recreational and creative activities such as games, arts and exercise.			
	24. My students have opportunities for play and playful learning during the school day.			
physical and psychological security	25. I teach students how to protect themselves from dangers in their environment.			
	26. I use ways of positive discipline (no punishments that hurt, ridicule or humiliate).			
	27. I let all students know I do not allow anyone to bully others.			
	28. I take prompt action if a student is being bullied/hurt by others.			
hopefulness and optimism	29. I discuss with my students their hopes and aspirations about the future.			
	30. I encourage my students to think positively about the future.			
responsibility and empathy	31. Through my example I demonstrate empathy towards the needs, rights and feelings of others.			
	32. I discuss stories with a moral message /human rights concepts with my students.			
	33. I talk about different feelings and emotions with my students.			
	34. I teach my students about their human rights and responsibility towards respecting the rights of others.			
adaptability creativity	35. I teach problem solving and encourage students to imagine different options in a given situation.			
	36. I let my students suggest solutions to different practical challenges.			

3 training activity 3: self-assessment questionnaire for stress

This short questionnaire will help you to evaluate your present stress level. Take the time to fill it out every three months in order to compare the scores. Rate each of the following items in terms of how much the symptom was true of you in the last month.

	never (score1)	once a month (score2)	often / once a week (score3)	always (score 4)
1. I feel tense and nervous				
2. I have physical aches and pain				
3. I am always tired, physically and mentally.				
4. I cannot tolerate noises.				
5. My work no longer interests me.				
6. I act impulsively.				
7. I can't get distressing events out of my mind.				
8. I am sad and feel like crying.				
9. I am less efficient than I used to be.				
10. I have trouble planning and thinking clearly.				
11. I have difficulty in sleeping.				
12. Doing even routine things is an effort.				
13. I am cynical or very critical.				
14. I have bad dreams or nightmares.				
15. I am irritable, minor inconveniences or demands annoy me a lot.				
16. I am spending more time at work than initially.				
Total				

Add up your total score:

- ❖ **Under 20:** Your stress is normal, given the working conditions.
- ❖ **From 21-35:** You may be suffering from stress and should take it easy. Try to find ways of coping and reducing your stress.
- ❖ **Above 36:** You may be under severe stress. Ask for help from someone close to you. If possible talk with your supervisor, a doctor or counsellor.

Reference: *Managing Stress in the Field - International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies* (Link: www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/Health/managing-stress-en.pdf)



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وكالة الأمم المتحدة لإغاثة وتشغيل
اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في الشرق الأدنى

part C: teacher handouts on psychosocial support





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1 key concepts and principles of psychosocial support

In order to understand how teachers can support children's psychosocial wellbeing it is useful to be familiar with some basic concepts:

Psychosocial development– the development of thoughts, emotions, behaviours, memories and social competence. Psychosocial development is shaped by the child's temperament, the socio-economic context, social, cultural and religious values, major life events, interaction with others, and the way the child is being treated by other people including teachers, parents and peers.

Psychosocial needs – basic elements children need for a positive social, emotional and intellectual development such as a secure attachment with caregivers, meaningful peer relations and social competence, sense of belonging, sense of self-worth and value, trust in others, access to opportunities, intellectual and physical stimulation, physical and psychological security, optimism about the future, responsibility, empathy, adaptability and creativity.

Psychosocial well-being– a situation in which children's basic social and emotional needs are sufficiently met. Psychosocial well-being is crucial for effective learning and a healthy and balanced development.

Barriers to psychosocial well-being– things caused by the outside environment and other people that negatively impact a child's psychosocial well-being such as lack of parental support and guidance, harsh teacher attitudes, bullying from peers, stigma, discrimination, exposure to conflict and violence, neglect or abuse.

Psychosocial support– is about helping individuals cope with and overcome difficult life situations. It does not require mental health specialists and it is not about treating mental illness. Rather psychosocial support is about practical actions that teachers, counsellors and other adults can do to enhance children's well-being, respond to their needs, and provide protection, healing and comfort.

At schools this support should include:

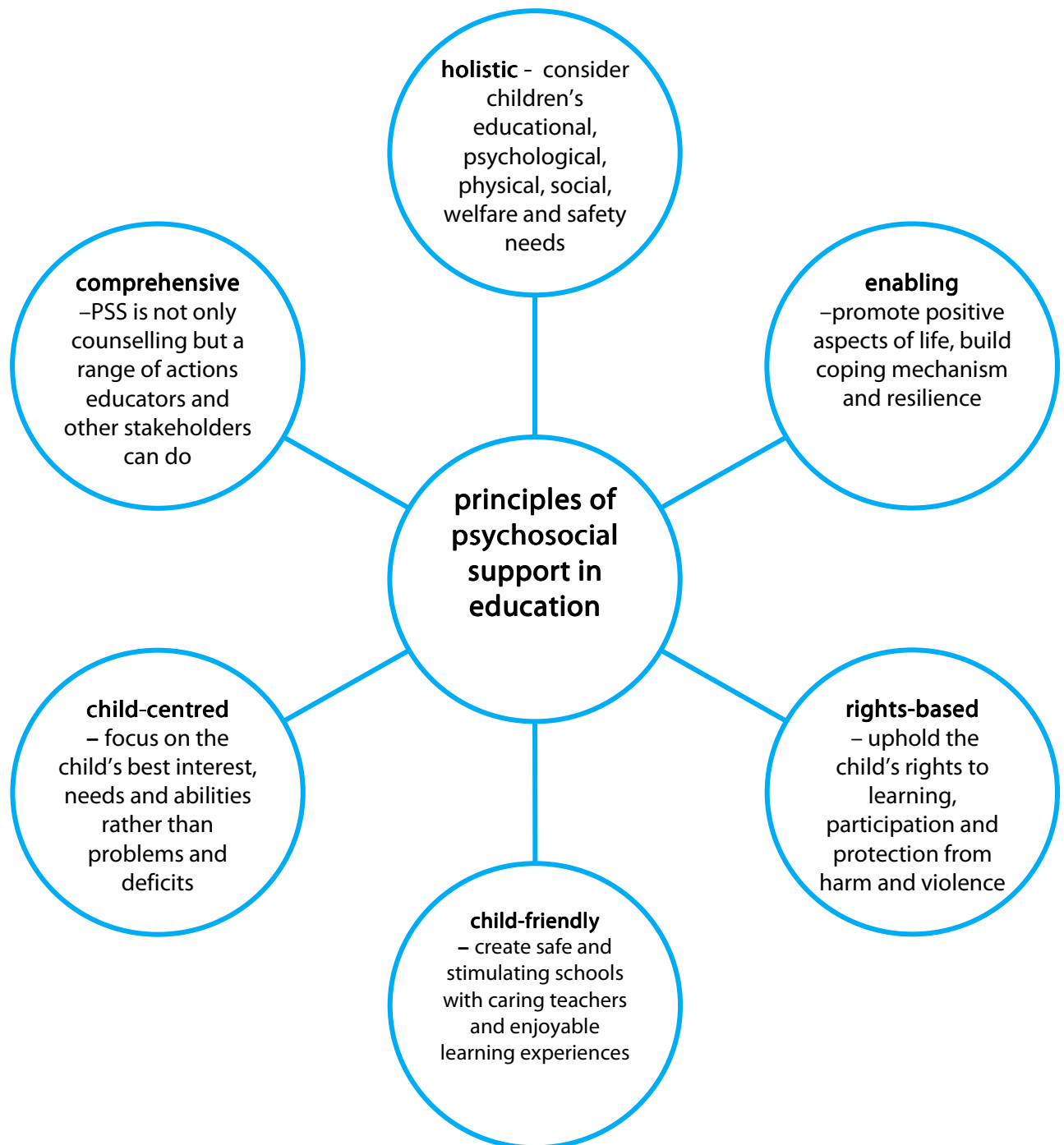
- ❖ child-friendly and protective environments
- ❖ supportive classroom interaction
- ❖ opportunities for play, creative, recreational and life-skills activities
- ❖ individual assistance such as counselling for students who need some more advanced help

Protective factors –external issues that support psychosocial well-being and development: for example protective and child-friendly school environments, opportunities for learning, play and recreation, friendships with peers, supportive parents and teachers.

Coping mechanism– behaviours and thoughts that help a person to master, tolerate or minimize stressful or difficult situations, these include for example ways of thinking about oneself, others and different situations.

Emotional resilience–a person's ability to cope with difficult life situations, adapt to change and have a positive outlook for the future.

With some basic understanding on the principles of psychosocial support educators can do much to support children’s well-being in schools, classrooms and non-formal education settings. The following principles are based on best practices that have proved effective in supporting children’s psychosocial wellbeing:



2 how do children react to a crisis situation?

Children are particularly vulnerable in a crisis situation. Crisis events disrupt their familiar world, including the people, places and routines that make them feel secure. Young children are often particularly vulnerable since they cannot meet their basic needs or protect themselves and their caregivers may be too overwhelmed to care for them.

How children react to the hardships of a crisis (for example witnessing destruction, injury or death, lack of food or water) depends on their age, development stage and their personality. For example some children are naturally prone to be more fearful while other children may become immune to, or ignore the violence and suffering around them. Children and young people may experience similar distress reactions as adults do (e.g. feeling sad, fearful, depressed or anxious, having difficulties sleeping or losing appetite, physical symptoms such as fatigue, aches and pain). Young children may confuse facts with fantasies and fears of danger, and they may not have the ability to keep things in a perspective and to block troubling thoughts.

Children's reactions to a crisis situation:

Young children may return to earlier behaviours (for example bed-wetting or thumb sucking), they may cling to caregivers, confuse facts with fantasies and fears, and reduce their play or use repetitive play related to the distressing event.

School-age children may behave like much younger children, believe they caused the bad things to happen, develop new fears, may be less affectionate, feel alone and be preoccupied with protecting or rescuing people in the crisis, may have nightmares and sleeping difficulties.

Adolescents may feel "nothing", feel different from or isolated from their friends, or they may display risk taking behaviour, negative attitudes and increased aggression.

At school, teachers may notice the following:

- difficulties with learning and concentration
- social isolation (keeping quiet in class, withdrawn, not participating)
- increased aggressiveness and challenging behaviour
- nervousness, sadness and fears
- lack of confidence, courage and hope for the future
- physical signs: fatigue, aches and pains, stuttering

While most children exposed to a crisis are likely to show some of these warning signs **not all children will be traumatized!** Children's reactions will vary and their resilience in situations of crisis will depend on a number of factors such as their previous experiences, their personality and the way their caregivers and other adults such as teachers interact with them. **In general, children cope better if they have a stable, calm adult around them.** Further a child's sense of control over his or her environment and opportunities for involvement in tasks such as reading, drawing or helping with chores at home will contribute to resilience and coping.

Teachers can help children recover from distressing events:

- **Most children** (70-80%) will be resilient if their basic psychosocial needs are met through normal developmental activities such as schooling, recreation and play.
- **Some children** (20-25%) may need some additional support such as a person to talk to about their feelings, help with a difficult situation at home or group activities that help to build their coping mechanisms (e.g. expressive arts or life skills activities).
- **Only a few children** (<5%) may require specialized intervention (e.g. psychosocial counselling or mental health services) due to losses, trauma or unresolved grief. Although teachers cannot provide such specialized interventions these children too will benefit from the above-mentioned school-based supports.



3 the role of teachers in promoting the psychosocial well-being of students

Children's psychosocial needs:	How you as a teacher can support:
Secure attachments with caregivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a caring relationship with your students. • Establish stable and predictable routines in your class to make students feel secure. • Discuss with parents the importance of showing love, care, and support to their children.
Meaningful peer relations and social competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have clearly established classroom rules that are discussed frequently with students. • Teach students the boundaries of socially acceptable behaviour and how to interact with adults and each other. • Offer group and team activities that require cooperation and dependence on each other. • Teach ways of conflict resolution and tolerance.
Sense of identity and belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure all students feel welcome and socially included in the classroom (being part of the group). • Promote a strong student identity (feeling like a student and recognized as such). • Engage students in dialogue, listening and sharing information. • Promote students' identity and pride in Palestinian culture and heritage.
Sense of self-worth and value, self-esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize, encourage and praise your students. • Create opportunities for self-expression through individual/group discussions, drawing, writing, drama, music, poetry etc. activities that promote pride and self-confidence. • Encourage children to form independent opinions. • Allow children to participate in decisions affecting their life (e.g. decisions on classroom rules). • Display student's work in the classroom.
Trust in others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure your students know they can rely on you for some help and advice and that they can talk to you confidentially about their worries. • Stand to your words and do not give false promises.

Children's psychosocial needs:	How you as a teacher can support:
Access to opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value each student's potential, equally regardless of their gender, abilities, disabilities or socio-economic status. • Make sure all students have an equal chance to participate in classroom activities – this does not mean all students have to do the same tasks at the same time or achieve the same results but all have to be supported to participate and benefit from learning.
Intellectual and physical stimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a variety of active and motivating learning experiences → students learn best by doing and when the given tasks provide them with a challenge that matches their abilities (sometimes you may need to provide different activities to different students based on their abilities). • Engage your students in recreational and creative activities, both traditional and new through games, sports etc. • Provide your students with opportunities for play and playful learning during the school day.
Physical and psychological security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure children at your school are protected from any forms of verbal and physical violence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Use ways of positive discipline, do not use corporal punishment or any other kinds of punishments that ridicule or humiliate the student. → Let all students know you do not tolerate bullying. → Take prompt action if a student is exposed to bullying and violence (from peers or adults). • Teach students how to protect themselves from dangers in their environment.
Hopefulness/optimism about the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow students to express their hopes and aspirations about the future. • Encourage students to think of the future positively.
Responsibility and empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set an example: demonstrate empathy towards the needs, rights and feelings of others. • Discuss stories with a moral message /human rights concepts with your students. • Talk about different feelings and emotions with your students. • Teach students about their human rights and responsibility towards respecting the rights of others.
Adaptability and creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach problem solving: allow children to imagine different alternatives and options in a given situation. • Allow children to suggest solutions to different practical challenges (e.g. how to make the classroom environment more attractive).

4 how to discuss a crisis with children

Returning to school following a crisis, such as a violent conflict often creates some nervousness for teachers and students. In some situations students and teachers may be displaced and reallocated into a temporary or new school. For teachers the task of leading classes and answering difficult questions from students in such a situation can be understandably overwhelming.

Some children may have serious worries but refrain from talking about them, sometimes out of shame, or because they are not used to talking about themselves with an adult. Many children may share similar fears and experiences without realizing it, because no one is talking about his or her concerns. It is extremely important for children to have a chance to openly discuss common problems. This might mean for instance that the first few days upon entry to school will be used for these discussions, together with some creative and recreational activities before assuming regular classes.

When talking with students about a crisis remember the following:

1. Children want and need as much factual information as possible, give simple answers to their questions however without scary details
2. Tell your students it is ok to feel sad, afraid, confused, angry and guilty. These are normal responses to a very abnormal crisis or tragedy.
3. Emphasize that they are not responsible for the bad things that happened
4. Initiate group discussions about distressing events that many may – or may not – have experienced. Even those who would not have experienced the events are likely to have heard of them. This will help affected children feel less alone with their worries.
5. Allow your students to share their own ideas about what happened so that they can begin to master the events
6. Listen carefully to your students thoughts and fears without being judgmental
7. Do **not** ask students to tell their own individual stories in front of the class - instead you can let students know that you are there for them and ready to listen any time later if they have worries which they would like to share with you confidentially
8. Emphasize to your students that they are safe at school / that everything possible is done to make sure the school is a safe space
9. Emphasize that you care for your students health and wellbeing

While many children begin to heal by talking about the distressing events, for some children, especially younger ones, it may be more appropriate to use other ways to deal with the events such as through play, drawings or other expressive activities.



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5 activities for improved learning and recovery

Play, playful, recreational and expressive activities will help children's learning and recovery following a distressing event. Below some suggested activities that can be easily organized at school and in the classroom:

Play – Play is the work of children. Play allows children to relate to events around them and express these in their own simplified way. It helps children handle fear and anxiety and to give them some control over what is happening. While play will help children master the thoughts and emotions related to their experiences it is not beneficial if the same patterns of play are repeated. Adults may need to interfere to change the pattern of play – for example giving a different and more positive ending to the event.

Journal writing – Keeping a journal can help students to express and explore their feelings. Journal writing can be a daily activity, for instance at the beginning of the morning lesson for 10 minutes. Journals can be personal or shared with the teacher. If students share their journals with you do not judge their opinions or do not focus on grammar mistakes. Rather try to encourage students or give them further ideas about what to write.

Poetry and short stories– Poetry and short stories can help children express their ideas, experiences, thoughts and feelings. Writing poetry or stories can be easily included as an activity in an Arabic class for instance.

Painting/drawing –Painting and drawing can provide your students a chance to express their emotions and feelings. Allow your students to work independently and paint/draw pictures of their own choosing. Do not ask students to draw about past events that may be distressing and do not ask about details of sad drawings.

Religious education – faith can be an important source of relief and hope. You may refer to verses from the Quran/Bible that provide courage, strength and comfort and you may introduce your students to religious texts that emphasize courage and coping with hardship.

Puppets and theatre –pretending to be someone else allows children to communicate ideas and feelings that otherwise would be difficult to talk about. Allow children to create their own plays.

Music and exercise – movements and rhythm can help release tension, produce a feeling of well-being and help children link with happy memories. Provide regular opportunities for all students to participate in sports and exercise, as part of lessons and co-curricular activities.

Human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance enrichment activities– UNRWA's human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance toolkit includes several activities that build students skills to better deal with their feelings, manage their behaviour and respect the rights and feelings of others.

Life skills activities – teach students how to protect themselves from dangers and keep healthy and safe. These important life skills will help students build a sense of competence, confidence and control over their lives.

Community service projects – organize or encourage children to participate in projects that give them an opportunity to use their skills and to help their family, school or community to recover from crises. Doing meaningful work and being able to help others will give children a sense of control and keep them from away from feeling helpless.



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6 how to manage challenging behaviour and maintain positive discipline

As a teacher you will be facing a challenging task of maintaining discipline in your class. Many children may experience difficulties with concentration and others may show disruptive behaviour and increased violence and aggression. To handle such a situation successfully you need to be **patient and consistent**. Children need to be aware of the boundaries for accepted behaviour and trust that the same rules apply consistently. Establishing predictable routines and clear classroom rules will prevent discipline problems and make classroom management easier. Some effective strategies include:

Jointly agreed classroom rules:

To help develop clear expectations it is be useful to have classroom rules, which you and your students have developed together. Express rules in a positive form, for example: “We pay attention to our teacher” instead of: “No shouting”. Refer to the rules frequently and if a student breaks a classroom rule that you ask the student to identify the rule and what the correct behaviour should be.

Arrangement of seats:

Plan the arrangement of seats so that all students know where they should sit. Consider arranging the seats in such a way that doesn't distract the attention of students who have difficulties concentrating (for example in front of you or next to wall).

Thumbs up:

Come up with a sign, which show your students its time to pay attention. For example when you put your thumbs up everyone must do the same and keep quiet. Wait until everyone does so without prompting.

Remember that good discipline is about encouraging and reinforcing positive behaviour. Give your students positive feedback and rewards for good behaviour. It is also important that you as a teacher lead by example and demonstrate to your students how to act responsibly. If you shout and use negative language you can't expect your students to be polite and keep quiet.

Sometimes it is necessary to discipline a student for bad behaviour. Make sure the student understands that you are unhappy with his/her actions but do not judge her/him as a person. Calling a student stupid will make him think he is stupid and behave accordingly, instead make sure the student understand his actions were wrong and next time you expect her/him to behave in a different way.

Some positive discipline strategies include:

Time out:

Time out means taking the student out of the situation in which the bad behaviour occurs. For example have a place for the student to sit in a corner. Time out gives a student a chance to calm down and reflect on how he or she should behave. The student should later talk with the teacher and identify what was wrong with his/her behaviour, who was hurt, and how he/she should have acted.

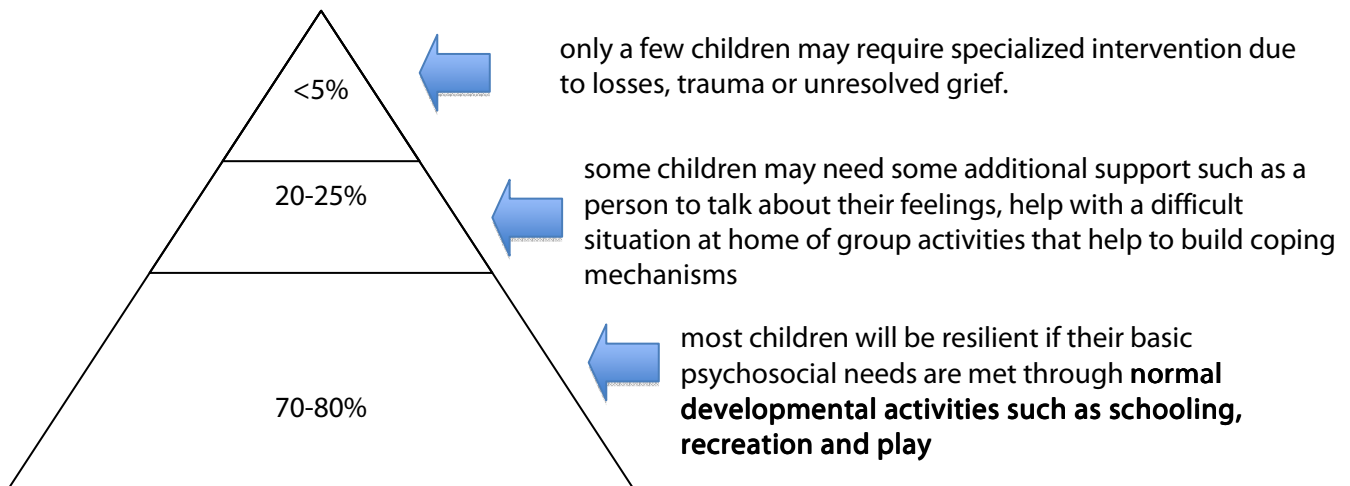
Use choice:

Respectfully confront the student who is disrupting others with the available choices. This provides the student or group with information about your expectations and the likely consequences of the choice. It puts the responsibility for decision making onto the student. For example: "You can start working now or remain with me at break time to complete your work." Make sure the choice does not sound like a threat.

Behaviour dairy / contract:

In serious cases of misbehaviour it may be necessary to have a meeting with the student (and sometimes their parents) to discuss the situation. In such discussions the focus should be the way forward and how the behaviour could improve. You may ask your student to sign a behaviour contract, whereby the student would agree on the behaviours he/she is committed to improve. With younger students you may start a behaviour diary, a notebook in which the teacher will provide the student daily feedback on their behaviour, this can be for example through drawing happy or sad faces at the end of the day. Follow up the progress regarding the contract/diary with your student and parents.

7 identifying and assisting children who may need more extensive support



While all children will benefit from the support schools and teachers can provide, some children may, in addition, need some more extensive support. This support can be for example designated group activities that help deal with emotions and build coping mechanisms, home visits from a social worker and psychosocial counselling or therapy.

Children who are likely to need more advanced support include:

1. children who continue to show signs of distress for a lengthy time / when others in the class already begin to heal (note that distress signs during the first month upon school return following a crisis are a part of the normal healing process)
2. children whose signs of distress are much more severe /whose behaviour differs significantly from others in the class: e.g. completely refusing to talk or not able to interact with others at all due to fears despite being in a safe and protective environment
3. children who have been directly exposed or forced to witness acts of violence including rape, torture and killing
4. children whose parents or caregivers are too sick or distressed to be able to care for them

Make sure you have the contact details of a school counsellor, social worker or any other instance to which the child may be referred to for further support. While the more advanced support may not always be available immediately give the child your additional attention and ensure the child can feel safe and protected in the classroom.



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8 teachers' well-being

Teachers themselves and their family members may be affected by the crisis their students have lived through. Teachers may have experienced personal losses, such as the loss of loved ones, jobs and homes and they may continue to experience stress, challenges fears and uncertainty about their own daily lives struggling to support their family members. Teachers may need space or support in processing their own grief before they can effectively find the emotional resources to support their students.

Other teachers may be given the job of teaching displaced students and may feel overwhelmed with the task of dealing with these students. Teachers may feel stressed due to their enormous responsibility and due to the reactions and experiences their students are demonstrating.

Remember that stress is a natural reaction in response to the physical and/or emotional challenges that you encounter. However if stress lasts too long or is too intense your body's resources will be exhausted and might bring about harmful effects such as fatigue, pains, loss of appetite, sadness, anger, depression, lack of concentration, aggressive or anti-social behaviour. It is important that you take note of signs and symptoms that suggest your coping mechanism may be overloaded (see training activity 3: stress questionnaire). This may enable you to find ways to manage your stress and to seek the support of others around you.

As a teacher it is important that you take care of your own well-being and try to find ways to manage your stress. The following advice may be helpful:

1. Accept your feelings: they are legitimate and they are not signs of personal weakness or lack of professionalism
2. Accept the situation you are in and adjust to the fact that there are things beyond your power to change
3. Take it easy, know your limits and do not place unreasonable demands on yourself
4. Recognize your reactions to stress and situations causing you stress
5. Seek support from colleagues, friends and relatives and talk to someone about your needs, emotions, doubts and fears
6. Maintain your daily routines as far as possible, have sufficient sleep and rest and try to maintain a healthy diet
7. Allow yourself to laugh, smile and maintain a sense of humour
8. Socialize with colleagues, friends and family members
9. Maintain a positive outlook on life: appreciate your strengths and abilities, recognize your daily achievements and try to look ahead for the future.



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