

Talking to Children About COVID-19: Tips For Helping Your Child Manage Stress & Anxiety During COVID-19

As we continue to navigate the changes at home, school, and work due to COVID-19, it is important to remember that children continue to look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. Per the National Association of School Psychologists, if parents seem increasingly worried, stressed, or anxious, children's anxiety is likely to rise also. Parents should reassure children that health and school officials are working hard to ensure everyone stays safe but it is also important to remember that children benefit most from factual, age appropriate information about the potential seriousness and risk. Teaching children positive, preventative measures, talking with them about their fears and giving them a sense of some control over their risk, can help reduce anxiety. Here are some other tips to consider when talking to your children about stressors due to COVID-19.

Remain Calm and Reassuring

- Children will react to and follow your verbal and nonverbal reactions. What you do and say about COVID-19 and the efforts to prevent it can either increase or decrease your children's anxiety.
- Remind your children that you and the school are taking preventative measures to keep them and those around them safe.

Make Yourself Available

- Even with the pandemic, a lot of us have still managed to keep busy lives. Remember that your child may need extra attention from you to talk about their concerns or fears so allow them the space to do so and be sure to reframe any of their concerns that may not be accurate.

Avoid Excessive Blaming

- When tensions are high, it can be easy to point the finger at a singular source, however this is unproductive and can, in fact, continue to increase anxiety in children and create an unrealistic perspective of a certain person or group.

- Be aware of any comments other children or adults are having around your children and explain any differences in values that may be present.

Monitor Television and Social Media Viewing

- Limit access to television and social media. It is highly likely that the information being provided may not be 100% accurate and can evoke stress and anxiety. Remember, they benefit most from factual, age appropriate information.
- Engage children in other activities, games, etc. instead.
- Keep a regular and consistent schedule as much as possible.

Review and Model Basic Hygiene and Healthy Lifestyle Practices

- Practice how to wear a mask appropriately with your children and continue to teach them hand washing, how to cover their mouths when coughing or sneezing, using their elbows.

Discuss School Rules and Communicate with the School Regularly

- St. Rose already enforces illness prevention habits so be sure to discuss and reinforce this with your children at home.
- Contact the school nurse with any specific questions you may have.
- Let the school know if your child is sick or if they have come into contact with anyone whom you suspect has the virus.
- Talk to the school nurse, counselor or principal if your child is having difficulties with anxiety as a result of COVID or life changes due to COVID-19. They can help with guidance and support while your child is at school.

National Association of School Psychologist (2020)

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/helping-children-cope-with-changes-resulting-from-covid-19>

For more information related to schools and physical and mental health, visit www.nasponline.org and www.nasn.org

