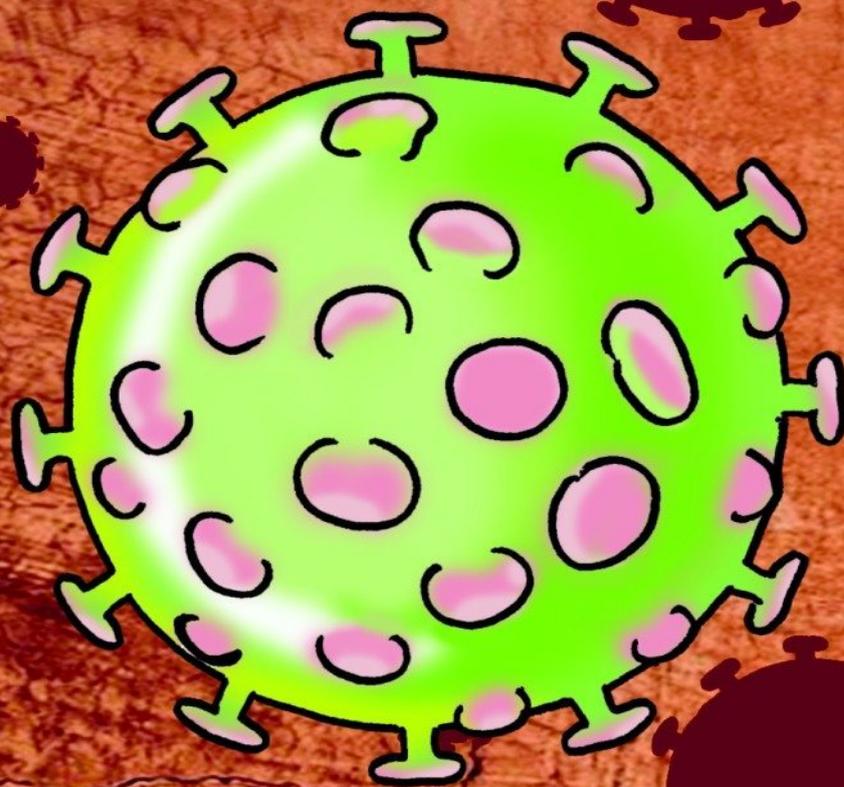
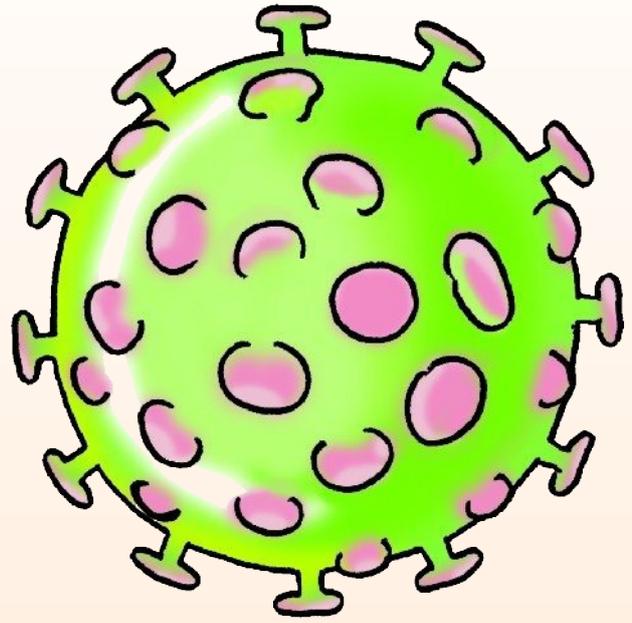


# **PSYCHO-SOCIAL HEALTH CARE & SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY COVID-19**



**A Handbook For Community Volunteers**



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**year of Publication:** 2020

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**PSYCHO-SOCIAL HEALTH CARE & SUPPORT  
FOR  
PEOPLE AFFECTED BY COVID-19**

**A HANDBOOK FOR COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The whole world is impacted so badly with Covid-19. It becomes imperative to protect the human race and the medical fraternities are trying their best to protect life of people in absence of vaccine and proper medicine for the disease. It has claimed more than a million precious lives so far and spreads very fast in the community! Keeping the destructive capacity of the pandemic in mind, Aaina an organisation having experience working in other disaster situations thought of intervening in the psycho social care(PSC) space as it is much affected and usually less attended! This is specifically designed to address the PSC of children. During 1999 Super cyclone Aaina had Psycho social intervention through creative arts therapy for children and this handbook was developed keeping that very experience in the background.

There are many people who became associated directly and indirectly while developing the handbook. I would like to acknowledge Dr. KasiSekar& his team in NIMHANS for being supportive and guiding our initiative. Friend and colleague Dr.Mamta Pradhan and Ms.BishakhaBhanja, one of the Executive Committee members of Aaina needs special mention in the process. My heartfelt thanks go to friend Sri Kamlakant Rath for his amazing illustrations to make the handbook friendly and lively. Last but not the least, I owe my gratitude to Prof. Namita Mohanty (Psychology) who is the co-author and editor of the handbook for bringing this into the format for use by the volunteers.

The purpose of the publication shall be solved if this handbook can be of any help to the cause of humanity!

Ms. Sneha Mishra  
Secretary, Aaina

## A FEW WORDS FOR THE COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS:

In the context of Covid-19, your decision to join as a community volunteer and contribute in the field of Psycho-social care for people is not only praise worthy but also deserves loud applause! The society shall remain indebted to you and your commitment!

SarveBhabantuSukhinah!

SarveshyantuNiramayh!!

SarveBhadraniPashyantu, Ma

kaschitdukhahbhagbhavet!!!

Om Shanti!

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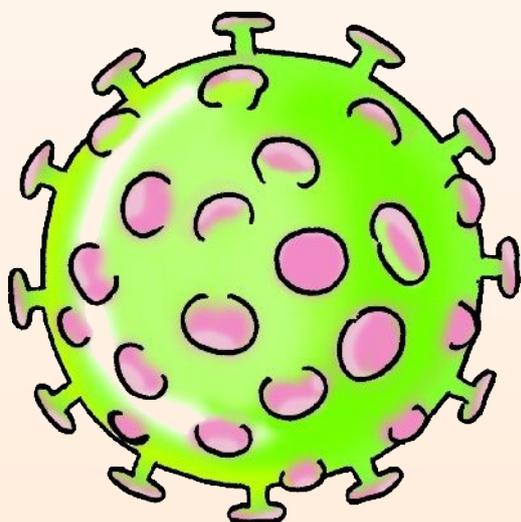
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## PSYCHO-SOCIAL HEALTH CARE & SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY COVID-19

The whole world is now suffering under the effect of Corona virus (SARS-Cov-2 or COVID-19). The virus has now stood as a huge challenge to the entire human race. Whether rich or poor everyone is suffering under its effect. Each one is worried about one's own and the family's security as well as the future livelihood prospects.

While it is a necessity to have a good physical as well as psychological health to face this challenge, everyone is feeling psychologically strained (weak) under its long drawn impact. The worries concerning the future livelihood of the middle, lower income and poor people has increased the insecure state manifold.

### SOME BASIC FACTS ABOUT COVID-19 (Corona virus):



This is a pandemic caused due to a virus (SARS-Cov-2). This spreads from one human being to the other. It spreads to other people from the droplets generated from the coughing and sneezing of the affected person. When the mucous or droplets fall on any surface, the virus remains alive on it for a long time, and anybody coming in contact with the surface during that period contracts it. That is why the experts are advising to wash our hands thoroughly and repeatedly with soap for at least 20 seconds every time. It is necessary to cover our face with a mask

or handkerchief while coughing or sneezing. Also it is essential to keep a social distance of minimum 2 meters from others. This virus specifically attacks the respiratory tract and the lungs of human being.

### SYMPTOMS OBSERVED WITH A COVID-19 INFECTED PERSON:

Fever, dry cough, running nose, fatigue, difficulty in breathing, body aches, migraine, sore throat, diarrhea, nausea etc.



**WHY COVID-19 IS DIFFERENT:** As yet there is no preventive or curative medicine discovered for this disease. The high contagious state, rapidity of its spread and a lack of understanding among the medical fraternity about the disease has enhanced the complexity of this pandemic. So far 210 countries over the world are under the clutch of this pandemic. As a protective measure, the infected person is kept under quarantine.

To counter the rapid and extensive spread of COVID-19, the governments have declared “Lockdown” across the country. The combined impact of COVID-19 and lockdown has created a fear of the unknown and uncertainty. Some people may be able to keep themselves away from this pressure but majority of people are deeply impacted psychologically by this fear of the unknown. These people are quite crestfallen with anxiety and their daily life chore has been severely affected. Thus, it is imperative to take timely steps to help them get hold of their life before they breakdown psychologically.



## WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH:

Mental health refers to our intellectual, behavioural and emotional state.

Examples being:

**Intellectual:** Daily life chores like taking care of oneself, brushing teeth, bathing, cleaning the clothes, eating, reading, putting things in place.

**Behavioural:** Normal interaction with others such as informal talks, understanding relationships and to act accordingly, reacting according to the weight/ meaning and intentions of a communication etc.

**Emotional:** Personal feelings and its expression such as expressing happiness, laughing, crying, showing confidence, to put up a brave front etc.



It is natural to lose patience and temporarily act erratically under unforeseen circumstances. But every situation does not derail psychologically and people manage to keep their balance and face it. But sometimes, it goes out of control and then it affects the person's psychological health. At this point, error and faults are observed in the intellectual, behavioural and emotional states of the affected person.



## **BROAD SYMPTOMS OBSERVED WITH THE PSYCHOLOGICALLY DISTURBED PERSONS:**

Any disaster, natural or human (man made) induces changes in every person's life, though the magnitude of the effect varies from person to person. Some are quick to respond to the situation without any help, others need some minor help and still some others require expert consultation and therapies.

People with the following observed symptoms definitely need additional support:

- Showing extreme anxiety of helplessness, crying unmanageably, retracting and not interacting with others, going completely silent, being very fearful, dreading darkness.
- Being extremely irritable, getting angry for no plausible reason, abusing and insulting and becoming violent and hurting others.
- Not taking care of oneself, disturbed sleep or not getting sleep at night, insomnia, losing appetite, persistent headache, feeling of nausea, lacking interest, losing or disoriented daily living activities like brushing teeth, bathing, combing.
- To be extremely anxious to share or waiting for someone to share the sadness/ experience of distress.



If anyone has a family member who is suffering from COVID-19 disease that person should be included for psycho-social support. Besides women, children and people from backward/vulnerable communities should be provided support on a priority basis.

## **WHEN AND WHY THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT NEEDED:**

As much as possible, a quick response from the care takers can save a person from a critical situation. Otherwise, it may play havoc by turning into a more complex and permanent problem in later stage.

**WHO REQUIRES SUPPORT:** Such a mass calamity does affect all the people at the psychological level in the same way and for which there may not be perceptible changes in behavior of everyone. Therefore, at times activities relating to the psycho-

social support may have to be carried out for the entire community to benefit everyone. But it is essential to seek the permission of the persons.



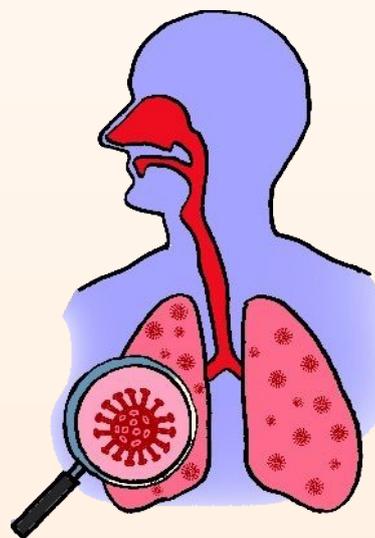
In the context of COVID-19 pandemic, people traveling from far off places, people in critical condition, women and children, elderly and persons with disability should be included in the process on a priority basis. Activities for the children and women must be conducted separately.

## **SERVICE PROVIDERS (VOLUNTEERS):**

The first job is to select health volunteers from the community and give them the relevant training and orientation to serve the people. The trained health volunteers will work with persons returning from other places, families of persons suffering from COVID-19 and other impacted persons directly at the village level.

## **SELF PREPARATION OF THE SERVICE PROVIDERS (VOLUNTEERS):**

- Keep oneself healthy and clean.
- Follow the standard safety measures (like putting on mask, using gloves, washing hands, maintaining social distancing etc.).
- Mentally prepare oneself as a support provider and facilitator for the affected people.
- To collect and understand information pertaining to COVID-19 as approved by the government and the circular and directive there to. To use these information in mitigating the fear and anxiety of the people.
- To build on one's patience, temper, the communication style and mannerism.
- To develop the listening capacity; to be able to listen attentively for a long period of time.
- To collect or learn small activities that we can put to use to keep the people engaged. As per the situation those can be demonstrated, make people to carry them out and motivate them in making an attempt to do it.
- The primary objective will be to reduce as far as practicable, the fear and anxiety of the people. To utilize their time in useful and productive activities.
- To make the people take care of their health. To work as a support provider and facilitator for the essential needs and provisioning for the people.
- At no point of time, one should get emotionally involved with the problems of the people.



## **ROLE OF THE SERVICE PROVIDERS (VOLUNTEERS):**

- The most important step is to listen to people attentively and patiently. Listen to them, speak elaborately about the problems that they are experiencing.
- Encourage the affected people to speak up and periodically repeat their statements to ascertain that you have understood it properly.
- To record the problems described by the affected people. Identify the ones

from among the affected person who are to be given priority to address their problems immediately and support them in solving them as far as possible.

- Under extreme manifestation of the problem, the expert may be consulted and the person be referred for treatment.
- To identify the hobby, liking and interest of the person and utilize it in time of need.
- To consult the family members and take their support wherever needed.
- To provide correct information regarding COVID-19 and to indicate the right location of various service deliveries. To help the people in obtaining information and access to services.
- If anybody from a family is under medical treatment for COVID-19 infection, then act as a communication bridge between the family members and the person under treatment sharing the good wishes of the family and the progress of status of the person at the appropriate end.
- Advise people with severe distress to avoid seeing or listening to news about COVID-19 frequently. With the help of the family members, frame a daily routine for the persons and ask them to follow it on a timely basis e.g. maintaining time of bath, meals, sleep, exercise etc.
- Under the current situation group activities are prohibited, hence going to places of worship (temple/church/masjid etc.) is not possible. To keep the mind engaged, calm and stable, one can play ludo, cards, carom and similar other games with the children or other older members of the family. It can also be suggested that as per the liking of the quarantined persons, they can either play indoor games, sing, pray together with others staying at home by maintaining social distance.
- It can be advised to follow a routine of Yoga, postures and exercises etc. as well.
- To carry out activities of drawing, singing, playing games etc. as per the liking of the other members of the family. The affected person should be encouraged to participate in or observe those activities.
- Encourage the persons in the family to participate in activities of house chores like wiping, mopping, fetching water, collecting firewood, cooking, taking care of the elders, tending to the domestic animals and birds etc.

Volunteers to remember that the basic need of human being is food! This need to be ensured before other services including PSC is rendered. Hence, it is important to link the person with the entitlements, schemes and benefits announced by the Govt. at least.

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THE HEALTH VOLUNTEERS:**

### **Can be done(Do's)**

- Volunteers to keep in touch with the government and civil society functionaries.
- Prepare a list of returned migrant workers from outside the state/ collect the already available list from the appropriate authority.
- To prepare the list of people from the village those who are stuck at other places and to establish contact with the families of such persons. Irrespective of class, creed or religious belief, everybody should be treated with respect and greeted cheerfully when they come seeking for help.
- To accept with respect and listen to their talks attentively. If anything is missed out, then instead of guessing one can earnestly ask for repeating the statement.
- Wherever necessary, it is important to establish link with the service providers and to facilitate the availability of service delivery such as PDS card, pensions etc.
- To maintain strict confidentiality of information about the service recipients. To refrain from talks regarding them in front of others.
- To adhere to the safety and protection norms for children while interacting or working with them.

### **Cannot be done(Don'ts)**

- Never give any false impression or promise like “leave those things to me”, “I will take care of such things”, “I will get you the government services and provisions”.
- Let us not create a belief that we can solve all the problems faced by the people.
- Never tease, mock or cut jokes at the affected people.
- Never betray the confidentiality of information and share their statements with others.
- Do not scold, shout at or make mockery of the children.
- Don't accept any kind of payments in cash or kind from the service recipients in lieu of your work.
- At no point of time should one show displeasure or speak in an accusing voice or manner to the service recipient like “it is already 12 o'clock, you were expected to come at 10, and things do not work out in this way” ... etc.

### **APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THE SERVICE RECIPIENT:**

- It is natural to be angry/feel sad/get irritated under these circumstances.
- I understand your condition/grievance; let us together try to find a way out to this problem.
- Your reaction to such situation is pretty normal. But let us explore some alternatives as well.
- Can understand that something serious is bothering you , together we may find out means for the solution to the current situation

### **ACTIVITIES FOR THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN:**

#### **Activities for women:**

Women are widely and intensively affected psychologically during these periods. Because of the limited access to other people in general, they get little opportunity to speak about their problem. During this lockdown period since everybody is at home, there is an increase in the workload and pressure on the women folks. Attending to the needs of small kids and cooking food for everyone as per their demand throughout the day, leaves no free time for the women. And if someone from the family suffers from COVID-19, then it affects the women in the family more.

If any woman has returned from any outside place or foreign land, then she is subjected to a lot of discrimination and sometimes even not allowed to enter the house. Keeping all these aspects in view, it is intently felt than support activities need to be extended to the women without failing to the women in the villages.



#### **Activities:**

- First of all ask them to speak out their difficulties at length and listen to their talk attentively.
- List out their problems and as described earlier prioritize them. Discuss on the solution mechanism for those problems.
- List out the works they like to do or have a liking for.
- Try to initiate some of the works they have interest in but have not been able to carry out recently – stitching handkerchiefs, making pickles, drawing, painting, writing poems and stories etc.

- To be involved in group activities as activities of the SHGs – stitching masks, supplying water, cooking food for people staying in isolation units etc.
- Women in villages produce many other useful items like floor mats, hand fans, brooms, leaf plates and bowls. They can be engaged in those activities also.
- Women will be suggested to make time from household chores and groom themselves and think of their personal needs.
- If there is sufficiently large open space where social distance norms can be followed and implemented, then women can be asked to carry out yoga, meditation and prayer with their neighbours.
- They may also play Ludo or Card games but it is essential to thoroughly sanitize all these playing material before use.
- Discussions on menstrual and reproductive health and associated problems and their solutions can be worked out with the women.



### **ACTIVITIES FOR THE CHILDREN:**

Generally children are playful, hence people miss out on the symptoms of psychological impact on them. But it has been found that children also get largely affected during any calamities/disasters. Some become extremely silent, others cannot sleep properly and many of them become anxious and fearful and simply lose attention on their studies.



Children should be engaged in different activities to keep them engrossed during his period. Activities can be conducted individually or in groups.

Examples being;

- Drawing, writing stories, poems or singing songs etc.
- Developing cartoons, participating in quiz (question & answer) sessions and preparing questions for the same.
- Playing word games with friends while staying at home.
- Make clay models and terracotta articles.
- Creating home decors from easily available household items.
- Practice yoga and other exercises.

How to conduct the activities: Since most of them are now staying indoors due to the effect of COVID-19, the big question is regarding the execution of the above mentioned suggestions. While we have high connectivity in urban areas through phones, it is not the same in the rural areas. Due to this, there is quite likely to have difficulties in conducting these activities. For this purpose, one has to locate/identify someone within relation or known by acquaintance, who will transmit the suggestions to the children made by you. The same person can transmit the opinions/remarks of the children back to you.

### **THINGS TO REMEMBER WHILE WORKING WITH CHILDREN:**

- Need to speak in simple language that children can understand.
- Need to keep yourself composed while giving information about COVID-19.
- Restrain yourself from using accusing and threatening language against any person.
- Clarify their doubts with facts and never overwhelm them with unnecessary information.

### **ACTIVITIES FOR THE ELDERLY PEOPLE:**

The elderly people and the senior citizens above 60 years should be given special attention because of their old age because of their high vulnerability to get affected by COVID-19. Since many of them already have high BP, diabetes, coronary diseases and respiratory problems, they are more susceptible to be infected by COVID-19. It is absolutely needed to protect them from COVID-19 and also take care of them by ensuring their medicine intakes uninterrupted and not allowing other ailments to affect them during the period. Often they get mentally upset, hence it is imperative to keep them in cheerful mind along with physical fitness. Hence it is required to keep them engaged while being at home, divert their attentions to games, chit-chatting, involving them in story telling etc. For example:



- It is necessary to create a conducive environment for them.
- Let them watch their favorite TV serial, cinema, listen to their favorite music.
- Letting them talk to the relatives and children staying at a distance.
- Never use words that can hurt them which in turn will increase the mental pressure and they might fall sick.
- Encourage family members to have food together. This will help them to get a common platform to exchange their feelings, experiences and get support from each other.
- Engage them in storytelling to the children and grandchildren in the family.
- Talk to them about the day's work and also sometimes engage them to tell their good past experience to the children.
- Respect their views and also engage them in household work keeping their physical condition in mind.
- Keep their regular medicine in stock for some months ahead as during lockdown period it may not be possible to go out for medicine. It is important to maintain their timely intake of medicines.

## **ACTIVITIES FOR THE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:**

The period of lockdown is quite difficult for children and person with disabilities, specifically for the children and adults with developmental disabilities with hyperactive disorder and children with autistic spectrum disorder. Since all the special schools, therapy and activities centres are closed during the lockdown period, all the burdens are on parents along with the daily chores. The community volunteers need to deal with the parents and caretakers of these children and adults as they are over-stressed and the stress of COVID-19 is just overwhelming. Following are some of the activities that can be done with them:



- Even if children and adults are not going to the schools or centres, still it is important to follow a routine for them even at home.
- You can engage them in small activities in home like filling bottles with drinking water, keeping vegetables and fruits stored in place, watering the plants etc. depending on the functional ability of the child.
- You also need to make them understand about COVID-19 and social distancing. Even children with intellectual impairment can follow the social distancing if communicated properly.
- If there is any special announcement made by the government for people with disabilities, the volunteers shall immediately inform the parents and also sometimes make an effort to link the services to the child or person.
- The child can be encouraged to play with his/her siblings at home. Siblings can be taught to adapt the games so that the child with disability can participate than being left alone!
- Children with Hyper activity or Autistic Spectrum Disorder might need to go out of the house sometimes. A special permission can be obtained from the concerned authority and the child can be told that they only can go out for a short time and not for long during this period.
- Parents/care takers shall be more careful about the food intake, medicine and nutritional intake of the children with disabilities even during the lockdown period.

## GAMES THAT CAN BE PLAYED BY CHILDREN DURING THE LOCKDOWN PERIOD:

Playing games is necessary for children but the lockdown situation is not permitting them to do so. However, by maintaining the social distancing norms, the volunteers can conduct some activities. Some of these games are described below. The volunteers can formulate many such games and motivate the children to play those games.

Group the children in to age bands like 5 – 9 years, 10 – 12 years and 13 – 15 years. Games should be played according to their age. But always keep in mind to adhere to the social distancing norms.

### 1. **Fruits, Flowers and Vegetables:**

5 – 10 years) this game is not new to the children but to play it maintaining the social distancing norm will add curiosity in the mind of the children.

**Preparation:** Ask children of this age group to come to the front door or veranda at a specified time of the day (social distancing has to be maintained always.) The volunteer taking all safety measures (like wearing mask and gloves) will position him/her at a conveniently middle point of the place from where he will be able to see and listen each of the child and vice versa.



Encourage every child to score more points and incentivize the children in 3-4 days interval with small prizes.

**How to play:** The volunteer will explain the rules of the game in the beginning. When the volunteer calls out the name of a fruit starting from the left position of the children, one after the other will say the name of a fruit different from the previous ones. The one who repeats the name of a fruit said earlier is marked as out and that child sits down at his own place. The volunteer can switch from a fruit to vegetable or flower any time in between. And the sequence of children will follow that suits with the specific names of vegetables, flowers as the case may be. No repetition of names, otherwise the child will be marked as out. The game continues till last 2/3 children remain. Those children may be awarded some predetermined point which should be recorded in a note book by the volunteer.

## 2. Let's Draw a Theme

**Game:** (5 – 10 years) – The volunteer will give a specific theme to the child to draw beforehand. The child will draw the picture and come to the front veranda of the house holding the picture in hand. The volunteer will reach to the child (social distancing to be maintained) and ask the child to describe it. Those children whose drawings match almost with the given theme, will be awarded points and their names will be declared.



In consultation with the parents/guardians, a display corner can be set up in the front of the house where the child can be encouraged to draw a picture every day.

**3. Word Making Game: (10 – 12 years)** – As stated in earlier games, children will be asked to stand in the front of the house. Starting from any child, a letter will be given to the child to make a word beginning with that letter. Going counter clockwise, the next child will be asked to make a word starting with the letter that was the last letter of the word made by the previous child. If someone cannot make a word or spells it erroneously that child will be marked as out. The game continues from the next child. This process can continue till the last 1/2 child or children remains/ remain. Award of points and prizes can be same as the earlier games.

**4. Song Game (Antakshyari):** The rule of the game is absolutely same as “word making game”. The only change is one has to sing a full stanza of a song instead of making a word.

**5. Memory Game:** This is a tricky game and involves a lot of attention on the part of the child. This will require an open space, where social distancing can be maintained with children standing in a circular formation. Anyone can be picked up to start the game. That child should give his/ her name and name of a food item that starts with the same letter as his/her name. (for example: Name: Chumki, Food item: Chart, Name: Ramesh, Food item: Rasgola). The trick here is that the second child besides giving his/her name and the food item, should repeat the previous child's name and food item. Now the third child has to do the same and repeat the previous two and the chain continues by adding up. Anyone failing to do so is marked as out. This game can continue till the last 1 or 2 child/children remains/ remain in the group. Do not forget to award points at the end of the game and the prizes at some point of time!

6. **Innumerable paintings:** Give a brown or a thick paper to the child. Put some cooked maida in semi-liquid form on the paper and ask the child to spread it all over the paper. Using his/her finger s/he can start making number of drawings till s/he is happy with something. To make it more colorful, colors available in home like turmeric, Alta, ujjwala blue, ground leaves etc. can be used and the best possible picture can be kept on the paper after several trials. This game helps in releasing stress from children as they use the entire palm in the activity.



7. **Game with earthen clay:** Wet clay dough is given to the children and they are asked to make any shape or any object they would like to like that of fruit, flower, animal, God etc. They are asked to make the dough in the beginning and then make the figures and models. This exercise helps children to release stress and aggression and also brings a lot of fun making all these shapes and objects. To make it a fun game during lockdown, children can be asked to choose a topic from flower/fruit/vegetable/animal/God /Human being etc. to make the shapes and figures. The volunteers can ask them to write two lines about their craft and read these lines to the next child and ask him/her to guess what other child has made! If the child is able to guess it correctly then s/he can earn points or else it goes to the next child and it continues!

Similarly children can also be asked to create some useful products from the waste materials. Activities are not limited only to these aforesaid games. People can use their creative mind to adapt to any new or regular games in a lockdown situation while maintaining the social distancing. This will not only reduce their stress and monotony, it will substantially promote well-being in them.



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**Stay Home, Stay Safe**

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**Aaina**

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