

# MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS



## *Inside the Issue*

### MANAGING STRESS & ANXIETY

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations.

### REDUCING YOUR FAMILY'S RISK

It is important to have all family members practice preventative measures.

## TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT COVID-19

It is very important to remember that children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events.

## STRESS AND COPING

*by Center for Disease Control & Prevention*

Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger. Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.



*"School is closed, parents are working from home and everyone is talking about a virus."*  
- Thayer

# 5 THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS

by Kate Thayer, Chicago Tribune

As the new coronavirus, which causes the COVID-19 illness, continues to spread, it is affecting most aspects of life — more every day, it seems. Experts say it's good to take this time to educate, but be careful not to scare. The Chicago Tribune states that it's important for parents to quell their own anxiety, which can be just as contagious as a virus. Here are five things to consider when talking to your kids about the coronavirus.

**1. Reinforce Healthy Habits:**

Dr. Latania Logan, chief of pediatric infectious diseases at Rush University Medical Center, said it's best to explain to younger children that the coronavirus is something that's spread through germs, like a cold. But it's also a good time to reinforce good hygiene, like hand washing, for all kids, Logan said. That will help with the spread of any virus. Parents can even make it fun for younger kids by singing a song to ensure they're sudsing up for at least 20 seconds, she said. Dr. Louis Kraus, chief of child and adolescent psychiatry at Rush University Medical Center suggests to keep consistency in the family's activities. Make sure kids are going to bed at reasonable times, and waking in the morning and being productive.

**2. Stay Calm:**

"You have to take a deep breath as you explain things to your kids," Kraus said. To take some of the pressure off, he also said it's important to remember to just "do the best you can. You're not going to be perfect here," he added. "No one is going to be anxiety-free."

**3. Be Honest but Simple:**

For older kids or those who have learned more on their own, further discuss and explain the news of the day, Kraus said, but in a reassuring way. "You should not be telling kids the sky is falling."

**4. Be Open to Questions and Dialogue:**

Parents should provide basic information about the virus, but then allow their kids to ask more questions. It should be the start of a dialogue, even for younger children. "Be open. They may have their own questions," she said. "Sometimes they'll surprise you. And then try to answer in a very straightforward and uncomplicated way."

**5. Avoid Stigma:**

In recent weeks as news of the coronavirus spread, so did stigma against certain groups. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said, in its own guide on talking to children, that it's important for parents to reinforce that the virus can affect anyone, regardless of nationality.



CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

## > TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT THE VIRUS

# TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT COVID-19

by National Association of School Psychologists

You know your children best. Let their questions be your guide as to how much information to provide. However, don't avoid giving them the information that health experts identify as critical to ensuring your children's health. Be patient; children and youth do not always talk about their concerns readily. Watch for clues that they may want to talk, such as hovering around while you do the dishes or house work.

### Remain calm & reassuring

Children will react to and follow your verbal and nonverbal reactions. What you say and do about COVID-19, current prevention efforts, and related events can either increase or decrease your children's anxiety. If true, emphasize to your children that they and your family are fine.

### Make yourself available

Children may need extra attention from you and may want to talk about their concerns, fears, and questions. It is important that they know they have someone who will listen to them; make time for them.

*Talk to your child about factual information of this disease—this can help reduce anxiety.*

# REDUCE STRESS IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS

by Center for Disease Control & Prevention

### Things you can do to support yourself:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

### There are many things you can do to support your child:

- Take time to talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your family's exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

# SEEK ADDITIONAL HELP

---

*If you or a loved one is having a difficult time coping with the outbreak and want to seek outside help, there are ways to get that help. For example:*

- Get support regarding your anxiety or stress by speaking to a trained counselor at SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 or by texting TalkWithUS to 66746.
- Contact your physician or your insurance company (if they have a consultation line) to ask health-related questions or to seek mental health support.
- Learn more ways to help your family. Additional resources can be accessed at:  
[www.NCTSN.org](http://www.NCTSN.org)  
[www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)  
[www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/children-faq.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/children-faq.html)

---

## RESOURCES

Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19. (2020, March 14). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

Talking to Children About COVID-19 (Coronavirus): A Parent Resource. (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)

Thayer, K. (2020, March 17). 5 things to remember when talking to kids about the coronavirus. Retrieved from <https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/ct-life-coronavirus-talk-to-kids-cb-tt-20200317-3gli3s3mz5ch3gk5obmzntzdbi-story.html?fbclid=IwAR0wq6Uo0ijmG-gThCsVC6K6a5BoZ5m0X1bGmtjt1GiXmVAzbNmAHrlmDd0#ed=rss> www.chicagotribune.com/arcio/rss/category/news/breaking/