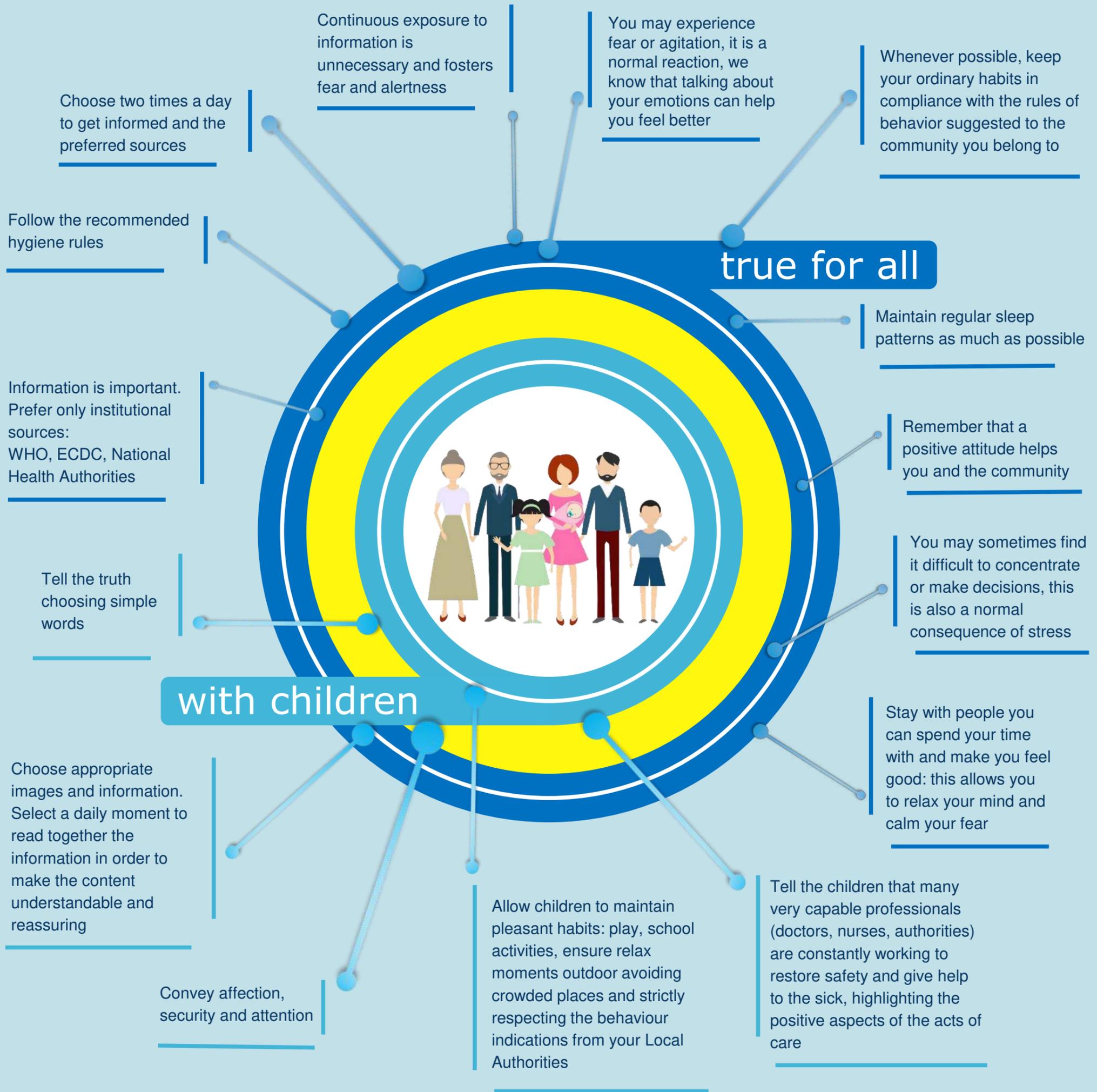


# How to manage anxiety and fear facing COVID-19



# ADVICE ON HOW TO COPE WITH THE STRESS FROM COVID-19

## How to protect yourself from fears that may create difficulties with adequate behaviour, correct thoughts and founded emotions

Fear works well if it is proportionate to the dangers. This has been the case since men had direct experience of the dangers and voluntarily decided whether to face them or not. Today many dangers do not only depend on our experiences. It is important to remember that fear, although it is not a virus, it can be very contagious. If the fear is well managed, it will be an ally that will help in being vigilant and acting effectively to face the disease.

To avoid disproportionate fears to create forms of individual anxiety and collective panic it is useful to share an “anti-panic decalogue” Some “reading keys” can help us avoid two possible mistakes: overestimate or underestimate (deny) the issue.

### Anti-panic Decalogue

Stick to the facts, that is, to the objective danger. The novel Coronavirus is contagious. WHO reports that out of 100 people who get sick 80 recover spontaneously, 15 have manageable problems in the healthcare environment, and only five have more serious problems. Among these last, deaths are related to subjects with other important diseases often associated with advanced age. Getting caught up in collective panic contagion leads to ignoring objective data and weakens judgment. As a result, we act erroneously by ignoring good, simple and effective practices.

It is difficult to counteract emotions with reasoning. The fundamental rule to follow is the balance between the feeling of fear and objective risk. The person being part of the risk population as indicated by the sanitary authorities should strictly follow the recommendations and prevention measures determined by the health authorities and trust them, paying attention to the feelings derived from the confinement. It is helpful to stay busy and connected with loved ones and friends, avoiding all possible additional sources of stress and anxiety but thinking at all the hard experiences overcome successfully in the life.

### Good practices to deal with the novel Coronavirus

#### Act collectively, not individually

The novel Coronavirus is not a phenomenon affecting the individual. We protect ourselves as a responsible community. Acting all in an informed and responsible way and helping each other to do so, increases the protection capacity of the community and of each of us.

#### Avoid compulsive search for information

It has been noticed that it is normal and functional, in terms of prevention, to be afraid of a new risk, such as the outbreak of novel Coronavirus: anxiety for oneself and beloved ones, the search for reassurances, the continuous search for information, are understandable and frequent emotional states these days.

The media are spreading information that can produce distorting effects because they focus on specific events and simplify complex data in rapid and uncontrolled sequences. Hence, it is important to reduce overexposure to various types of information. Once you have acquired the basic information on what is happening and how to react, simply check the updates from reliable sources of reference by choosing only two moments a day to inquire on trusted channels.

#### Use and spread trustworthy sources of information

Fear can be reduced by thinking on the relationship between the objective dangers and the appropriate behaviours to be implemented.

### Who to look after in the flood of news

#### Make children feel safe

It is good to protect children. If they ask us, we will always be available to speak calmly about what they may have heard and be frightened of. This means that children can continue doing children's things: playing, talking about fun things, doing homework and learning new things. They must be able to be with mom and dad and other trusted people without seeing afraid and alarmed faces. Children observe and understand, and need to be with an adult who can transmit affection and mastery. They notice the inconsistencies of adults, for example if you say: "There is no need to be afraid", then to make food supplies for an army, confusion can be generated and the child may wonder if it is good to believe in adults. Confidence and calm are indispensable for transmitting children safety.

The European Commission's science and knowledge service  
Joint Research Centre

 EU Science Hub: [ec.europa.eu/jrc](https://ec.europa.eu/jrc)  @EU\_ScienceHub  Joint Research Centre

 EU Science Hub - Joint Research Centre  EU Science Hub

## After thoughts and emotions, behaviours

Here's some simple and effective rules suggested by several public health institutes, which are worth to mention:

1. wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based gel;
2. avoid close contacts keeping the distance of at least one meter;
3. avoid crowded places;
4. cover mouth and nose with disposable tissues when sneezing or coughing. Otherwise use the bend of the elbow;
5. avoid touching eyes nose and mouth with your hands;
6. avoid handshakes and hugs until needed;
7. if you have flu-like symptoms, stay at home, do not go to the emergency room or medical studies, but contact your general practitioner or pediatrician, the medical guard or the numbers activated in your area.

Regular use of these elementary actions significantly reduces the risk of contagion for oneself, for those close to us and for the community.

## Furthermore...

1. Continue your routine as much as possible: in emergency situations, you need to stick to what is certain, known and predictable. Continue your work and your habits where possible, even through smart mode.
2. Physical activity is very important, as well with the help of online tutorials. It helps not only the body but also the mood. Releasing tensions through "doing" allows a better night's rest.
3. Get adequate rest.
4. Eat as regularly as possible.
5. Talking and spending time with family and friends (by phone / telematically). The sense of humor can help keep the emotion of fear under control.
6. Talk about problems with someone you trust.
7. In your spare time, carry out activities that help you relax individually: yoga, meditation, reading, gardening, artistic activities, etc.
8. Recover old passions, hobbies or start new ones left in the drawer of the "I will".

## Don't be ashamed to seek help

We can all need, in certain moments or situations, a confrontation, consultation, support, or even just to clear our ideas on how we feel and better manage our emotions, and this must not make us feel "weak". Those who seek help increasing their resources and those of their beloved ones are not weak. If you think your fear and anxiety are excessive and make you uncomfortable, don't be afraid to talk about it and ask for help from a professional. Online psychological supports are an interesting alternative in a situation like the present one we are all living in.

If you think you may need it too, please contact the Medical Service at the following email address, valid for JRC sites of Ispra, Geel, Seville, Petten and Karlsruhe: [HR-ISP-MEDICAL-SERVICE@ec.europa.eu](mailto:HR-ISP-MEDICAL-SERVICE@ec.europa.eu)

An appointment with one of our professionals will be arranged for you swiftly with alternative communication methods such as telephone, Skype, WhatsApp etc.