

How to Talk to Your Children about Coronavirus

With adults and the media hyper-focused on the coronavirus outbreak, we can be reassuring voices for our children.

Children are naturally scared of the unknown—especially a mysterious illness like the coronavirus. This is normal. But now, we have many adults startled about the Coronavirus (COVID-19), which is alarming because we need to help our children continue to be smart and feel safe in the world. We want to be aware, not anxious. Of course, it's reasonable to be concerned, but for the vast majority of people – children included – there isn't yet a reason to be panicked, especially if they continue good hygiene habits and practice social distancing, stay a safe distance away (6 feet) from anyone with symptoms (WHO, 2020). But to help adults (parents, teachers) have the “coronavirus talk” with their children, I recommend focusing on these four aspects of the current outbreak:

#1 – Focus on the facts

One way to help children minimize their fears is to share age-appropriate facts and correct any misinformation. Keep it simple, especially with young kids. You know how it feels to have a cold and sometimes you get a cough and have fever? This is kind of like that. Most people who catch this illness stay home, rest, and feel better. The good news is we have wonderful doctors and nurses who can help people when they need it. Monitor the amount of news watching in your home – the news is meant to be checked but not an all-day focus.

#2 – Reassure your kids that they are safe, which is the most important message they can hear.

We know that children take their emotional cues from our tones and energy. Saying “You do not need to worry. Lots of people are working hard to keep people healthy, and luckily we know how to keep healthy!” will help kids know they are safe and there are ways we can help.

#3 – Healthy Hygiene

Share simple things your family can do to be “germ busters” – for all types of germs out there! The hygiene habits that slow the spread of COVID-19 are the same habits that keep us healthy all year. A) Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap frequently B) Avoid close contact with anyone who is coughing, sneezing or feeling sick (i.e. don't touch them), and C) Stay home if you are sick so you will not infect anyone. Practicing social distancing will help reduce the spread of the virus. Remind kids that germs like to travel from person to person, but if we stay home for a while, it is hard for the Coronavirus to travel to new people. We can be germ-busters to protect people like our grandparents or other vulnerable groups of people. This is how we can all help!

#4 – Stay on schedule

Kids thrive on routine. This is one of the best ways to keep a sense of normalcy during an uncertain time. While school is out, find an example schedule online or provided by a teacher to help you manage your homeschool activities. Teachers are working extra hard to teach virtually during this time and will be happy to help you with resources! Don't forget to make time for some fresh air, movement, and mindfulness everyday – we can create a more emotionally healthy atmosphere for our kids by setting a positive example!