

Guidelines
for Mentors

RESILIENT FAMILIES



Mentoring for challenging times

Guidelines for Mentors

Thank you for volunteering your time to mentor families in your community affected by armed conflict and displacement. Through these sessions you will help to support families who are living in active conflict zones, have been internally displaced, or are living as refugees.

Through this programme, we will work together to help ensure that:

- Children are protected from abuse and danger during conflict
- Children build resilience, enabling them to move through difficult situations, recognising and building on their own strengths
- Parents have built their own resilience and are confident that they can cope with crisis and care for their children
- Communities are equipped to support families to be resilient during conflict

This guide will explain how to ensure that your mentoring is safe and provides good support to the children and adults you talk with. It should give you all the information you need on how to be an effective mentor, top tips on maintaining your own wellbeing, and key information about each of the mentoring sessions. As you mentor families, remember to refer to this guide whenever you need to. If possible, a training session based on these guidelines should take place before you start to meet with beneficiaries of the project.

These materials have been developed by Viva in partnership with [World Without Orphans](#) (WWO) and [Innovista](#), based on the [War-time Parenting tips](#) developed by [Parenting for Lifelong Health and others](#), and based on Viva's Child and Family Phone Mentoring Programme developed during Covid-19.

This guide contains essential background information and tools and resources to support and equip you as a mentor:

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1. Introduction: How it works

What is the Resilient Families Programme?

Through this programme, you will support families over the course of **six mentoring sessions** – plus additional introduction and closing sessions depending on how you are delivering the programme. Each session contains a **parents' session** and a **children's session**. You can use the materials in a variety of contexts, deciding what will work best for the situation your participants are in:

- In-person meetings for individual households, meeting first with the parent(s) and then with the child(ren)
- Phone calls for individual households, speaking first to the parent(s) and then to the child(ren)
- Group sessions, meeting with a group of parents and then separately with a group of children

During the six main sessions, you will talk about the following topics:

- 1) **“Talk about it”** – Helping the family to process where they are at right now and the experiences they have had, and supporting parents to talk to their children about the conflict
- 2) **“Strong families”** – Positive communication within families, and spending quality time with children
- 3) **“Mental health and resilience”** – Managing emotions and taking care of mental health, and supporting children to manage their emotions
- 4) **“Staying safe together”** – How to stay together in conflict situations and avoid trafficking
- 5) **“Staying safe at home”** – Anger management and positive discipline
- 6) **“Learning together every day”** – Supporting children's learning, and creating structure and routine

An additional session on **“Coping with Loss”** is also available to provide extra support where families are dealing with grief and loss.

N.B. Throughout these resources we refer to “parents” for simplicity. However, we recognise that the more appropriate term in many situations could be caregiver, foster parent, or extended family member, for example. As a mentor, you should be sensitive to these different relationships and family structures, and use appropriate language to refer to the adults that you are working with.

2. Background information for mentors

Why mentoring? Supporting families' resilience

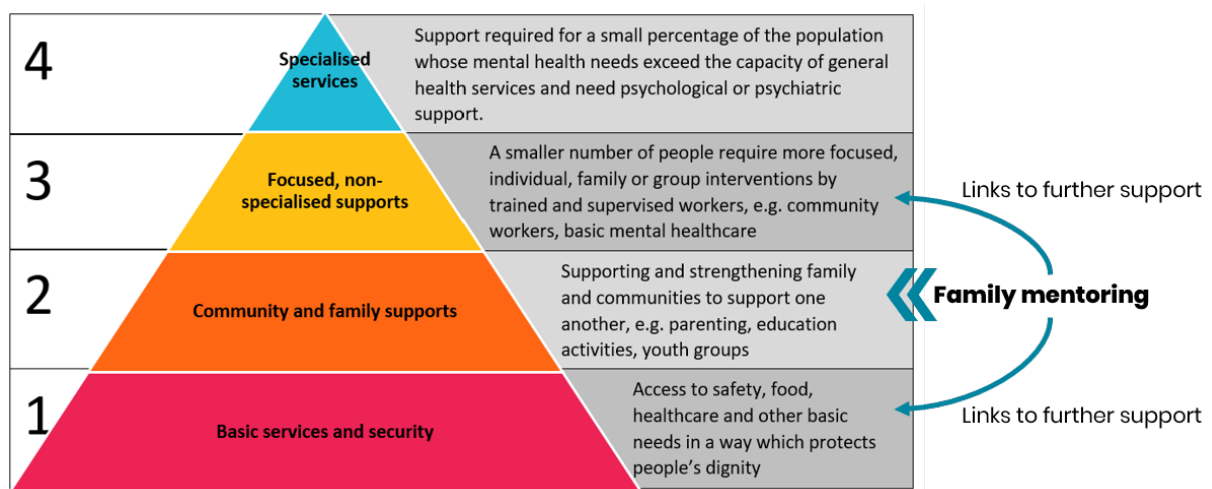
Through the mentoring programme, a key idea in supporting children and families through this time is the concept of building resilience in children and families, and helping them to increase their capacity to cope with difficulties.

While all children are vulnerable in times of crisis, children also have the ability to meet, bear and recover from exposure to loss. This capacity to cope and “bounce back” after stressful experiences is called resilience. Resilience refers to the ability to react or adapt positively to a difficult and challenging event or experience.

The '**psychosocial support pyramid**' is a helpful tool to show us how our work with families during times of armed conflict and displacement can support their resilience and enable them to cope with this crisis.

Research has shown that there is a small percentage of children (3-5%) who need individual counselling and psychological support following a crisis (which should only be provided by trained professionals), but that most children can be helped through the support of their families and communities. Our response should therefore seek to strengthen the capacity of caregivers, and other adults in children's lives, to provide everyday psychosocial care to children. In this way we can focus on restoring resilience in the face of challenging circumstances.

The IASC **psychosocial support pyramid**¹ illustrates a layered system of complementary supports. The layers represent the different kinds of support people may need to recover from a crisis.



This model recognises that children and communities have strengths and resources of their own, and tries to build on and support these. Mentoring families can assist with community and family support, while also connecting families to access basic needs or focused support through the mentoring programme.

Psychological First Aid

Some families that you meet may need initial psychological support before they are in a position to benefit from the mentoring sessions. **Psychological First Aid** (PFA) can help reduce the initial distress caused by experiencing conflict – it's a great first step to help you know how you can respond well to someone you meet for the first time, who is in distress. Not everyone who experiences a crisis event will need or want PFA, so you should not force help on people who do not want it, but should make yourself easily available to those who may want support.

PFA is simple enough that anyone can provide it when meeting someone who has been directly affected by a crisis. Please familiarise yourself with the information in **Appendix 1** so that you can be prepared to offer PFA to families who may need it.

¹ IASC, [IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings](#) (2007)

Support for mentors

Coming alongside families in this difficult time as a mentor is very rewarding, but it can also be difficult at times. Speaking to families about their struggles can affect your own wellbeing if you are not prepared. The following section will help you to develop good strategies to protect your own wellbeing throughout your time as a mentor.

It is really important that you do not feel that you need to deal with challenging situations on your own. This is why we suggest that you **meet regularly with your fellow mentors and your Mentor Supervisor** (ideally once a week), to chat about how your support sessions are going, discuss any challenges that you are facing, and to support one another.

Make sure you are also **prioritising your own wellbeing** – to help and support others, we need to start with ourselves. See **Appendix 2a** for Tips for looking after your own mental health and wellbeing. Before starting the project, please look through these and think about what you can put in place to look after yourself during this time. In **Appendix 2b** you will find a template for a personal “Wellbeing Plan”. Take some time to complete this before you begin your mentoring sessions.

Your support structure

Your Mentor Supervisor is:

Contact details:

Your Programme Coordinator is:

Contact details:

Your Programme Safeguarding Officer is:

Contact details:

Note that the exact structure of the programme will depend on various factors, such as how many people you are supporting, and whether you are running the programme through a church, local project or larger organisation.

Who should take part in the programme?

Identifying families who could take part

In your role as someone who has been supporting people affected by conflict, you may already have been offering direct support to individuals or families, such as giving out food parcels, hosting refugees or coordinating host families, helping people to access local services and jobs, or offering Psychological First Aid.

You will work with your Mentor Supervisor and/or Programme Coordinator to identify families you feel would most benefit from this support. This may be:

- Families where you are already aware that there is a risk of domestic abuse or family violence for parents or children
- Families in particularly unsettled circumstances – e.g. in temporary accommodation
- Families including child(ren) who are not living with their mother or father
- Families living in poverty or unable to meet their daily basic needs
- Families which have been separated due to conflict
- Single parent families
- Larger families with more than 4 children
- Families where the female caregiver or young person is pregnant or a nursing mother
- Families where there is a child or parent with a disability
- Families where there is a child or adult with a serious physical or mental health condition
- Families where the primary caregiver is an elderly relative

Depending on the number of possible beneficiaries you identify, and your circumstances and preference, you may wish to conduct one-to-one in-person or phone sessions, or to meet with adults and children in a group setting.

Inclusion

When selecting families, you should ensure that there is no discrimination based on gender, race, colour, language, politics, nationality, disability, or any other factor, and that marginalised groups are given an equal opportunity to participate.

Safeguarding

When working with children and vulnerable adults, it is very important that we:

- **...ensure that the sessions we run, or any interactions we have with families, are safe and do not place them at risk of harm**
Having a written code of conduct that all mentors agree to can help us to mitigate any risks which might arise through our work with vulnerable families. We need to ensure that we have read and understood this code of conduct, and commit to following it by signing it.
- **...recognise signs of abuse**
We need to be able to pick up on signs of possible abuse, since these are not always obvious and can be mistaken for something else.
- **...know how to respond when abuse is suspected or when someone reveals abuse**
It is extremely important to have a clear reporting procedure, so that everyone knows who is responsible for what, and so that cases of abuse get picked up and dealt with quickly and effectively.

Important safeguarding information relating to these three points is contained in **Appendices 3-6** at the end of these guidelines. Your designated Safeguarding Officer should ideally take you through this information in a short session before you start mentoring.

Additionally, a conflict or emergency situation exposes children to additional protection risks. These include separation from family, recruitment into armed groups, dangers and injuries, child labour, and trafficking. **Trafficking** of a child is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation, and so it is often linked to child labour. Trafficking is often presented as an opportunity for a child to travel to a different location (such as going to the city, or

across a border) to support their family by earning extra income, or to work for and be taken care of by an employer.

Receiving feedback from families

Make sure you know how the beneficiaries can report a complaint or concern with the project, and how this will be dealt with. You should discuss this with your coordinator and write the information in the box below so that you can refer back to it.

A project beneficiary can report a complaint or concern with the project by emailing / calling at

Procedure that will be followed:

Identifying further support

Although this is not a core part of your role as a mentor, it is likely that as you get to know families and understand their situations, you may like to connect them to other support outside of your mentoring sessions. This may be support which is offered by your church or organisation, by other organisations in your local area, by the government, or by professional services, for example. Support may include food packages, job placements, language teaching, mental health services, or other help getting set up in a new location. We would encourage you to work with your Mentor Supervisor or Programme Coordinator to develop a basic database or list of all the support options that you could signpost beneficiaries to. All referral programmes and organisations need to be checked and approved by your supervisor before you recommend them to a family. There is a template which you could use to help you in **Appendix 7**.

3. Before you begin

Preparing for the sessions

You will need to decide, with your Mentor Supervisor and/or Programme Coordinator, whether you will conduct the sessions as:



in-person meetings for single households



one-to-one phone calls, or



group sessions



In in-person individual meetings, you can meet with one or two parents and any number of siblings from the same family or household. Please see the section on safeguarding if there is a chance that you will be meeting with a child in a one-to-one setting. You should try to make sure you can speak to the same people every week.



Phone calls might be particularly suitable to situations where it is difficult to meet face to face or where people may be on the move, or in a conflict setting. With phone calls, it will be easiest if you speak to one adult and one child from the same family or household. You should try to make sure you can speak to the same people every week.



Group sessions might be particularly well suited to refugee and displacement contexts, where you perhaps have been working with a group of parents or children already. You should have one support group for parents, and another for children.

What will I say?

Viva has produced a conversation guide for each session to ensure that you are able to cover all the content. Each guide includes one section for your conversation with the adult(s) and one section for your conversation with the child(ren).



If you are conducting the sessions over the phone, you can keep this conversation guide in front of you as you speak.



If you are meeting face to face, you can still keep the guide on hand, but should try to ensure that you have a good knowledge of what it contains beforehand, so that you can interact well with the participants.

How long should I speak for?



Over the phone or with individual households, the sessions will probably take around 30 minutes, but could be longer if the adult/child chooses to talk for more time. Be aware, some families may have to borrow a phone and pay to charge it. They may need to keep the phone calls short for different reasons so be flexible and, if a person is rushing, be sensitive to this and ask if they need to go. You can offer to rearrange the call to a time that is better for them.



In a group setting, sessions are likely to take longer, probably around one hour.

The length of the session must be flexible and based on how much time the adults and children can, and want to spend with you.

Top tip: at the start of each session, ask how long they can give to the session. This will help you to manage the time you have.

When will I speak to the family/ies?

It will be helpful to find out from the families or groups what is the most suitable day and time to meet. Discuss and agree a regular schedule. Ideally, you should meet on a weekly basis.



For groups, it is best to meet at the same time every week, so that everybody in the group can schedule this in.



For individual households, you may be able to be a bit more flexible, although it is still helpful to keep the sessions as regular as possible.

If an unavoidable circumstance crops up and you are not able to honour the session, please contact the family or group as soon as you find out that you are unable to make it, offer an apology and rearrange for another time.

Introduction and closing session

Before getting started with the 6 sessions, you should take your adult participants through the introductory session which provides information about the project, and gives them the opportunity to learn more and decide whether they would like to take part. The introductory session also involves each participant downloading the Resilient Families app and answering some introductory questions in the Parents' app. Make sure this is complete before getting started with the conversations.

Similarly, after the 6 sessions, there is a closing conversation, where participants can review their experience and learning over the course of the project. You should make sure to schedule time for this the week after the sixth session if possible.

Using the conversation guides

Read through the material ahead of time and familiarise yourself with it. Think about:

- What are the key messages you must communicate during this session? Are there any parts of the conversation you need to adapt for your local area?
- What questions might the parent(s) or child(ren) ask you?
- What information do you need to know ahead of time – are there any topics on the session you want to do more research about beforehand? You could discuss these with your fellow mentors in your peer support sessions.
- Think about relevant experience from your own life that you could share to help the mentee to open up, and reflect on your own experiences related to this topic.
- Practise reading through and asking the questions – you could even practise with a friend, family member or another mentor.
- Remind yourself of the safeguarding code of conduct commitments.

The session guides are designed to be used in various conflict contexts your participants may be in – whether in a live conflict zone, on the move, or settled in a new location as a refugee, internally displaced person, or returning to home. Where activities vary, you will see these symbols – please choose the content reflecting where your mentee or group are at.



Conflict zone



On the move



Settled

Where families are under pressure or in crisis and cannot engage in a long conversation, the key points to communicate have been **highlighted in bold**.

Each session will also include some visual 'posters' covering some of the week's themes which can be found in the app, and the parent(s) and child(ren) will be encouraged to try to commit to taking one simple new action based on what has been discussed.

Adapting the sessions for group settings

In group settings, try to help all participants to engage with the session by making it as interactive, participatory and varied as possible. You should plan how you will do this BEFORE the session.

For parents:

- When asking questions, vary the way you ask parents to respond. You could do this in plenary (i.e. as a whole group discussion), split participants into pairs or small groups to discuss and then feed back, or allow a time of quiet reflection.
- Think about how you can integrate movement into the sessions – even if this is as simple as moving chairs to form small groups and then moving back into a whole group. Movement can aid focus and keep energy levels high.
- Try to notice who is contributing most to the discussions, and encourage those who are not contributing as much, to make sure that everyone's voice is heard. However, you should never force any participant to share with the group if they do not want to – it's fine if someone chooses simply to listen.

For children:

- Throughout the sessions you will see some ideas for activities that children could do, such as drawing a picture or playing a game. These activities help children to engage in the sessions in an interactive way. You can come up with your own activity ideas too.
- If children seem to be struggling to concentrate or losing interest, take a short (2-3 minute) break to allow them to run around, or simply stand up and do some stretching exercises where they are seated. Make sure you allow time for this when you plan your sessions.
- Keep discussions short and simple for younger children.
- Vary the way that you ask children to respond to questions. They could talk to a partner, draw a picture, or put their hands up to answer as a whole group, for example.
- Take into account the ages of the children and their ability to discuss and think critically about different topics.

Adapting the sessions for face-to-face meetings

If you are meeting face to face with a child or children from one household, you should take some time to think about what you can do to make these children feel comfortable speaking to you. You should plan how you will do this BEFORE the session. For example:

- Allow them to bring a favourite toy to their sessions with you.
- Bring some paper and pencils with you or some toys that you think they might enjoy. It is OK for them to be playing as they are talking to you – this does not mean that they are not listening, and many children, especially young children, may feel more comfortable chatting with you if they are doing something else at the same time.
- Integrate activities into your sessions, such as simple games or drawing activities.

Adapting the sessions for unstable contexts

The sessions are designed to be used even in live conflict contexts, or where the situation becomes very difficult. If this happens, conversations can be very short (using only the key text in bold within the sessions and the ideas for active conflict settings) and you will need to be sensitive to whether the participant is able and willing to engage with the content. It's fine to pause the sessions for a period, or to continue if the participant says that they will find these helpful.

4. During the sessions

Beginning the session

Make sure you follow the instructions for beginning each session, which are listed at the start of each conversation guide:

- Remind yourself of the safeguarding code of conduct (**Appendix 5**).
- Check with the parent or group that this is a good time for the session, and remember to ask both children and adults if they are still happy to take part in the project.
- Answers to underlined questions should be recorded (normally by the parents) in the app (see below). If you are completing the log yourself after the session, take notes so that you can do this accurately after the call or meeting.

Make sure you ask the parent(s) about their agreed action(s) from last week – did they manage to do it? How did it go? Do they have any other reflections about what they learnt last week? Make sure that they log their answer in the app.

During the session

Follow the structure of the session, but where a parent or child has more to say, try not to rush them or force them back on topic, giving them enough space to share what is on their mind and to make sure they feel listened to.

Remember: *Helping the child and parent to know that someone cares and is interested in what they have to say is just as valuable as the specific message you share.*

Be ready to share your own experience, where needed, to help to create trust with the participants, but ensure that the larger portion of time in the session is given to the participants to share their experiences.

If the participant has a question you cannot answer, it's ok to say that you don't know and that you will find out for next time.

At the appropriate points during the parent session, ask parent(s) to answer the underlined questions in the app. For child sessions, ask children these questions and note the answers in the app yourself.

Top tips to give families a positive mentoring experience

- **Give families and children time and space to share their emotions. Listen more than you would normally** to make sure they feel properly heard.
- **Empower families and children.** Encourage families and children to focus on short-term or longer-term goals where they have an element of control or influence.
- **Focus on strengths.** Identify what families are good at, enjoy doing, achievements and high points. This can help foster a positive outlook.
- **Connect families to further support.** Don't feel you have to do everything on your own.
- **Share the “parenting tips”.** At relevant points during the parents' conversation, direct parents' attention to the parenting tips in the app.
- **Opportunities to debrief.** Make sure that you meet with your fellow mentors between each mentoring session to debrief.

What to do if the person appears distressed

- If talking to a distressed participant, it is important to create a sense of calm and safety by using a **calm tone of voice**.
- **Drop the conversation guide** and focus on the person's needs.
- **Acknowledge the child or adult's feelings** and understanding of events and allow for expression of frustration.
- Use comforting statements that **reassure that this is ok to talk about it** and to share their worry.
- If the distress is related to the conflict, reassure and normalise these reactions by explaining that such feelings are normal during a time of conflict and that he/she is not alone.

Ending the session

End the session by confirming the actions the mentee is planning to take this week – participants should log this in the app if possible, or you should complete the app questions if answering on their behalf. Agree the time you will meet again for the next session.

Remind the mentee(s) of the feedback and complaints mechanism.

Thank the mentee(s) for their time and encourage them, if possible, by sharing something that has been positive in your interaction, or the changes you have seen them make already.

Sharing the “parenting tips”

After each session, remind parents that there are some parenting tips on the app which show key messages on the theme for that session (you can also find these at the end of each conversation guide). Encourage parents to have a look at these, and remind them that they can come back to the app at any time to remind themselves of them.

These resources are also available in many languages on the website <https://ukraineparenting.web.ox.ac.uk/downloads> and in English and Ukrainian at <https://worldwithoutorphans.org/resources/war-time-tips>

5. After each session

Logging sessions

If you have led a group session for adults, facilitated a session for a child or group of children, or you led a session with a single adult who does not have the app, you should log this on the mentor's app.

You can do this by clicking on the appropriate session type on the home page (e.g. "Log an adults' group session" if you have led a group session for adults).

For an individual session with an adult where the adult logged their own answers in the app, you will not need to log anything.

Logging sessions is important because:

- It helps to protect you as a mentor
- It helps to protect the children and adults you are speaking to
- It helps Viva to know how many children we are helping so we can try and reach even more children and families
- It will help us to improve the programme
- You can use these logs to give feedback and suggestions

Remember: *You will not be judged on the answers of participants. Don't be disheartened if families do not complete their planned actions each week; simply having the conversation and discussing these issues is a positive step. We know families are having a hard time so entering their honest feedback will help us better understand how the families are coping and how we can improve the programme.*

6. Using the Resilient Families app



Viva has developed an app to accompany the Resilient Families programme. The app has three main aims:

- To give families access to the "parenting tips" connected to each session, which they can refer back to at any time
- To allow parents to make a note of their answers to some of the discussion questions, so that they can come back and reflect on these if they want to
- To allow Viva (and the partner organisation running the programme) to understand the way the sessions are being used, the impact on families, and how the project can be improved

To download the app, search for "**Resilient Families**", "**Стійкі сім'ї**" or "**Стойкие Семьи**" (depending which language your phone is set to) in Google Play or the App Store. The app is **free** to download.

You (the mentor) and the parents should all download the app. When you first open the app, you will be prompted to enter a password. This password will be given to you by your coordinator.

Parents' app

The app is very simple and easy to navigate. In the parents' platform, parents will be able to click on each theme to access the parenting tips and the reflective questions for that theme. They can also see all of the parenting tips in one place by clicking the "Tips" button in the bottom ribbon, where there are also some links to further information.

In the conversation guides, you will see that there are certain points where parents should record their answers to an underlined question. You should prompt the parents to answer the questions at the appropriate points. You can also direct them to the parenting tips, whenever you feel this is helpful.

You may find that parents are getting distracted by having their phones out during the sessions. If this is the case, make sure that you instruct them to put their phones away when they are not needed.

N.B. It is important that the parent uses the **same phone every time** to log their answers.

Mentor's app

When you first enter the app, you will see four options:

- Log an adults' group session
- Log a children's group session
- Log a one-to-one parent session
- Log a one-to-one child session

You do not need to log any details for a one-to-one session with a parent where they have logged their own answers in the app.

Log an adults' group session

Here you will simply log a few basic details about **each parents' group session that you hold**. You should do this either at the beginning of a session, or as soon as it ends, so that you don't forget any of the details.

Log a children's group session

If you are doing group sessions with children, you should ask the children the underlined questions in the conversation guide at the appropriate points, and note down how many children choose each option as their answer (e.g. by doing a show of hands).

Log a one-to-one parent session

If you are doing one-to-one sessions and the parent is not able to use the app to log their own answers, you can log their answers instead. You should do this at the points in the conversation guide where the underlined questions are asked. Or, if you find it distracting to do it during the session, you could do it immediately afterwards.

Log a one-to-one child session

If you are doing one-to-one sessions with a child, you should log their answers to the underlined questions here, either during the session or immediately afterwards.

N.B. It is important that the mentor uses the **same phone every time** to log their answers

N.B. If for any reason you are unable to use the app, you can still log your sessions by going to www.resilientfamilies.viva.org.

Appendix 1: Psychological First Aid (PFA)

Psychological First Aid (PFA) – Why PFA and how to train community volunteers

Ensuring that you are confident and well-equipped to provide initial support for people affected by conflict in an appropriate way can make a significant difference in delivering an effective emergency response. Psychological First Aid (PFA) can be a critical first step in supporting people affected by conflict, and can help you to identify people who may need further support. It's a great first step for teams who are responding to large numbers of people affected by crisis.

Key guide to PFA in multiple languages: WHO, Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers – [English](#) [Ukrainian](#) [Romanian](#) [Russian](#)

What it is:

Psychological first aid (PFA) is a compassionate, supportive response to someone who is suffering and who may need support. PFA can help reduce the initial distress caused by experiencing conflict – it's a great first step to help you know how you can respond well to someone you meet for the first time, who is in distress.

PFA helps people affected by a disaster to:

- Feel safe, connected to others, calm and hopeful
- Have access to social, physical and emotional support
- Feel able to help themselves, as individuals and as part of communities

Who is PFA for?

PFA is for distressed people who have been recently exposed to a serious crisis event. You can provide help to both children and adults. However, not everyone who experiences a crisis event will need or want PFA. Do not force help on people who do not want it, but make yourself easily available to those who may want support.

People with either severe or long-lasting distress reactions may need more support than PFA alone, particularly if they cannot function in their daily life, or if they are a danger to themselves or others.

Who can give psychological first aid?

PFA is simple enough that anyone can provide it when meeting someone who has been directly affected by a crisis. It involves very simple actions including:

- Giving practical care and support, and helping people to access basic needs (e.g. food, water, information)
- Assessing needs and concerns
- Comforting the person and helping them to feel calm
- Protecting the person from further harm

PFA is not:

- Professional counselling or therapy
- Asking people details about how they feel or what happened to them

Basic principles of PFA

Before providing PFA, find out about:

- The situation itself – what has happened and how many people are likely to be affected?
- Available services and supports – who is providing for basic needs like medical care, food and water, shelter, or finding family members?
- Safety and security – is the crisis continuing? What dangers might there be in the environment? Are there areas to avoid entering because they are unsafe?

PFA must be given responsibly – this means you should:

- Respect people's safety, dignity and rights – making sure you don't put people at further risk of harm, treating people with respect, and making sure people can access help fairly.
- Adapt what you do to take account of the person's culture – e.g. thinking about what is appropriate in terms of gender, touch, religion, language and clothing.
- Be aware of other emergency response measures, so that you can refer people to further support as needed.
- Look after yourself – take care of yourself and your team, so you can care for others (see chapter 4 of the PFA guide for practical ideas on how to do this).

Good communication:

Being calm and showing understanding can help people in distress feel more safe and secure, understood, respected and cared for appropriately.




Someone who has been through a distressing event may want to tell you their story. Listening to someone's story can be a great support. However, it is important not to pressure anyone to tell you what they have been through. Some people may not want to speak about what has happened or their circumstances. However, they may value it if you stay with them quietly, let them know you are there if they want to talk, or offer practical support like a meal or a glass of water. Don't talk too much; allow for silence.

Keeping silent for a while may give the person space and encourage them to share with you if they wish.

THINGS TO SAY AND DO ✓	THINGS NOT TO SAY AND DO ✗
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Try to find a quiet place to talk, and minimize outside distractions. » Respect privacy and keep the person's story confidential, if this is appropriate. » Stay near the person but keep an appropriate distance depending on their age, gender and culture. » Let them know you are listening; for example, nod your head or say "hmmmm..." » Be patient and calm. » Provide factual information, if you have it. Be honest about what you know and don't know. "I don't know, but I will try to find out about that for you." » Give information in a way the person can understand – keep it simple. » Acknowledge how they are feeling and any losses or important events they tell you about, such as loss of their home or death of a loved one. "I'm so sorry. I can imagine this is very sad for you." » Acknowledge the person's strengths and how they have helped themselves. » Allow for silence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Don't pressure someone to tell their story. » Don't interrupt or rush someone's story (for example, don't look at your watch or speak too rapidly). » Don't touch the person if you're not sure it is appropriate to do so. » Don't judge what they have or haven't done, or how they are feeling. Don't say: "You shouldn't feel that way," or "You should feel lucky you survived." » Don't make up things you don't know. » Don't use terms that are too technical. » Don't tell them someone else's story. » Don't talk about your own troubles. » Don't give false promises or false reassurances. » Don't think and act as if you must solve all the person's problems for them. » Don't take away the person's strength and sense of being able to care for themselves. » Don't talk about people in negative terms (for example, don't call them "crazy" or "mad").

Action principles – Look, Listen, Link

The three basic action principles of PFA are **look**, **listen** and **link**. These action principles will help guide how you view and safely enter a crisis situation, approach affected people and understand their needs, and link them with practical support and information.

LOOK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Check for safety. » Check for people with obvious urgent basic needs. » Check for people with serious distress reactions. 	
LISTEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Approach people who may need support. » Ask about people's needs and concerns. » Listen to people, and help them to feel calm. 	
LINK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Help people address basic needs and access services. » Help people cope with problems. » Give information. » Connect people with loved ones and social support. 	

See the PFA guide (Section 3.3) for more details on the actions contained within each of these steps.

Appendix 2a: Looking after your own Mental Health and Wellbeing

Tips for looking after your own Mental Health and Wellbeing

Thinking and perspective:

- Gratitude – set aside a few minutes each day to reflect on a few things you're thankful for.
- Accept uncertainty and keep things in perspective – we are living through uncertain times so all we can do is focus on those things we can control and what we can do.
- Recognise that your feelings are normal and ok. The emotions you are feeling right now (anger, sadness, fear) are normal responses to an abnormal situation.
- Write down worries to give yourself some space; you might also try analysing evidence for and against the worries and seeing if you can problem-solve them.
- Be reasonable with your expectations of yourself and, at the beginning of your workday, be clear about what you want to achieve today and what your key priorities are.

Physical wellbeing:

- Establish a routine
- Eat a healthy diet
- Get enough sleep
- Regular exercise can lift your mood and increase your energy levels. It doesn't have to be strenuous and you can pick something you enjoy so you will be able to stick with it! For example, going for a walk during your day, or doing stretches in the morning.

Social connections:

Building and maintaining positive relationships with people can be an important part of wellbeing.

- Maintain social connections – e.g. phoning a friend or relative, arranging to speak with a colleague or friend.
- Think about who energises you and reach out to them for a conversation. Limit time with those who don't.
- Think about who you can support and get in touch with them as well.
- As mentioned above, meet regularly with your fellow mentors and your Mentor Supervisor to offer mutual support and encouragement.

Self-care:

Find some moment in the day when you do something that is just for yourself:

- Engage in a spiritual practice. This could be prayer, spending time in nature, or engaging in meaningful contributions to others.
- Make time to do something that will allow your brain to calm: prayer, cooking, gardening.
- Be kind to yourself – talk to yourself as you would to a friend.
- Be creative – music, art, writing, growing plants, cooking a new recipe.
- Talk about or write down your feelings. Expressing how you feel will mean you have a choice about what to do with that feeling; suppressing it will mean that the feeling can overwhelm you.
- Take breaks and set boundaries around working hours and work communication.

From the tips above, what are you already good at? What do you find challenging? Is there something you want to work on, or try for the first time yourself?

Appendix 2b: Personal Wellbeing Plan

A wellbeing action plan can help you to put good practices in place to know how to take care of yourself. It is a good idea to complete a wellbeing plan ahead of time, so that if you start to feel you are struggling, you already have a plan in place. A wellbeing plan is a living document, so you can keep adding to it and reviewing it as you find more things that help you.

What helps me to stay well?

(e.g. going for a run, cup of tea, listen to music, talk to a friend, take a proper lunch break)

What things can I do every day to stay well?

(e.g. exercise, sleep and food as well as things that make you happy)

What do I want to avoid every day?

(e.g. using social media, putting pressure on myself)

What are the warning signs that I am struggling?

(e.g. feeling overwhelmed, not responding to messages)

What can I do if I notice I am struggling?

(Who can you talk to, and what can you do to help yourself? Think about who can help you as well as activities or actions you can do to help yourself)

Appendix 3: Recognising signs of abuse

During a difficult time like a conflict/crisis, signs that a child is struggling could also be a result of their response to the emergency. We shouldn't assume that abuse is happening – but these signs can be a flag to encourage us to take extra care and be aware of how this child is doing.

	Physical Signs and Symptoms	Changes in Behaviour
Physical Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body Multiple bruises – in clusters, often on the upper arm, or outside of the thigh Cigarette burns Human bite marks Broken bones Scalds Multiple burns with a clearly demarcated edge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fear of parents being approached for an explanation Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts Flinching when approached or touched Reluctance to get changed, e.g. in hot weather Depression Withdrawn behaviour Running away from home
Sexual Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pain or itching in the genital area Bruising or bleeding near genital area Sexually transmitted disease Vaginal discharge or infection Stomach pains Discomfort when walking or sitting down Pregnancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people Having nightmares Running away from home Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age, or developmental level Sexual drawings or language Bedwetting Eating problems such as overeating or anorexia Self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempt Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about Substance or drug abuse Suddenly having unexplained sources of money Not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence) Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults
Emotional Abuse		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neurotic behaviour e.g. sulking, hair-twisting, rocking Aggressive or hostile Being unable to play Fear of making mistakes Anxiety and mood swings Sudden speech disorders, language delays Self-harm Fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour Developmental delay in terms of emotional progress
Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from others Constantly dirty or 'smelly' Loss of weight, or being constantly underweight Inappropriate clothing for the conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaining of being tired all the time Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments Having few friends Perceived as aggressive or disruptive Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised Learning and language delays

Appendix 4: Responding to alleged or suspected abuse

It is important to develop the right attitudes and behaviours that can encourage people to feel safe to report a safeguarding concern. A safeguarding concern includes concern about someone's behaviour, a direct allegation from a victim of abuse, or witnessing a safeguarding incident.

If you are informed about a safeguarding concern

- React calmly and show acceptance of what you have been told. Reassure them that they did the right thing in telling you.
- Explain that you will need to let someone else know – never promise confidentiality.
- Take what they say seriously even if you think it involves someone who would not harm them. Do not judge and do not blame.
- Don't push for more information. Ask just enough to clarify the situation.
- Ensure that the person is safe.
- If they need urgent medical attention, make sure that they receive this and that doctors or medical staff know that it is a safeguarding issue.
- Make a written record as soon as possible (preferably within an hour of being told).
- Complete Safeguarding incident form.
- Inform the Safeguarding Officer.
- Do not discuss the case with anyone else (including parents and carers) until you have spoken to Safeguarding Officer.
- If required and in consultation with the Safeguarding Officer and the person who has reported abuse, take immediate action to contact Social Services and/or the police to discuss putting safety measures into effect to protect the person if they are in immediate danger.

Time scales

- All concerns should go to the Safeguarding Officer
- If it is life threatening, it must be immediate
- If it is abuse it must be within 24 hours
- If it is not either of these, then action should be taken within 48 hours

Reporting procedure

As a mentor, your role is to:

1. Respond appropriately to an allegation (see above)
2. Report the concern to the designated Safeguarding Officer
3. Complete an Incident Report Form (available from your Safeguarding Officer)
4. Follow any other advice given by the Safeguarding Officer

As a mentor, your role is NOT to:

- Investigate an allegation of abuse
- Confront the alleged abuser about the abuse

Appendix 5: Safeguarding Code of Conduct when conducting sessions with families and children

Note: This code of conduct is in addition to the appendices “Recognising signs of abuse” and “Responding to alleged or suspected abuse” above. Mentors must have signed Appendix 6 to say that they have read all three documents before beginning the programme. Ideally you will also have gone through a short training with the designated Safeguarding Officer for the mentoring programme.

Here are a few guidelines and a few words of caution with regard to mentoring sessions that you are required to follow while talking to children and parents.

Mentors should:

- Follow behaviour protocols set out in your church’s / organisation’s safeguarding policy
- Contact only those families assigned to you and who have agreed to be contacted as part of the programme
- Apart from initial contact, only contact the family/ies at times agreed with them beforehand
- Always get permission from the parent before speaking to the child
- Check that parents and children are happy to speak at the start of each session and ensure they know that they may stop the session at any point if they are finding it difficult
- Take additional care when communicating with parents and children to make sure that it does not negatively impact their life (check convenience, privacy, check how they are doing)
- Show respect to adults and children by using positive words, images, and messages, and promote inclusion
- Look out for potential signs of stress and anxiety and react calmly
- Speak clearly and sensitively, giving good opportunity for questions and space for the person / people to speak
- Be flexible and understanding if a session gets interrupted or has to end earlier than expected
- Use a specific account set up for the programme, with an appropriate name and profile picture if conducting the sessions through a form of social media
- Log details of the session immediately after each session on the app
- **Maintain confidentiality.** Do not disclose the name of the family or child being mentored unless they have given consent. What is spoken about should remain confidential. However, involvement of a third party may be required where:
 - The parent or child indicates they are going to harm themselves or someone else
 - The child says that they are at risk of harm
 - The parent or child says they or someone they know are breaking a law

In these situations, do not discuss with anyone else except the designated Safeguarding Officer. Professional help may be required or the case may need to be signposted to another agency immediately.

- Refer any safeguarding concerns revealed during the sessions to the programme safeguarding officer and follow the steps in the reporting procedure in **Appendix 4**

It is not appropriate to:

- Share personal contact details with the children or families beyond the contact details used for the sessions (e.g. phone number if sessions are conducted over the phone)
- Share personal information that is not relevant to the session topic, reveals too much about yourself, or is explicit in content
- Pressure for answers or thoughts that are not freely expressed
- Take photos during the sessions or ask the child to send photos to you

Mentors must never:

- Act in ways that may abuse a child or may place a child at risk of abuse
- Give verbal abuse such as shouting, swearing or use of demeaning language
- Record a meeting session without permission from the parent and programme supervisor
- Expose children to inappropriate materials such as pornographic videos and literature
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice, which is inappropriate, flirtatious, offensive or abusive
- Excuse, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- Act in ways intended to shame or humiliate

In calls:

- If sessions are one-to-one, the mentor should be the same sex as the parent being mentored
- Ensure that at least one adult in the home is close enough to monitor your call with the child

In face to face sessions with one household:

- If sessions are one-to-one, the mentor should be the same sex as the parent being mentored
- If at all possible, conduct children's sessions with more than one child (i.e. siblings), so that you are not alone with a child
- Make sure that you conduct children's sessions in a room where the door and curtains are open, and a parent is close by at all times
- Ensure you are never left alone in the house with a child / children
- Any physical contact should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child, rather than the mentor

In group sessions:

- At least two adults should be present in a group session for children, even if only one is leading the session
- Any physical contact should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child, rather than the mentor
- If a participant wants to speak privately with the mentor about any issue, this should only be done somewhere where they will remain visible, and ideally in the same room as the group

Appendix 6: Commitment to Safeguarding Form

All volunteers should sign this form before commencing with the programme.

Full Name

I have read and understood “Appendix 3: Recognising signs of abuse”.

SignedDate.....

I have read and understood “Appendix 4: Responding to alleged or suspected abuse”.

SignedDate.....

I have read and understood “Appendix 5: Safeguarding Code of Conduct when conducting sessions with families and children” and will abide by it.

SignedDate.....

Please give this signed form to your Coordinator.

Appendix 7: Referring beneficiaries to further support

Below, you will find a template which you can complete to give you a comprehensive list of further support that you can refer your beneficiaries to. You could fill this out with your coordinator before beginning mentoring sessions.

Name of church / organisation / govt. department etc.	Nature of support (e.g. food packages, job placements, mental health services etc.)	Details	Contact person	Physical address	Contact details (phone number, email address)

Appendix 8: Additional information on supporting children

Risk factors and Protective factors

Although children are very different from one another, there are certain factors and capabilities in children's lives that have been shown to influence their level of resilience. These are called 'protective factors' which give people psychological 'cover' and help to reduce the likelihood of negative psychological effects when faced with hardship or suffering. Some of these factors are innate but many can be developed and strengthened through psychosocial support.

This is good news for us as we work with children, as we can proactively think about ways in which we can support and encourage children's resilience. One simple way to do that is to look at risk and protective factors – resilience happens when protective factors that support wellbeing are stronger than the risk factors that cause harm.



We can consider the risk factors and protective factors below, and think about how we can use the mentoring programme to reduce these risk factors for children.

Risk factors:

- Difficult or frightening experiences
- Lack of understanding of what has happened
- Loss of family home, friends, or caregivers
- Loss of self-respect and self-confidence
- Poor living conditions or lack of access to basic services like healthcare
- Poor diet and nutrition
- Lack of opportunities for education and play
- Excessive burden of paid or unpaid work
- Uncertainty about the future
- Disability

Protective factors:

- Self-esteem, self-confidence, and communication skills
- Can think through and process events and look to the future
- Can express themselves through play, arts, games, community rituals
- Positive parenting and carers who respond to the child's emotional needs
- Positive family environment that provides love, support and discipline
- Can express feelings and anxieties to adults who listen to them
- Friends who are good role models and a source of fun and acceptance
- Able to maintain normal family life, religious practices, language
- A positive school experience where teachers are supportive
- Part of a strong community where children are active members

As you go through the programme, you should notice that you are addressing several of these factors in the way you are working with families.

What is grief and how can children react?

Material for this session draws on guidance produced by the Global Protection Cluster and the MHPSS Collaborative for children and families in adversity, [Communicating with children about death, and helping children cope with grief](#). This resource has been adapted here, so you can refer to the original for more detailed information on this theme.

Grief is the name for the painful emotion we feel when someone we love or feel connected to dies. We can also grieve for other losses, for example being separated from our friends and family, our home or losing access to familiar places like school or the work place.

Practical suggestions to support children dealing with loss include talking to children openly and honestly, ensuring the child receives loving, consistent care, maintaining routines, giving children the right level of responsibility and taking care of yourself as a parent.

Useful answers to difficult questions:

Do children grieve? Yes, but their reactions to death will vary according to their age, their previous life experiences, their personality and the way life and death is understood within their culture.

The following information can help parents to understand how children of different ages experience loss and how parents can help them to cope with the death of a loved one during the pandemic:

Common expressions of grief:

- **0–2 years:** Any prolonged separation from a loved one is painful for an infant, they are likely to cry, become withdrawn, or angry. They cannot understand that death is final. The longer the separation, the greater the distress. They are likely to become more demanding and clingier with other caregivers.
- **3–5 Years:** Small children still do not understand that death is forever and may ask repeatedly if the loved person is coming back. They may have ‘magical thinking’ believing that something they did caused the death. They may behave like a younger child, becoming clingy or soiling and wetting themselves. Alternatively, some children may continue as if nothing had happened and appear not to care.
- **6–11 years:** Children begin to understand that death is forever, that the loved person cannot return, and that death can happen to anyone. They may worry that other loved family members and friends will die. They are increasingly curious and want to understand what happened, and can show concern for others. Physical aches and pains, and anger, are very common. Anger can be directed at the loved person who has died, or the remaining caregiver. It can be expressed as challenging behaviour. In some cultures, boys may already be learning to hide their feelings
- **12–Adolescence:** Teenagers understand that death is irreversible, and happens to everyone, including themselves. They are interested in understanding why things happen, have a growing interest in abstract ideas like justice and injustice, and are sensitive to inconsistencies in any information given. At this age they are struggling with the conflicts between becoming an independent person who is making close friendships with their peers, while wanting to stay close to family members they love. Friendships with peers are very important and separation from, and losses among, their friends will also affect them. Their reactions vary greatly, ranging from “appearing not to care”, to anger, or extreme sadness, poor concentration and a loss of interest in daily activities. They too can feel guilty, they might feel they have not done enough. Some teenagers will feel very responsible and wish to take on the adult role in the family following the death of a parent.

Should we tell children when someone they love has died? Yes. Do not hide the truth and do not delay telling the truth. It is natural to want to protect children from distress, but even very young children will be aware that something unusual is happening: the family are worried and upset, normal routines have changed and people are behaving differently. Not understanding what is happening causes more distress. If children are told lies to protect them, and then discover the truth later from someone else, they will distrust those who lied. All children, including those with physical and mental disabilities, need clear, honest, consistent explanations appropriate to their age and ability to understand, so that they can accept the reality of the loss. Telling your children the truth will increase their trust in you and help them cope better with the loss.

How might children react? There is no 'correct' way to grieve. There are likely to be changes in a child's:

- **Feelings:** they may feel sad, angry, numb, frightened, lonely, guilty, irritated, worried, confused, and show longing for the past. They may experience more than one feeling at the same time, or feel and show nothing at all for long periods, and then suddenly feel overwhelmed by different emotions.
- **Thinking:** they may find themselves thinking constantly about what happened, going over the same events. They may find uncomfortable or frightening thoughts or images suddenly appear in their head without warning. They may think about the future and what is going to happen. They may become forgetful and distracted. They may find concentrating and paying attention to normal tasks like school work difficult. They may also have comforting images and thoughts and happy memories.
- **Behaviour:** children may become apathetic and not want to do anything at all. They may withdraw and isolate themselves. Or, they may carry on with their normal activities as if nothing unusual had happened. They may 'act out': getting into physical and verbal fights, being naughty or deliberately provocative. They may behave like a much younger child: thumb sucking, bed wetting, demanding that you stay close. They may engage in 'repetitive play', repeatedly acting out an upsetting experience, for example: Daddy going to the hospital.
- **Physical state:** children often have less appetite, and difficulty falling or staying asleep. They may have nightmares. They may suffer from unexplained aches and pains. All these reactions vary greatly between children, and within the same child over time, sometimes changing rapidly over the course of a day. At one point a child may be busy with their normal activities, and at the next start weeping, or become very angry. This can happen repeatedly.

How long does grief last? Grief can continue for a long time when life circumstances are challenging. It can also return unannounced months after a child has appeared to forget or recover. It may be triggered by a reminder, such as an anniversary, or a favourite activity that the child did with the lost person. All these reactions are natural. However, in a very small number of children the reactions may be intense and prolonged and very disruptive of daily life. Or occasionally a child may express suicidal thoughts, or behaviours such as harming themselves or others. In these cases, do not hesitate to seek extra help from a health worker in your community.

How can we help children cope with grief? One of the most important ways all of us, both adults and children, come to terms with losing a loved one is through mourning. Although different cultures and religions mourn in different ways, all mourning processes include ways for accepting the death, celebrating the life of the dead person and making it significant, saying goodbye, and continuing attention towards the dead, while moving beyond it and making a new start. It is very important to give sufficient time to mourning and not try to hurry the process, even in these difficult times.

How do we help children to feel better and protect their mental health? The loss of a loved relative can be deeply upsetting for a child, especially at the moment when it is also accompanied by the loss of normal structures and routines of daily life. The most important things to do are to ensure that:

- The child receives loving, consistent care from a parent, relative or carer, whom they trust and know well.

- Infants and young children are given security through loving physical contact, singing, cuddling and rocking.
- Normal life routines and structure are maintained as much as is possible. So even if confined to a limited space it is important to have a regular pattern to the day with allocated tasks and times for activities, such as cleaning the space, doing school work, getting exercise and having time to play.
- Challenging and/or regressive behaviour is understood and the child is not punished.
- Other children in the child's life, at school or in friendship circles, are informed (through their teachers or parents) as to what has happened, so that they can support the child.
- The children are given the opportunity to help you, but are not pushed to take on adult roles and responsibilities beyond their capacity.