unicef
for every child

FOR ADOLESCENTS:

COPING DURING CIVIL UNREST

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Understanding emotions during a crisis

Emergencies and crises can bring a lot of difficult emotions. You may feel stressed and overwhelmed by everything that is happening around you. In times of civil unrest, you may have been hurt in recent protests, or have seen or heard of friends and other young people getting hurt or even losing their lives. It is normal to feel intense emotions during such times.

You might experience feelings like:

- Fear
- Anger
- Grief
- Sadness
- Aggression
- Guilt and shame
- Frustration with authority
- Wanting to take more risks than usual
- Deep concern for others
- Loss of meaning and purpose
- Hopelessness

It's completely normal to have strong emotions like these.
Emotions help us understand and react to situations.
Fear, for example, tells us to stay safe, while sadness helps us mourn and heal.
These emotions do not need to be avoided and often decrease naturally over time.

Seek Help

If you are experiencing distressing emotions and thoughts, try speaking to someone about it.

Reach out to Child Helpline —

1098 **to speak to a trained counsellor.**

This is a free and confidential service, meaning everything you discuss will be kept private and not shared with others.

Ways to cope with strong emotions

Look After Your Body and Mind



Stay Active: Engage in physical activities like walking, stretching, or following exercise videos online if it's safe to do so.



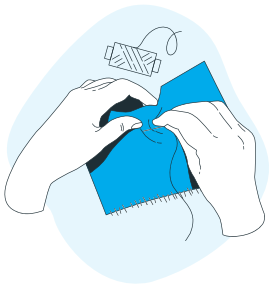
Eat Well: Maintain a balanced diet to keep your energy levels up.



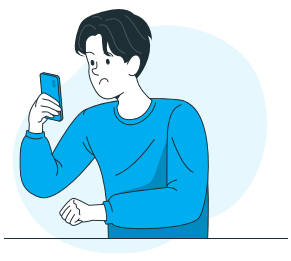
Sleep: Ensure you get a healthy amount of sleep, not too little or too much.



Keep Your Routine: Try to maintain regular meal times and bedtimes to create a sense of normalcy.



Immerse Yourself in Your Hobby: Engaging in your hobby reduces stress and by offering a comforting escape and a sense of accomplishment, helping your mind recharge.



Limiting exposure to distressing news and social media: This helps prevent negative thoughts, allowing you to focus more on the positive aspects of life and safeguard your mental health.

Write Your Feelings Down

Why It Helps:

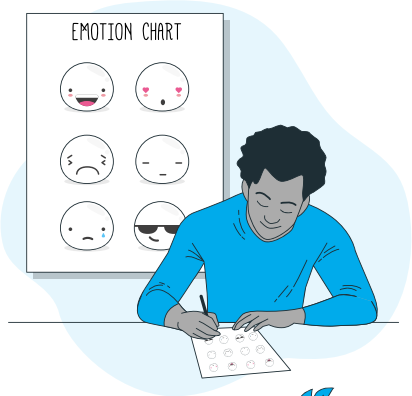
Writing down your feelings can help you process and understand them better. It provides an outlet for your emotions and can make them feel less overwhelming.



Journaling: Start by writing "I feel... right now" and describe your current emotions. Don't worry about grammar or spelling; just let your thoughts flow.



Daily Diary: Keep a daily diary where you write about your day, your feelings, and any events that impacted you. Reflecting on your day can help you see patterns and understand your emotions better.



Emotion Chart: Create an emotion chart where you list different feelings and rate their intensity. This can help you track how your emotions change over time.



Expressive Writing: Write freely about anything on your mind without worrying about structure. This can help release pent-up emotions and reduce stress.

Problem-Solving

Why It Helps:

Problem-solving can help you feel more in control and reduce feelings of helplessness. By focusing on solutions, you can manage your stress and anxiety more effectively.

Instructions:

Categorize Issues: Divide your problems into two categories:
"**Things I can do something about**" and "**Things I cannot do anything about**."

Things I Can Do Something About:

These are issues you have some control over. For each problem, try to:



Define the Problem:

Clearly state what the problem is in simple terms.

Example:
"I am feeling scared because of the violence I witnessed during the protests."



List Possible Solutions:

Brainstorm different ways you could address the problem.
Don't worry if some ideas seem silly; the goal is to generate options.

Example:
Talk to a trusted adult about what I saw and how I feel.
Spend time with friends or family in a safe place.
Engage in a calming activity like reading or drawing.



Evaluate Solutions: List the good and bad aspects of each solution. Consider the feasibility and potential outcomes.

Example:

Talk to a trusted adult:

Good: Provides emotional support and understanding.

Bad: Might be difficult to start the conversation.

Spend time with friends or family:

Good: Feeling of safety and support.

Bad: Might not always be possible if they are busy or far away.



Engage in a calming activity:

Good: Helps distract and calm the mind.

Bad: Might not fully address the emotional impact.

Pick One to Try: Choose a solution to try. If it doesn't work, go back to your list and try another one.

Example: Start by talking to a trusted adult and see if it helps. If not, try spending time with friends or family.

Things I Cannot Do Anything About:

These are issues beyond your control. For these problems:



Acknowledge Them: Recognize that there are some things you can't change or control.

Example:

"I cannot control the ongoing protests and the actions of others."



Let Go: Focus on what you can control and let go of the rest. This can be challenging, but it can also reduce your stress and anxiety.

Example:

"I will focus on staying safe and supporting my own well-being instead of worrying about the protests. I will take steps to stay informed but not let it consume all my thoughts."

Relaxation & breathing excercises

1. Deep Breathing

Why It Helps:
Calms the mind and body by reducing stress and tension.

Instructions:

- Sit or lie down comfortably.
- Breathe in through your nose, letting your belly fill with air.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth.
- Place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest. Your belly should rise more than your chest.
- Repeat for several minutes.

2. Quick Muscle Relaxation

Why It Helps:
Relieves tension in the body.

Instructions:

- Sit comfortably and close your eyes.
- Breathe in slowly through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Make a fist, hold for a few seconds, then release.
- Notice the tension leaving your body.
- Repeat with different muscle groups.

Relaxation & breathing excercises

3. Imagining a Safe Place

Why It Helps:
Creates a sense of peace and safety.

Instructions:

- Sit comfortably and close your eyes.
- Imagine a place where you feel safe and calm.
- Focus on the sights, sounds, and sensations of this place.
- Breathe deeply, imagining the air is filled with peace and calm.

4. Using Your Senses

Why It Helps:
Grounds you in the present moment.

Instructions:

- Sit quietly and breathe slowly.
- Look around and name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can feel, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.

Know when to get help

It’s important to seek extra help if you are finding it hard to cope. Get help from a professional if you experience any of these warning signs:

- Unable to carry out usual activities due to your feelings.
- Extreme or long-lasting changes in eating and sleeping habits.
- Frequent panic attacks or feeling unable to calm down.
- Using alcohol or drugs to cope.
- Feeling that life is no longer worth living.
- Thoughts about hurting yourself or others.
- Experiencing violence or abuse.

If you find it difficult to talk about how you are feeling, start by sharing a little bit of information or letting someone know that you need support.

Recognize who your 'Safe People'

Your safe people are those you feel comfortable sharing your feelings with and who can help you feel better when you're experiencing strong emotions.

This might include your parents, specific friends, family members, or a counsellor.

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