

LIVING IN LOCKDOWN

Can technology help us to cope?

Parents and children are having to adjust to spending much more time together in the current health emergency. Stress levels within the family are higher than they have ever been before. This lesson looks at ways in which digital technology can be used to help parents and children cope with the pressures of the current situation and the part society can play in this.

Learners will be able to:

- ▶ Reflect on the kinds of stress families are experiencing as a result of measures taken to prevent the spread of the coronavirus;
- ▶ Analyse different family situations and causes of stress;
- ▶ Identify ways in which technology can help families to cope;
- ▶ Develop skills of listening, observing and conflict-resolution.

STIMULUS

A thought experiment:

Imagine the Simpsons having to adjust to life in lockdown during the coronavirus pandemic. All the characters are cooped up at home together, no work, no school, with the constant fear of catching the virus.

Choose another famous family, real or imaginary, if you prefer.

Paired- or small-group work would be good for this.

DISCUSSION

After the thought experiment:

- ▶ How do you think the Simpsons would react to being isolated at home together? How would they behave?
- ▶ What would be the biggest sources of stress for them?
- ▶ How about families in real life right now? How are they reacting? What sorts of stress are they under?
- ▶ Is the stress the same for all families? If not, what might make it worse for some families? Think of some examples.
- ▶ What things can families do to help reduce the stress?
- ▶ How can technology help them with this? What different ways can you think of?
- ▶ Are there ways in which technology might make family life even more stressful? What are these and how can they be avoided?
- ▶ Can you think of a situation where a family member needs to look for outside help?
- ▶ Who in society can you turn to when the stress of family life becomes too great? How can you make your needs known?

Allow learners to be as imaginative as they like.

Don't ask learners to talk about their own families unless they want to.

You may need to prompt learners with an example, e.g. living in a one-room apartment, or where a family member needs special care or is in hospital with the virus.

Include things like social media, apps, email, video games, websites, MP3, electronic books, etc.

You may need to prompt learners with an example, e.g. violence.

Tell learners about local/national helplines and any other relevant services, public or otherwise.

CONCLUSION

Emphasize that, unlike in the Simpsons, there are real problems for some families living in the lockdown, such as mental illness and domestic violence. Children are particularly vulnerable.

Explain that, although it may not be a complete answer, there are many ways in which families can use technology to help them cope. Include:

- games and entertainment to help them relax
- information with which to set their minds at rest
- social media to keep up with friends and socialize
- self-help advice
- mindfulness and yoga apps
- helplines for emergencies, etc.

There is an opportunity here to mention the rights of the child, in particular Article 19 on child protection.

You can find other examples on-line, e.g. <https://www.zdnet.com/article/tech-tips-and-tricks-to-cope-with-coronavirus-social-isolation-measures/>

ASSIGNMENT

Learners create a meme about family life under the virus. The meme can be funny or serious, but it must contain a practical tip or piece of advice to help families trying to cope with the pressures of life in the current crisis.

FOLLOW-UP

Make a digital slideshow of the memes for learners to watch.

Learners share any other personal tips or advice they might have for families during the lock-down.

Find an appropriate tool, e.g., Microsoft Photos.