



## Working with University College London

### Keeping in touch during the Covid 19 pandemic

Issue 3, May 4th 2020

Content: [News](#) | [SFSC can help](#) | [Resources](#) | [Covid 19](#)

## News

Welcome back to the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities newsletter: a collaboration by staff at the Race Equality Foundation and University College London (UCL) to help you and your family during the Coronavirus outbreak. This newsletter is here to offer some practical tips and support for you, parents and practitioners alike, direct from the SFSC team, and keep you informed of the latest advice to follow. We hope you find this helpful and you can let us know what you think and what you want more of by getting in touch (see the bottom of this newsletter for contact details). Take care and stay safe!



### Together Study Event

If you are an SFSC delivery agency or area and are interested in hearing about how the research is progressing, or how you can become a site for the research, why not sign up to our free Webinar and hear all about it?

The webinar is taking place on 29th May at midday. To book a place click [here](#).

### SFSC goes online

The Foundation has been awarded a grant by the London Community Response Fund to develop an online version of our Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities (SFSC) parenting programme, so that parents can continue to get support even when they cannot attend face to face programmes due to the current context of lockdown and social distancing.

The funding will allow us to deliver a shortened online version of the Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities (SFSC) Parenting programme to around 150 vulnerable families over the next three months and to build the course so that many more parents can benefit from it thereafter. If you want to offer the course to families that you work with, contact [leandra@racefound.org.uk](mailto:leandra@racefound.org.uk)

## SFSC Can help



Modern Western culture places considerable pressure on us to be 'more independent'. But, as the weeks in lockdown roll on, the reality and negativity of independence is being felt as isolation and loneliness; we are cut off from members of our family, friends, work, school and life itself. This is not a 'new normal' any of

us would have chosen, but it is one we are having to face.

The SFSC parenting programme explains that our need to be together is part of the very foundation of human life, forming and informing our 'roots', giving us a sense of identity, belonging and pride. Throughout the world and, throughout time, people have traditionally gathered together in what the programme calls circles of support to show their kinship and love, to mark an event, celebrate, support, empathise, commiserate, acknowledge and show solidarity. There are many examples:

We mark our beginnings and endings with the welcoming of a new baby, the celebration of a new job or by gathering to grieve for the loss of a loved one who has died. When we face tragedy and distress, like a terrorist attack, the Grenfell disaster and now, a worldwide pandemic, communities come together to understand and deal with a situation, care for the vulnerable and recognise the work of those supporting others : our Thursday evening 'clap for carers' being an example of this. There are many customs and traditions to mark our transition from one stage of life to another. These rites of passage include things like weddings, school proms and assemblies, graduations and award ceremonies, a house warming party and 'special birthdays' like an 18th to mark the age of 'legal adulthood'. Finally, celebrations and acknowledgements are times when families, communities (schools, sports, social and faith groups, for example) and, even entire nations come together to remember all that brings them together: their history, ancestry and purpose.

Gatherings offer everyone a feeling of belonging, a sense of identity, and a sense of being with people who share a common aim: friends and family are an antidote to loneliness. Memories are created, our 'history' is lived. Most importantly for families, communities can pass on their values, traditions and customs to the younger generations. The message of gatherings around birth and death are clear: life is precious. We should never underestimate the importance of these circles of support in enhancing our relationships and educating our children. So, whilst we have been unable to celebrate (outside our homes) the festivals of Passover, Easter and Vaisakhi or the breaking of our fast during Ramadan this year, we can all find ways to gather and share, especially with the use of technology.

With some thought and creativity, families can still pass on the values which are important to them, even though our traditional gatherings are on hold for now. Children themselves can be encouraged to be creative, so that they are not just meeting with their peers through social media, but sharing virtual hugs with their cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents with drawings, poems, pictures and stories. They may even find ways to sign each other's shirts or have an end of year prom. Until we can all meet again.



### **Children and household tasks**

"I am going around in circles picking up after everyone" "no one does anything to help" "it is an impossible task". These are a few of the common statements we hear when running parenting programmes when talking about household chores. And certainly parents are talking about this now when everyone is home needing to eat, work, study and play in the same place.

Parents often share that they carry out the majority of the chores at home often because they 'want things done properly and promptly'. This statement is true to the person, it's 'the way they do it' and 'they way they like it'.

As adults we are often able to carry out house chores efficiently which is why we usually just do it, but this was not always the case; as children we weren't so skilled. We learnt through watching those around us, play, trial and error.

When we look at temperament in SFSC we explore that what is the right way for one person may not be right for another, and this need to be considered when we are looking at household tasks too.

So if, for example, a young person hangs out the wet washing it might not be straight or as orderly as you would hope but we want to focus on the effort put in. So, they did the task, that's a great thing, they felt proud that they did the task, they might check on the clothes a day later and see that they are still wet. We could talk to them about what factors make clothes dry more quickly. They will possibly learn from that first time and, if so do it differently next time. They may also start to see that task as 'their job' and it could become part of a routine which will raise primarily their self esteem and self discipline but also their social competence.

SFSC tells us to say "yes if you can, and no if you must" and this can be applied to housework too, especially during lockdown when we are all home together. If your child can help you with something or do a task, let them have a go. If they are not keen to help, encourage them to do so, these are vital skills they will need to learn if they are able to function as adults. And remember, if it is a job that is not appropriate to their age or stage, it is still the case that you can model what to do and make sure they are still learning from you.

---

### **Tips from the SFSC Community**

This is a new section and we encourage SFSC parents and facilitators to share their tips for surviving lockdown and social distancing. This week we hear from Ahmed Abd-Elghany, one of our freelance SFSC facilitators about lockdown and Ramadan



### **Ramadan and Children during lockdown**

This wonderful time can be a great opportunity to apply some of the techniques learned during our SFSC programme, in particular to embed some of the ethnic, cultural, family and spiritual values. A key component of SFSC's building blocks for success.

There are many fun activities related to Ramadan and Eid that can be introduced to our children as part of our spiritual rite of passage.

This can include:

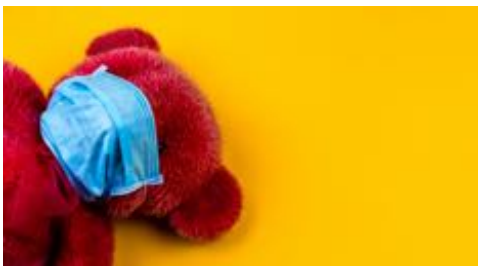
- Art and creative activities such as decorations for Ramadan and welcoming Eid. This can be a fun way to help our children learn about Ramadan/Eid and family values.

- Older children can help with the preparation of food for Iftar. It's a good time to talk to children about the significance of different ingredients and dishes in your community and family.
- Ramadan and Eid are a great time to give to charities and to engage in kind and charitable gestures: help children to be grateful for what we have and learn to give to and help others.
- Both Muslim and Non-Muslim families can also take the opportunity to teach their children about how other people in our communities may practice their religions too.

Remember: any activities are a great opportunity to use clear instruction steps to help children understand what you would like them to do.

## Helpful Resources

We will be sharing a few useful resources to help us get through this time of self isolation. If there are areas that would like information on, please feel free to drop us a line and we will see what is out there. Our focus in going to be on resources we can access online or via the phone as we cannot get out to get the help we might need right now. Remember that many of the telephone helplines like Samaritans and Childline are taking calls and can also be a source of someone to talk to.



### Covid time capsule

A nice activity that you could do with your children, or that older children could do independently is document this period of lockdown. This provides a good opportunity for children to reflect on what is happening

and plan for the future. Download this activity workbook [here](#).

### Support mental health of Muslim communities

Some useful resources for coping with lockdown. [Inspired Minds](#) is a faith based, voluntary mental health charity located in London raising awareness, combating stigmas and providing professional, non-judgemental, confidential support to those with mental health illnesses. Although Inspired Minds works predominantly with those from an Islamic faith, they welcome all to use their resources.





## Explaining Covid 19 to children

We have shared other resources that might be useful for parents to use with children, this book produced by WHO is aimed at slightly older children: 6-11 year olds and should be used as a book for parents to read together with their child rather than independently. Download it [here](#).

## Covid 19 Advice

### COVID-19 and ethnicity

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a devastating effect in the UK and globally but we now know that the virus seems to be having the greatest effect in certain ethnic minority groups. This is a big concern for many of us and it can be difficult to make sense of why we are seeing this trend. Here, we summarise what the data currently shows and what the possible reasons might be for the higher proportions of deaths in ethnic minority groups. For many, this might be difficult reading and we do not provide any easy answers of what to do, but the end of this section provides some links for support.



### What we currently know about COVID-19 deaths and ethnicity?

Researchers have looked at the ethnic breakdown of people who have died from COVID-19 related deaths and found a clear pattern; that people from ethnic minority groups are overrepresented in the deaths.

- [Black males are 4.2 times more likely to die from a COVID-19 related death and Black females 4.3 times more likely than White males and females.](#) People of Bangladeshi and Pakistani, Indian, and Mixed ethnicities also all have a significantly raised risk of death linked to COVID-19 compared with those of White ethnic backgrounds.
- [35% of COVID-19 related admissions to intensive care were of ethnic minority people](#), and ethnic minority admissions were slightly more likely to die in critical care (for example, 48.4% of White patients died in critical care compared with 55.3% of ethnic minority patients)
- Deaths appear to be [higher in UK cities with higher density of ethnic minority populations](#) (e.g. London, Liverpool, and Birmingham).

- Similar patterns are seen around the world including in [USA](#), [Norway](#), and [Brazil](#)

## Reasons for higher deaths?

There are some known reasons which might explain why there are such inequalities in deaths. These include...

- **Underlying social and economic inequalities:** many ethnic minority groups are more likely to have poorly paid, insecure employment; live in over-crowded, multi-generational housing; and live in deprived neighbourhoods with high rates of concentrated poverty and increased pollution levels.
- **Underlying health conditions:** because of social and economic inequalities, ethnic minorities also tend to develop other health conditions too. These underlying health conditions are linked with risk of COVID-19 infection and death.
- **Types of occupation:** many ethnic minority groups are employed in sectors that increase their risk of exposure to COVID-19. For example, transport and delivery jobs, healthcare assistant, hospital cleaners, social care workers, and in nursing and medical jobs.
- [Some argue](#) that entrenched **racism and discrimination** are important where many of the reasons highlighted are also due to structural and institutional racism (i.e. poorer access and treatment in healthcare, fewer opportunities of work promotions, being unpaid, and fewer services in local areas).



These reasons are often called the '[social determinants of health](#)' and show that the higher rate of deaths related to COVID-19 in people from ethnic minority groups is not random but follow what we already know about health inequalities between ethnic groups. Many of these are factors outside of individual control and rely on bigger changes to happen in society. Many people might focus on cultural differences, genetics and biology to explain the higher than expected rate of deaths in ethnic minority

groups. However, there is not much evidence or data to suggest these have a big effect on the higher rate of deaths.

These health inequalities are a concern and the UK Government have announced that they will hold an 'inquiry' into the higher rate of deaths in ethnic minority groups. There will also be a separate investigation by the Labour Party. This will be important to understand COVID-19 and for institutions and governments to act now and for the future.

### **Bereavement support**

- [Cruse](#): a bereavement charity which is helping families affected by COVID-19. They have guidance and easy read fact sheets on their website.
- [Childhood Bereavement Network](#): provide advice and guidance from a number of organisations for children and young people. This includes information supporting a bereaved child or a young person, how to say goodbye when a funeral is not possible because of social distancing restrictions, and guidance for families with children and young people around changes to funerals.
- [The Good Grief Trust](#)- Coronavirus bereavement advice
- [At A Loss](#)- Dealing with bereavement and grief during Covid-19
- [National Association of Funeral Directors](#)- COVID-19 Funeral Advice
- [The Compassionate Friends](#)- support for families after the death of a child, you can also call 0345 123 2304
- [Muslim Youth Helpline](#)
- [Jewish Bereavement Counselling Service](#)

### **What is SFSC**

Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities is an inclusive evidence-based parenting programme, designed to promote protective factors which are associated with good parenting and better outcomes for children. SFSC is a group based programme for parents of children from birth to 18.

Further information is available [here](#).

### **What is 'Together'**

We are a team of academics, practitioners, policy-makers and parents who are focused on understanding the impact of Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities. In particular, we want to know how this programme might improve the mental wellbeing of parents and their children.

Further information is available [here](#).

### **Get in touch**

We hope this information is useful and helps in this difficult time. Do let us know if you want us to cover other topics in this newsletter by emailing us at [donna@racefound.org.uk](mailto:donna@racefound.org.uk), Tweeting [@racefound](#) [@TogetherStudy1](#) [#TogetherSFSC](#).

### **Race Equality Foundation**

Unit 17 & 23 Deane House Studios  
27 Greenwood Place  
London NW5 1LB





[www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk](http://www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk)

Registered charity 1051096

Company limited by guarantee England

3121679

© The Race Equality Foundation 2020