



Supporting Children Through the COVID-19 Pandemic

In a time where the unknown can feel like the norm, communication with children is key! If you are a parent or caregiver and wondering if you should talk to your child(ren) about novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the answer is YES!

Children experience stress and worry just like adults do, and often find it hard to understand the things that are happening. We can support children by giving them honest, accurate information, and by showing them they are important – even if there is a lot of change happening in the world. The following list contains suggestions and ideas for supporting your child(ren) during this time.

Consider Developmental Level and Temperament

Ask children what they have heard about COVID-19 to gauge their level of understanding. This will help you know where to start and give you a chance to clarify misconceptions with kindness and age-appropriate language. Allow and encourage children to ask questions. Reassure children that they have done nothing wrong. Children often have big feelings but limited words to express them. Use open-ended questions to encourage conversation. Keep open communication and check in daily with children about how they are coping emotionally. Deliver honest and simple information, while also minimizing media exposure. Let children know that as you hear more information, you will let them know.

General Tips and Suggested Language to Use

“COVID-19, sometimes called novel coronavirus, is a new virus that can be spread by germs. Usually people who have this virus have a hard time breathing, are very tired, have a cough, and maybe a fever. Scientists are still learning a lot about the virus to keep everyone as safe as possible. It can make SOME people very sick, but most people recover from COVID-19.”

**Check out storybook for younger children at <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>

Child-friendly Definitions for Common Terms

- Virus: A type of germ that is very tiny, and when they get inside your body, they can make you sick
- Germs: Tiny organisms, or living things, that can cause disease – germs are so small and sneaky that they can creep into our bodies without being noticed

- Contagious: When a virus or sickness can jump from one person to another through things like coughs, sneezes, and contact with others

Maintain a Normal Routine to the Extent Possible and Let Them Know What to Expect

Keep as much of a routine as possible, even in creating a new routine during quarantine. Routines make things predictable and allow for a sense of control.

- Allow this daily routine/schedule to be a little flexible, providing children with appropriate choices when able
- Keep bedtime, wake time, and meal times consistent as much as possible
- Incorporate various activities throughout the day (See page 4)
- Encourage children to take part in and come up with age-appropriate activities in line with social distancing and cleanliness
- Develop clear guidelines and limits around what is allowed and what is not
- Within this schedule, give children a break in between schoolwork sessions to exert energy in a positive way (i.e. jumping jacks, hide and seek, and so on)
- Assign simple tasks around the house (doing dishes, picking up their room, helping with pets or cooking)
- Set aside special time for children every day; even small things like reading books together makes a big difference
- Allow children to connect with friends and family through video chatting

Validate and Normalize Feelings - Model Behaviors and Responses that are Serious, Yet Calm

Validate children's feelings while doing your best to reduce worry. Give children the opportunity to talk and ask questions. Explain what is being done to help, clarify information, and keep them busy. Instead of telling children not to worry, try saying:

- "It can be scary and that is why it is important that we..."
- "Doctors, nurses, and hospitals are trained on how to keep patients safe."
- "I'm worried about people who are sensitive to germs too; that's why we are going to stay home and do our best to have fun together."
- "It's confusing because we don't feel sick but it is still important for everyone to stay apart to keep germs from sharing right now."
- "This is teaching us what to be grateful for... the things we can live without... etc."

Teach Children Everyday Actions to Reduce the Spread of Germs

Encourage proper hand washing with soap and water while singing "Happy Birthday" two times in order to ensure it is both fun and long enough to effectively clean their hands. Describe hand washing and social distancing as ways that we can work together

to slow down the virus. Explain what steps are being taken to keep everyone healthy and safe as well as what steps would be taken if someone became ill. Remind children to:

- Stay away from people who are coughing or sneezing, or who are sick
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or elbow, throwing the tissue into the trash
- Wash hands after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing, going to the bathroom, before eating, after playing outside, etc.
 - If soap and water are not available, teach them to use hand sanitizer; hand sanitizer should contain at least 60% alcohol

Remain Calm and Provide Reassurance

- Children often pick up on the feelings and emotions of adults around them; the calmer we are, the calmer they are
- Reassure children they are safe and will be taken care of
- Acknowledge the challenges that go along with all these sudden changes for yourself and for children
- Reassure children that it is normal to feel stressed during times of change
- Be an example for children by sharing with them how you are dealing with the situation through talking with loved ones or distracting your mind with books, movies, or hobbies

Engage Children's Brains While at Home

- TRY NOT to stress over structured schoolwork; Children often bounce back from crises better than adults. They will catch up in no time.
- Take this as an opportunity to teach life skills and work on STEM projects
- Read for at least 60 minutes a day
- Go outside, when able

We know this is a stressful time for everyone. You are already doing a great job supporting your child(ren)! Please reach out to your support systems via telephone/FaceTime when you need extra connection and support.

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Resources for Coping & Distraction While Isolated in the Hospital or at Home

Please Note: These resources are intended to be used by parents and/or caregivers with children in addition to typical schoolwork, and play-based activities, such as books, puzzles, board games, walks, etc. Continue to engage children’s brains while at home.

Educational

YouTube Kids	Websites	Podcasts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids Learning Tube • Free School • Homeschool Pop • Story Bots • The Brain Scoop • World World PBS • TED-Ed • National Geographic Kids • Peekaboo Kidz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starfall.com • ABCMouse.com • MysteryScience.com • STMath.com • Abcya.com • Xtramath.org • Zearn.org • TheSpanishExperiment.com • Mimshousebooks.com • Si.edu/learn-explore • Learn at Home – Classroom Magazines – Scholastic • Nasa.gov/stem • Photomath.net • BrainPop.com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brains On • But Why: A Podcast for Curious Kids • Circle Round • Smash Boom Best • Wow in the World • Eleanor Amplified • Ear Snacks • KidNuz

Mindfulness, Movement, and Relaxation

Websites/YouTube	Apps	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gonoodle.com • CorePower Yoga on Demand – Keep Up Your Practice • Cosmic Kids Yoga • Zumba Kids • ActionforHappiness.org 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calm Meditation • Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame Street • Mindful Powers • Stop, Breathe, & Think Kids • HERE Meditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planet Fitness – offering free 20 minute classes via their Facebook page at 7pm

Adventure and Entertainment

Websites	YouTube	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • StorylineOnline.net • http://zoo.sandiegozoo.org/live-cams • Home Zone – Kohl Children’s Museum • Live Cams – Monterey Bay Aquarium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story Time From Space • Story Time with Ms. Becky • Fun Family Florida • Home Safari 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sequoia National Park Virtual Tour from Google Earth • Search your favorite artist – Many are doing online concerts • Some new movies will be live streaming • Story Pirates (Podcast) • The Two Princes (Podcast)