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## COVID-19 and minors. Save the Children: Wellbeing Workshop to overcome stress and jumpstart life again

Children and young adults have paid a high price for the repercussions of the Covid emergency, albeit the phenomenon is largely underestimated. To address this issue, Save the Children has launched [Officina del benessere](#), (Wellbeing workshop), an online multimedia platform offering expert advice for parents, teachers and educators dealing with children and adolescents impacted by the Covid crisis, with a dedicated space for them to share their thoughts. The initiative, launched on June 28 by [Save the Children](#), draws on the organisation's experience in the past year and a half and on research published in the Italian [Journal of Pediatrics](#), which shows that 73% of parents reported increased levels of anxiety, worry or sadness in their children, or loneliness (78%); 69% noted sleeping difficulties in their children, with an increase in nightmares (19%). SIR addressed the issue with **Erika Russo**, psychologist at the emergency and psychosocial unit of Save the Children Italy and coordinator of the "Workshop." "Last year we took action from the very first moments of the emergency situation. We realised from the very beginning that the public institutions were not showing enough consideration for children and young people," she said. "We therefore launched various initiatives, including a Facebook group to support parents struggling to support their children, educational webinars and teaching kits for teachers."



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Thanks to our presence at local level - we work closely with schools nationwide through our Education Department - there was a big response, both in terms of participation in the courses and in the download of the teaching kits. **And now a further development with the Wellbeing Workshop. How did it come about?** Our experience over the past year and a half of the pandemic highlighted the urgent need to devote greater attention to understanding the reactions and emotions of children and young adults. Simple - yet clear and practical - tools were needed. We have no pretension to replace professionals in care and treatment. Our objectives are very specific: *Listening to children and young adults in order to understand and intercept any signs of distress at an early stage, taking action and creating environments that will enable them to share their experiences.*

Strengthening children's and adolescents' friendships and affective relations, severely tested by the pandemic, is a major challenge. According to the experts, liveliness and planning capacity have alarmingly declined among many of them.

**Our objective is to help young people regain confidence, energy, self-esteem and to pursue their projects and dreams.**

However, we realised that this also requires taking care of ourselves in our guiding roles. We found that parents' anxiety, worry and stress had a negative impact on their children's lives. It is therefore necessary to devote special care to the psycho-physical well-being of adults as well.

There are very intuitive sections for parents, teachers and educators working with children in summer activities. One such example is Ministry of Education's Summer Programme, as well as the youth counselors at Grest, at summer camps and at sporting activities starting in the coming weeks. Teachers are provided with worksheets and activities for children and adolescents from six to 18 years of age, in addition to educational webinars. Our services offered to everyone - parents, educators, teachers - include meetings with experts: psychologists, neuropsychiatrists, pedagogues or professionals working in emergency situations focusing on children's needs and experiences. This comprehensive and varied programme is designed to disseminate good practices, focusing on minors but also on the strategic role of adults. There is also a dedicated space for youths to express themselves. **What can a child aged 6 to 10 find on the platform?** Simple, safe, age-appropriate games, along with activities to play alone or with classmates and friends. They can also listen to the experiences of their peers through short interviews we have conducted. The section dedicated to children offers food for thought, advice on how to best manage emotionally stressful situations and tackle the restart in the best possible way. However, we would like this section to become a participatory environment where users can freely upload and share with other children any content they deem helpful to everyone's well-being. In short,



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The starting point was the research published in the Italian Journal of Pediatrics, in which parents report on the worrying signs detected in their children. You have often referred to the impact of negative parental emotions on their children. As a psychologist, I see many parents struggling to manage their children's negative emotions and anger outbursts. But on closer inspection, it emerges that these feelings mirror the parents' own experiences. Our aim is to make them aware that any reaction, feeling of anxiety, fear, worries about the future, affects all children, even the youngest. We therefore continue providing them with clear indications on what to do, and above all what not to do, in front of their children. This is essential to protecting them.

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