

Coronavirus #Covid-19:

How to deal with...

Situations of vulnerability for children and young people



At home, with the family - it has to be the place where children and young people must feel safe, protected and cared for.

It is the space where they can feel stronger to resist this social isolation for as long as it must last.



But it's not always like this.

In the family context, some children and young people may be victims of sexual violence by people with whom they have a close family relationship, for example: father, mother, siblings, grandparents, uncles/aunts, cousins, stepfather, stepmother, grandmother's or grandfather's companions, among others.



Isolation may increase the risk of this type of violence.

No one knows or realizes the situation and silence increases the danger.



Engaging in sexual activities with a child or young person is a serious crime punishable by law.



It may happen that you are going through a situation like this.

If this is the case, it's important that you know that it's not your fault and that children and young people are the victims of this crime.



You have the right to say NO.

Whoever that adult person is, even if you like that person very much. You can tell and ask a trusted person for help or call the police.



Every child and young person has the right to privacy and respect for his or her body.

No one should look at it or touch it in an abusive way, forcing to do "things" that are not appropriate for its healthy growth.



Do you have doubts? Are you confused and not feeling safe to talk to someone close to you?

Know that there are trained people, professionals, to help and to guide children and young people in this situation and to ensure their safety.



If you are going through a particularly difficult time, try to stay in a place in the house where you feel safer and where you can call for help.



If you feel you need help, please contact:

112

211 967 000 (Criminal Police)

116 111 (SOS-Criança/SOS-Child)

21 358 79 00 (APAV Care Project)

The Local Commission for the Protection of Children and Young People of your area of residence (contacts available at www.cnpdpcj.gov.pt)

CNPDPJCJ profile on Instagram and Facebook

It is common that, at first, the child or young person does not identify abusive behaviors and considers these as just an affective demonstration. As the abusive behavior continues, the approaches of the aggressor may become more frequent and trigger feelings of insecurity, doubt, fear and shame in the victim about the normality of those acts.

Initially, violence may happen through very subtle behaviors, which are hardly identified as intrusive by the victim (e.g., touch disguised as a demonstration of affection). The child or the young person asks for affection and the abuser responds with abusive behaviors.

Sexual violence involves all sexual behaviors and may become progressively more intrusive or invasive.

The aggressor takes advantage of the position of trust, authority, power or influence exerted over the child or young person to pressure or to force the latter to adopt behaviors of sexual nature against their will and which they are not prepared for.

Children who are or have been victims of sexual violence often remain silent about their problem. This happens because of the dynamics of their own relationship with the abuser, who uses

strategies to keep the child victim silent and accessible to their attempts. The silence of the victims allows the continuation of the abuse.

Children's fear of talking about experiences of violence may also be due to fear of family rejection: fear that the family will not believe the story told, fear of losing the parents, fear of being expelled from home and fear of being considered the cause of family conflicts. Other possible roots for this fear by the child may encompass: shame; thinking of him/her as the only person to whom this violent situation happened; lack of information about sexual violence; and thinking that to endure everything in order not to be rejected is the only way out.

Children and young people are neither responsible nor guilty of sexual violence, they are victims! Nobody has the right to abuse, disrespect, threaten or blackmail children and young people to force them into silence.

Unfortunately, many boys and girls of all ages are sexually abused, namely by those who should protect them and defend them.

Combatting sexual violence is key and cannot wait!



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