

Talking to Your Kids about COVID-19

The spread of the coronavirus, or COVID-19, has captured the world's attention on many levels. The societal response has created a lot of change in our daily lives from school closures to the cancellation and rescheduling of major sporting and community events. As hard as it for adults to make sense of these uncertain times, it is even harder for children. Talking to your children about coronavirus can go a long way in making them feel safe, secure, and loved.

Ways you can help your child will be different based on your child's age, knowledge of the situation, and their unique personality.

Listen. Always be willing to listen to and answer your child's questions, but realize not every child will want to talk about the subject. You know your child best, so if your child likes to process things slowly, let them. Allow them to bring it up in their own time. If you're unsure whether your child has questions, simply ask them.

Honesty. When they do bring up the subject, try your best to answer your child's questions correctly and honestly. Talk about the subject in the terms of "strong germs or serious illness." Relate it to something they may already be familiar with like the flu or a bad cold, but explain that some people respond differently. Remind children the reason for the cancellations is an effort to keep us all safe and healthy, and there are many people working hard to stop, treat, and cure the virus.

Limit. Limit news media footage of the virus as these can increase anxiety and sadness, especially in younger children. If you find your child in front of a television showing virus updates, remain calm and try to move their attention elsewhere. Offer to play with them, ask about their day, or read a book with them.

While you can't promise your children the virus will never affect their community or affect people they know, you can reassure them that there are people who are doing their best to keep them safe. You can list these people like police officers, firefighters, health-care workers, and government officials who work to keep everyone safe.

As new developments and information become available, it is always a good idea to check it against reliable sources such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which offers a wealth of information on the virus, and the World Health Organization, which currently has information dispelling myths. You can also reach out to your local Cooperative Extension office for more information.

Resources:

Center for Disease Control (2020). Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19):

What you should know. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

World Health Organization (2020). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for

the public: Myth busters. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>

Source:

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