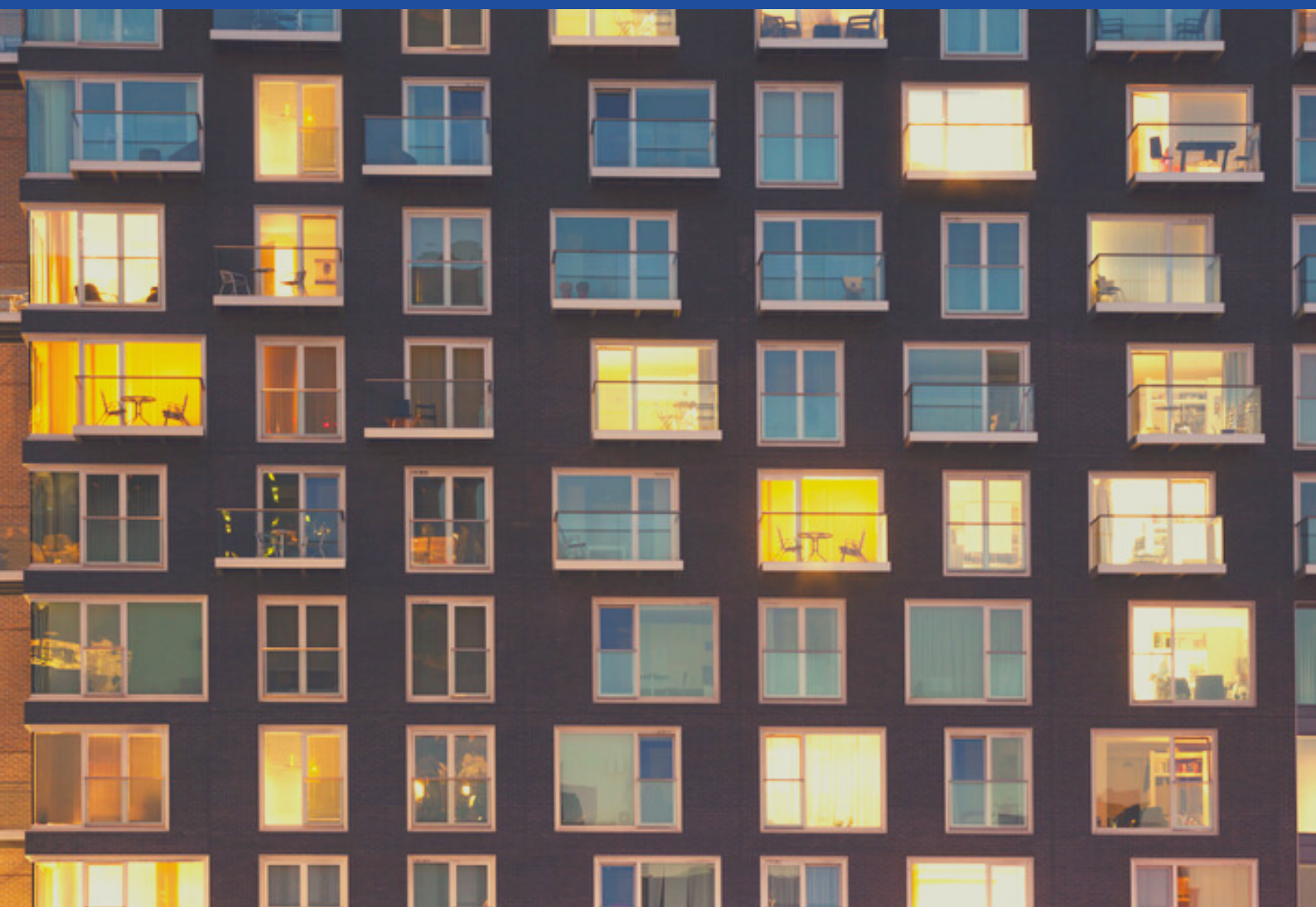


# PARENTS IN LOCKDOWN

## IDEAS FOR NOT FEELING TRAPPED





# WHAT YOU HAVE IN YOUR HANDS

What you have in your hands is a space for discussion: these pages host the thoughts of parents encountered during the research project *Parents in Lockdown* (Erasmus+ DEPCIP Project). They will help you stop and think about your own way of parenting and, perhaps, find new strategies to guide yourself during these complex times.

# WHERE IT COMES FROM

The study is part of the Erasmus+ DEPCIP project, which aims to promote training and support to parents in the use of non-violent and respectful educational practices for their children, including in the management of *small daily crises*. The DEPCIP project involves universities and training centres from five countries (Italy, Greece, Lithuania, Spain and Turkey). During the period March-June 2020, the study reached (through written and oral interviews) around 1,000 parents in lockdown from the countries involved in the project, of which approximately 400 were Italian.

# BEING A PARENT IN LOCKDOWN IS LIKE BEING...

- A superhero
  - A juggler hovering under a leaden sky
  - A captain sailing blind



We are living in extraordinary times, for an extended period. During lockdown, we experienced a sort of **emotional swing**, in the course of which opposing feelings and emotions rapidly alternated between them. We have learned that a period of **emotional adjustment** is necessary and that we have to tolerate our frequent feeling of being slightly out of control. This is not the time to blame ourselves for this confusion, but to welcome it, attuning ourselves to our emotions, however confused or apparently unmotivated they are. And, when it is not possible to find time for ourselves, we could **indulge in small activities we enjoy** - that we can even do with our children - during which our minds rest.

## EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT COVID, BUT...



- My children explained to me what COVID is, by repeating what they hear on the news ...
- I tried to tell him the truth in a simple and not too negative way...
- I found some videos to explain it to my kids...

Children, more than adults, may find it difficult to adapt their behaviour to the restriction system imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to **explain the health crisis** and protect the well-being of your children (avoiding anxiety and worry) it is essential to use methods that are suitable for their age, yet still based on **honesty and transparency**. From the age of 24 months, you can inform them correctly using picture books, nursery rhymes and other creative modes (drawings). For older children, videos and other materials can also be used (perhaps in discussion with teachers). Teenagers (who may already be informed) still need to **share** what's going on with their parents and we need to pay attention to messages coming from the media. In general, we must always remember to ask and listen to their point of view.

## ...AND, SUDDENLY, WE HAD TO INVENT A NEW DAILY ROUTINE



- The garage has become a point of exchange: we pass things between the neighbours in hanging bags...
- More time together: I'm living my daughter's life and she is living mine
- I'm missing my morning coffee alone, a walk in the park with the children, meeting up with friends...

Suddenly, we found ourselves having to **place everyone's commitments** on the same agenda: school, the office, the everyday world crowded our homes and we have often felt constricted. Some have reinvented spaces, some have given themselves a rigid schedule for using the only PC in the house. It hasn't been easy. But some constraints have turned out to be unexpectedly resourceful: discovering that the courtyard can become a park for a Sunday picnic; that we're not the only ones who can cook at home. And, also, that the first step is to **give everyone**, even the youngest, **a role** in handling responsibilities at home.

## THE DIFFICULTY IN STAYING IN THE TURMOIL OF UNCOMFORTABLE EMOTIONS ...

- I feel obliged to bring calm and normality
  - I need to have an armour to show only trust and peace of mind
  - It is difficult to handle the children's times of discomfort



**Armour** protects us, but also makes us impenetrable... it can be complicated to show one's despair, sadness, uncomfortable moods, and listen, giving space to those of the children. This helps to become **emotional trainers**, showing that it is possible to observe, welcome and tolerate negative emotions.



# THERE ARE THINGS THAT MAKE ME EXPLODE...

- To be told: the teacher explained it to me better!
- I can't find space for myself
- They never listen to me



There are things that simply make us feel on the verge of exploding, that we feel we cannot tolerate any longer. During times of confinement, it becomes difficult to even **recover time and space** for 'decompression' to 'catch your breath' and not to risk 'overstepping the mark'. Trying to get to know each other, understanding the conditions that lead us to lose control, is the first step in not overreacting. In addition, it can help us to identify our '**boiling point**' and how not to reach it, without, however, pretending to be always capable and competent every time. Starting with what you know you cannot do or manage, you can **reach out for help**, building alliances even at a distance (with another parent, with other families, with teachers, etc.).

# I HAVE TO PUNISH THEM SOMEHOW... OR NOT?



- A few slaps once in a while don't hurt anyone
- I'll start with blackmail...
- I punish them so they learn that what they do has consequences

Often, when dealing with certain behaviour of children, punishment strategies are used. To do so, parents end up **isolating them physically** (stay in your room), **socially** (no mobile phone), or even **from their affections** (I'm not talking to you). The need to give rules and teach them how to respect these rules seems irreconcilable, in this period especially, with the **fatigue** of experiencing a situation in which there are many rules, which change quickly, in a way that is a little incomprehensible to children. Perhaps, therefore, punishing them is not the only way to teach that a certain thing must not be done. Because adults educate, first and foremost, by their own **example**. If a slap is not at all likely to convince our children to be more respectful, it certainly teaches them that it is legitimate to use force.

## I'M WORRIED I OVERREACTED!



- I succumbed to much detested smacking, I'm still ashamed of it
- I shouted too much... but I couldn't control the situation
- I lost my patience, I yelled at them and made them feel guilty

If you overreact, it may be helpful to **stop for a moment** and understand what happened. Perhaps we underestimated our tiredness, or feared that we might lose control of the situation. Going back to rethinking what has happened, also going back over the emotions that led us 'beyond our limit', helps us not repeat the same behaviours: what can I do to stop it from going that far? If you really have gone too far, **taking responsibility** even in front of your children is a gesture that shows parents and children that things can be done differently.

## SHARING HELPS ME...

- I feel the need for space to get my head together
- I've often felt lonely and wish I had someone to talk to about it
- I'd like to know if certain things happen to other people too



Often, especially when dealing with the most uncomfortable emotions and behaviour, of which we may not be proud, we prefer to remain silent, almost hiding, for fear of being judged. On the contrary, **rethinking one's experiences together with others** is a precious resource. In this study, we have seen that it is precisely the possibility of sharing that has proven to be an effective strategy. Talk about it with your partner, with other parents, but also with your children: "Help me understand what you're feeling, help me understand why you've been acting this way and I can try telling you about how I feel too".

# USEFUL RESOURCES

[Parenting for Lifelong Health Parenting Tips](#)

[WHO Parenting Tips](#)

[UNICEF Parenting Tips](#)

## ABOUT US

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## COMING SOON...

...in the spring of 2021

Webinars dedicated to parent education

## FOR INFORMATION

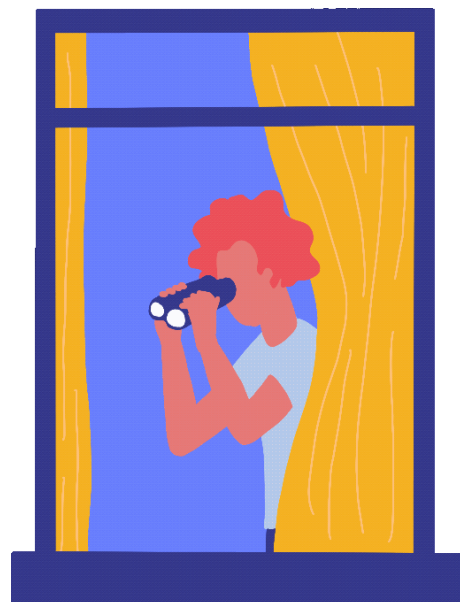
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