



Supporting Others with COVID-19

April 2022



Introduction

With the increasing number of cases during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a chance that you may know someone who has tested positive, and they may be experiencing a range of different emotions or showing signs of distress as they navigate the different procedures required of them to receive the care they need.

This guide includes some tips on [how to support people around you who have tested positive for COVID-19](#), and [how to take care of yourself as a carer](#). It is important to note that people may cope differently, depending on their situation. Reach out to them to learn more about their situation and how you can best support them.

NOTE: This guide does not include specific medical advice for any of the physical symptoms of COVID-19. Please refer to current governmental guidance for up to date, practical steps that you must take to manage any COVID-19 symptoms.

Supporting the needs of others in different situations

Depending on the situation and severity, individuals will likely have to undergo mandatory isolation, either at home, in an isolation centre, or in a hospital, and the level of support you can offer will vary because of that. It is important to remind yourself to be empathetic in showing your love and support to those who have tested positive - small things matter especially during difficult times. No matter where they are, it is always helpful to reach out and connect with them. Here are some general ideas on how to support others if they have tested positive:

Before mandatory isolation

- **Stay calm.** Although it can be overwhelming when your loved ones test positive for COVID-19, **remember to stay calm and focus on the situation.** This can be reassuring for them, and also takes some stress off them
- **Find practical information and resources to support their next steps.** They will likely need to make a lot of decisions after testing positive, and it may be difficult to keep up with all the changes and administrative work. Sharing practical information and resources to support them in planning can help to alleviate some of their stress.
 - Avoid sending news and fear-mongering information. Focus on practical information that could support them in making decisions, which can help relieve their stress.

- If they are heading to a quarantine centre or hospital, **help them get prepared**. Check if you can help source items they need and provide a list to ensure they have all the essentials they may need for their mandatory isolation. For more tips on getting prepared for mandatory isolation. Read our guide on mandatory isolation tips [here](#). Please abide by government regulations and do not engage with someone under mandatory isolation in a household different to yours.

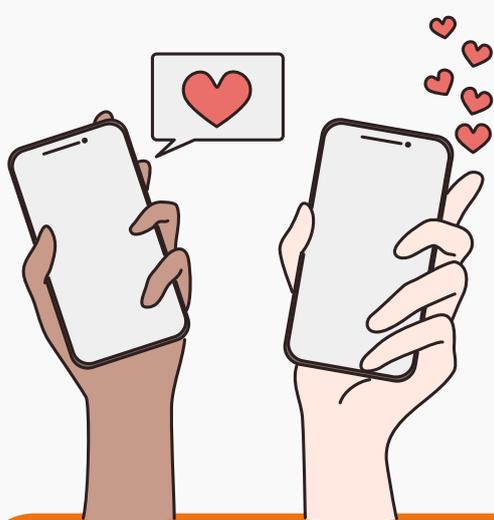
During mandatory isolation



- **Chat with them.** Be it by text messages, a call, or through Facetime. Catch up with them, have a casual chat, and focus on enjoying the company.
- **Offer practical support if available.** Ask them what kind of support they need, and how you can help them.
- **Deliver essentials.** Check to see if you are able to drop off essential items for them during their isolation period, such as clothes, toiletries, healthy snacks, or comfort items. Discuss together and make a list of things they need, and drop everything off in one go. Please check government restrictions before doing this.



Check in with them



Taking the initiative to check in with them is important, particularly when they are going through a tough time. A support network can be an important source of emotional support for anyone who is isolating or has tested positive for COVID-19. Starting a conversation with someone about their mental health can be difficult, especially when we are not used to it. Here are some tips on checking in with others and providing emotional support.

Starting a conversation

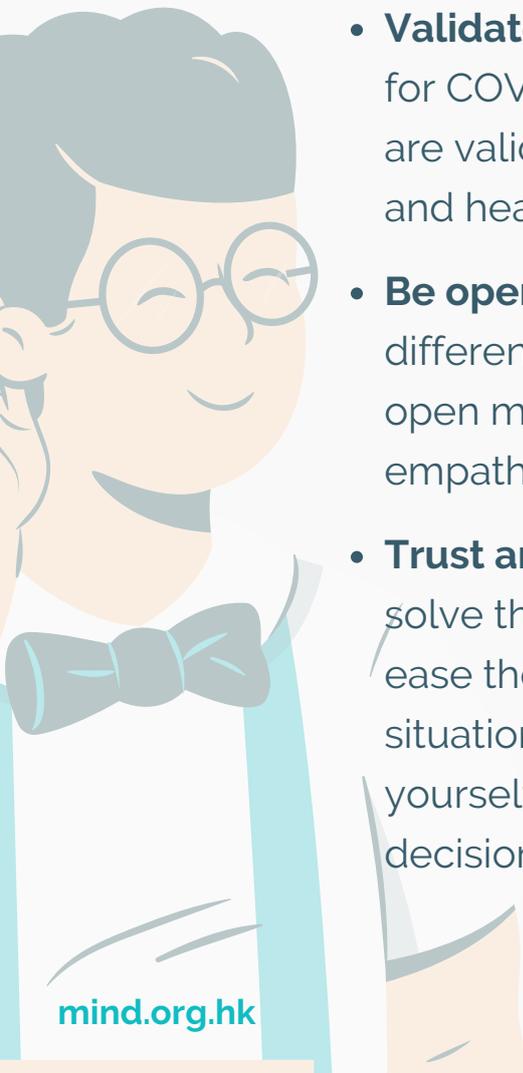
- **Be mentally prepared.** It is likely that they are going to unload some negative thoughts and emotions during the conversation, which can also affect you. Make sure you are mentally prepared to take on the conversation while taking care of your mental wellbeing too.
- **Pick a good time.** Find a time when neither of you are in a rush, so you have more time and space to unpack and talk about what has been going on, and how they are feeling about the situation.
- **Make good use of technology.** Even if you cannot meet in person, you can schedule a call, Facetime, or even just send a text to check in with them.
- **Keep it open-ended.** Try to start the conversation with an open-ended question like 'How are you?' or 'Tell me about how you are feeling' to allow room for them to share and expand.
- **Read the signs.** If they don't want to talk about it at the moment, it's okay. Let them know you are there for them if they need somebody to talk to, and check in with them after a few days.

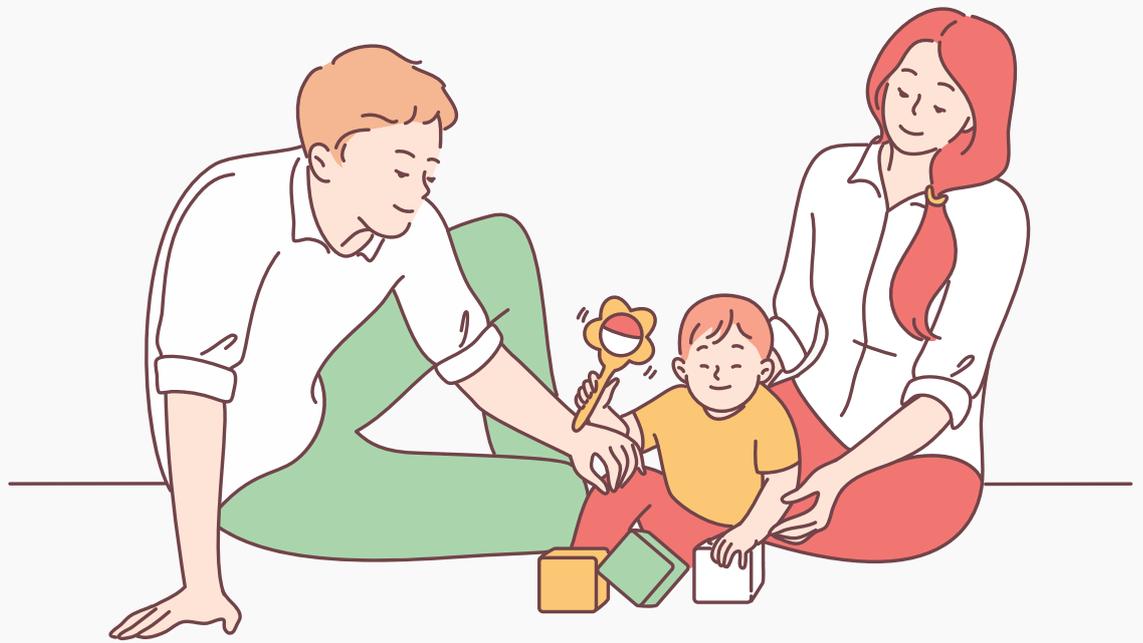
- **It doesn't always have to be about the pandemic.** If they are not ready to talk about their emotions and feelings, it doesn't mean your conversation has to end there. Talk to them about something else and try to find ways to engage with them if they are open to it.



Be a listener

- **Be an active listener.** Focus on your conversation, listen attentively, and respond by summarising and reflecting on what they are saying. If you are video calling them, pay attention to non-verbal cues like their facial expressions and body language.
- **Validate their emotions and feelings.** Testing positive for COVID-19 can be overwhelming, and all emotions are valid. Reassure them that their emotions are valid and heard.
- **Be open-minded.** Different people experience things differently, and it is valid to them. Listen to them with an open mind, and keep a non-judgemental and empathetic attitude.
- **Trust and respect them.** Sometimes we are eager to solve the problem for them, with good intentions to ease their mind. However, how we would manage the situation might not be the same as them. Remind yourself that they are in control of their experience and decisions, and respect their choices.





Supporting your children

Children may react to testing positive for COVID-19 differently, depending on their age, symptoms they are experiencing, and how they express their emotions and feelings. Besides taking care of your children's physical needs to support their recovery, it is also important to attend to their mental wellbeing, which may also be affected by the current situation.

Try to notice physical and behavioural signs of discomfort from your children, check in on their emotions and feelings, and support them in managing these feelings. Here are some tips and ideas to help you support them:

- **Ensure they have sufficient medical and daily support.** This includes medications, food, water and other daily essentials that could support their recovery. Please speak with a healthcare professional about this.
- **Be mindful of your own feelings.** Remember that children pick up cues from adults, so be aware of any anxiety you are experiencing, and try to approach any conversations calmly.

- **Validate and normalise their feelings.** There has been a lot of talk about getting infected with COVID-19, so it is understandable that children may experience anxious thoughts and fears if they test positive. Validating their concerns and listening to what they are worried about is essential.
- **Talk to your children honestly** about what is happening using age-appropriate language and allow them to ask any questions they might have.
- **Provide clarity.** Explain what is happening in a simple and clear manner.
- **Take deep breaths together.** If they are feeling anxious and overwhelmed by the situation, try to take deep breaths together, or try different grounding techniques to help them calm down.
- **Give reassurance.** Reassure your child that there are things we can do to help them through their illness and that many doctors and nurses working hard to keep everyone safe.
- **Give back control.** In an uncontrollable situation, children take comfort in reasserting their control. Encourage them to take an active role in their recovery, such as picking activities they like as they are resting and picking what fluids (water, tea, fresh juice in moderation) they would like to drink to keep themselves hydrated.
- **Support creative energy.** If they are up to it, use art or toys to allow your child to express how they are feeling. Spending time during the day engaging them in a creative pursuit they enjoy can help lighten the mood.
- **Maintain connections.** If they are well enough and age-appropriate, ensure your child can connect with their friends and family virtually.



Supporting elderly

The impact of the pandemic also takes a major toll on the mental health of the elderly. A lack of social connection from their friends and family exacerbates their feelings of loneliness; Constantly receiving updates from the news and radio can greatly increase their anxiety and frustration. Especially for elderly who have tested positive, lack of support and growing anxiety can further worsen their situation, which is detrimental to their physical and mental health.

If you are supporting an elderly:

- **Make sure they have sufficient support.** Please speak with a healthcare professional for advice regarding what support is required and necessary medications.

- **Validate their emotions and feelings.** Elderly are one of the most vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is normal to feel anxious and frustrated if any elderly family member gets infected, especially with all the news and updates around the number of cases among the elderly. Acknowledge and reassure their feelings are valid and reasonable - it is normal to feel that way, with all that is happening.
- **Reassure them.** Remind them that support is available - there is medical assistance available to monitor and support their health and keep everyone safe. If we have prepared for the worst, it is okay to hope for the best.
- **Plan ahead together.** If they are able and willing to, plan ahead together on managing different situations and making decisions - taking care of their daily needs and providing supplies. If they are well enough, give them a sense of control and self-efficacy over their situation, which can be helpful under uncertain situations.
- **Connect with them.** Reach out to them, or support them in connecting with their circles of support, such as their friends and family, exercise buddies or neighbours - do this virtually! Normal daily conversations can give them a sense of normalcy and a great source of social support.



Managing conflict

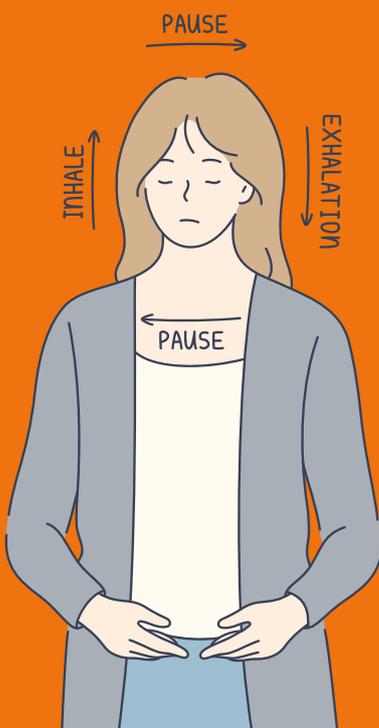
Testing positive for COVID-19 and going through all the procedures and emotions can be overwhelming. At the same time, caring for others who have tested positive can also take a toll on your mental health; you may also find yourself getting impatient and frustrated, depending on how the person you are caring for is managing their situation and if differing perspectives arise.

Remind yourself - the pandemic is hard for everyone. Try to notice any signs if you are getting irritated or impatient, or if you find yourself snapping at others, you could manage the situation using the following steps:



1

Take a deep breath before you say something or act on anything else.



2

Buy yourself some time to think and process. Remove yourself from the situation temporarily and give yourself some time to process your emotions, which can help you to find ways to cope with your emotions better. Try to ask yourself, 'Why am I feeling this way?' or 'What triggers me?'



3

Find ways to manage your feelings.

Coping strategies can be different, depending on your feelings at the moment and what works for you. Some ideas may include:

- Take a cold shower
- Blast music
- Relaxation techniques, mindfulness and breathing practices
- Exercise
- Focus on other activities
- Talk to someone about how you feel



4

Once you have processed your own emotions, apologise to the person on the receiving end. Let them know that you are frustrated and anxious because of the pandemic itself, and it is not personal.



5

Try to talk it out with the person and see if a mutual agreement can be reached.

Learn more about managing conflicts with friends and family [here](#).

Take care of yourself

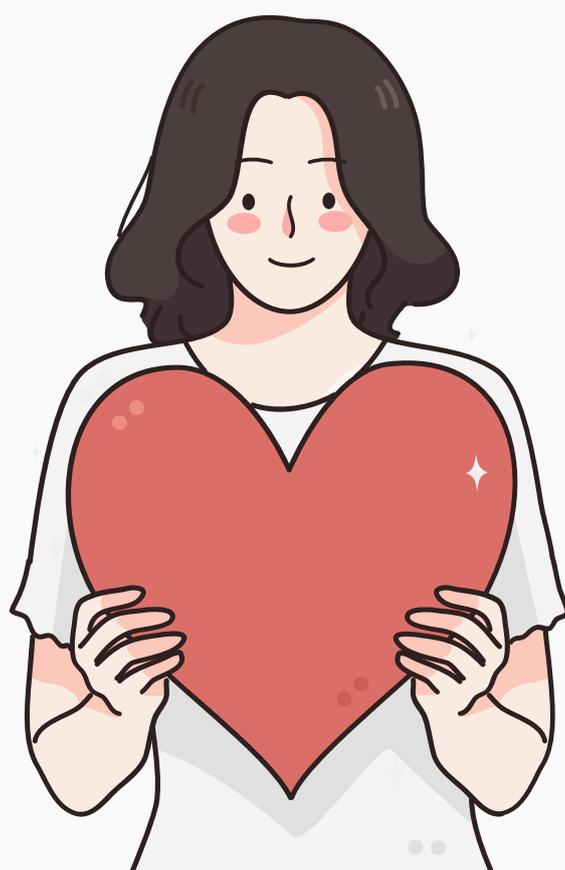
It can be devastating to see your loved ones experiencing symptoms - it is normal to feel a range of different emotions, which can be overwhelming at times. Caring for others can also take a toll on your wellbeing - both physically and mentally. It is important to take some time out for yourself, and reach out to your support system.



- **Manage your emotions.** Notice any signs of experiencing anxiety or other emotions that arise, and take steps to manage it. You may find grounding techniques and breathing exercises help bring your focus back to the present moment. Visit our resources here to learn more how to manage your mental wellbeing during the pandemic.
- **Plan ahead.** The plan may include a list of emergency contacts you can reach, information about mandatory isolation, details on handling a potential medical emergency, accessing healthcare support, and getting enough medication.
- **Take care of yourself.** That includes eating regular meals, staying active, and getting enough rest and sleep. Staying well strengthens your immune system, which helps protect yourself and will allow you to better support the people you care for.

- **Reach out to your support system.** Be it a friend or family member you trust, or online communities where you can reach out to people who have shared experiences. This can be a good way to get practical tips and resources in providing care, as well as emotional support from people who understand. You can also seek formal professional support and speak with a mental health professional, who can help guide you in managing your feelings and emotions.
- **Make time for yourself. It can be hard to care for someone,** especially if you are juggling caregiving and working simultaneously. Reserve me-time for yourself to focus on an activity without any distractions, no matter how long it is. Fully immerse yourself in an activity that brings you joy and pleasure.

For more tips and information on taking care of your own mental health as a carer, visit our carer support resource [here](#).



About Mind HK

Mind HK (Mind Mental Health Hong Kong Limited) is a S88 registered charity (91/16471), which launched in 2017. Our vision is to ensure no one in Hong Kong has to face a mental health problem alone. Through resources, training, and outreach campaigns and programmes, we help to educate around mental health and remove the associate stigma, with the aim of achieving the best mental health for all in Hong Kong. With existing collaboration and research efforts, we are here to support Hong Kong in becoming a global leader and regional model for public mental health. For more on our work, mission and vision, please visit www.mind.org.hk.

Useful Resources

If you want to learn more about other mental health topics, please visit **our Mental Health A to Z:**
www.mind.org.hk/mental-health-a-to-z/

COVID-19 Mental Health Information Hub:
Mental health resources and local supports available to take care of your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic
mind.org.hk/covid-information-hub

If you are in an emergency or crisis situation, please contact 999, or go to your nearest A&E.

More local urgent support in Hong Kong:
mind.org.hk/find-help-now
More non-urgent support can be found here:
mind.org.hk/community-directory/
How & where to seek help in Hong Kong:
mind.org.hk/getting-help/



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