Coronavirus (COVID-19): Helping My Child Cope

THINGS PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS CAN DO AND SAY

Seven things you can do to help your child:

1. **Remain calm and reassuring.** Focus on helping your child feel safe. Answer their questions, listen for misunderstandings, and share accurate information.
2. **Keep as many everyday routines as possible.** Try to stay consistent with bedtimes, meals, chores, exercise, and schoolwork (which might be online).
3. **Help your child feel in control.** Enlist them in your family plan to stay healthy. Help them use their "germ buster" powers: washing hands often, not touching their face, coughing or sneezing into a tissue or elbow.
4. **Help your child feel connected with others.** Stay in touch with friends and family on the phone and online. Spend family time doing things you all enjoy.
5. **Allow your child to talk about feelings and worries, if they want to.** Talk, write, or draw about how they're feeling. Check in on a regular basis or when the situation changes.
6. **Make time every day for stress-reducing activities.** Help your child create a habit with calming, stress-reducing activities they can do every day, such as exercise, deep breathing, or yoga.
7. **Take time to deal with your own feelings.** It's harder to help your child when you are really stressed or worried. Talk it out with other adults – so that you can get some support.

What should I expect?

Feeling lonely, bored, stressed, anxious, or afraid of getting sick are all normal responses in this situation. Common, temporary reactions you might notice are:

Young children: afraid to be alone, bed wetting, bad dreams, crankiness, temper tantrums

School-age children: easily upset or angry, bad dreams, wanting to be near parents, trouble concentrating

Teens: changes in sleep or eating, arguing with friends or family, wanting to be left alone

When and how should I get extra help for my child? If your child's worries or behavior changes are getting worse, or are worrying you, talk to your child's doctor about the best way to help. There may be online or phone-based services to help you support your child.

When Your Child has Existing Health Concerns

Parenting a child with existing healthcare needs can be especially stressful during a disease outbreak or pandemic. The following tips can help:

- ✓ **Keep in touch with your child's healthcare team.** They are the best source of accurate information about current affairs and how they might impact your child.
- ✓ **Rely on trusted sources.** Misinformation can be spread online, even by well-intentioned people. Rely on national disease groups and your child's healthcare team to answer your questions. Don't be afraid to ask about something that you see online.
- ✓ **Check in about health-related worries.** Your child might be nervous about things like running out of medications. Provide fact-based reassurance whenever possible.
- ✓ **Be sensitive to "triggers".** Seeing or hearing things about the disease, the hospital, and dying might be especially scary for kids with underlying health issues. Keep in mind that your child might react in ways that surprise you.
- ✓ **Give everyone a chance to ask questions.** Brothers and sisters may also be worried – give them factual, age-appropriate information.

Putting it Into Practice: Using These Tips at Home

Do: Help put feelings into words.

Say: "A lot's been happening. Is there anything you're wondering, or worried about?"

Do: Find other ways to share.

Say: "Can you draw me a picture about how you're feeling?"

Do: Remember everyone's reactions might be different.

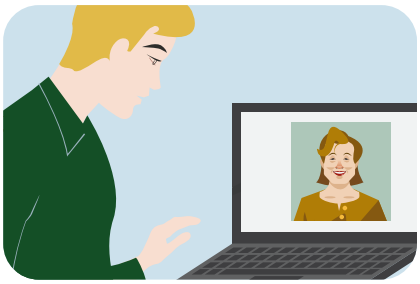
Say: "How is everyone feeling? How can we help each other this week?"

Do: Help your child feel in control.

Say: "Way to go, GermBuster powers! Let's wash our hands."

Do: Promote connection.

Say: "You can still chat with your friends."



Do: Model reaching out to others.

Say: "When I'm upset, I find someone to talk to."

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