



## HOW TO SPEAK WITH YOUR KIDS ABOUT CORONAVIRUS

### **Manage your own anxiety:**

When you're feeling most anxious, that isn't the time to talk to your kids about what's happening with the coronavirus. If you notice that you are feeling anxious, take some time to calm down before trying to have a conversation or answer your child's questions.

### **Don't be afraid to discuss the coronavirus with your children:**

Not talking about something can actually make kids worry *more*. The conversation is an opportunity to convey the facts, set a calm emotional tone and be more reassuring than whatever they're hearing from friends or on the news. Depending on their age, consider encouraging your kids to not watch the news. You can be their source of information.

### **Be developmentally appropriate:**

Don't offer too much information, as this may be overwhelming. Instead, try to stick with only answering your child's questions. Do your best to answer honestly and clearly. It's okay if you can't answer everything; being available to your child is what matters.

### **Take your cues from your child:**

Invite your child to tell you anything they may have heard about the coronavirus and how they feel. Give them ample opportunity to ask questions. You want to be prepared to answer (but not prompt) questions. Your goal is to avoid encouraging frightening fantasies, give them the facts and correct any misinformation.

### **Focus on what you're doing to stay safe:**

An important way to reassure kids is to emphasize the safety precautions that you are taking. Kids feel empowered when they know what to do to keep themselves safe. So remind kids that they are taking care of themselves by washing their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds (or the length of two "Happy Birthday" songs) when they come in from outside, before they eat and after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the bathroom. Remind them to wash their hands often, to cough into the inside of their elbow, to not touch their face and to stay at least 3 feet away from other people. This is not going to go perfectly 100% of the time, so let them know that we can all only do our best.

### **Stick to routines:**

Kids don't like uncertainty and uncertainty can increase anxiety. Therefore, staying rooted in routines and predictability is going to be helpful right now. Structured days with regular mealtimes and bedtimes are an essential part of keeping kids happy and healthy.

### **Keep talking:**

Tell kids that you will continue to keep them updated as you learn more. This is not a one-time conversation. Let them know that the lines of communication are going to be open. You can say, 'Even though we don't have the answers to everything right now, we will let you know once we know more.'



## ACTIVITIES TO DO AT HOME WITH YOUR KIDS

### Go on a Virtual Field-Trip:

- 2500 museums and galleries around the world provide virtual tours: <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner>
- National Parks Service online tours: <https://artsandculture.withgoogle.com/en-us/>
- The National Zoo: <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/webcams>
- The Houston Zoo: <http://www.houstonzoo.org/explore/webcams/>
- The San Diego Zoo: <https://zoo.sandiegozoo.org/live-cams>
- Monterey Bay Aquarium: <https://www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams>
- Animals from around the world: <https://www.explore.org/livecams>
- Go to Mars with NASA: <https://accessmars.withgoogle.com/>

### Keep Learning at Home:

- Day-by-day projects to keep kids reading, thinking and growing from Scholastic: <https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html>
- Self-paced, interactive content--exercises, videos and articles--for students in every grade and in most major subject areas from the Khan Academy: <https://www.khanacademy.org/>
- Crash Course is a YouTube channel offering engaging educational videos suitable for high school students. <https://www.thecrashcourse.com/>
- ABCmouse is offering a free 30-day trial of its comprehensive early learning academy for children aged 2-8 and includes educational games and activities designed by teachers: <https://www.abcmouse.com/abt/homepage>
- Learning and Activities for Kids from NASA: <https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/edu/teachable-moments/>
- "Skype a Scientist" matches your family with an expert for a live Skype chat about real scientific research: <https://www.skypeascientist.com/for-families.html>

### Creative Activities:

- Nickelodeon offers projects, ideas, and organizations that will help you and your family be champions for good: <http://www.nickhelps.com/>
- PBS Parents offers many videos on craft projects to do with kids: <https://www.youtube.com/user/PBSParentsPicks/videos>
- 100s of activities to do with kids: <https://mommypoppins.com/>

### Games and Exercise:

- **Obstacle course:** Create a furniture course or take chalk and make a course outside.
- **Freeze dance:** When the music stops, hold your pose until the music begins again.
- **Scavenger hunt:** Write up clues and hide them around the house.
- **Parachute:** You each take an end of a bedsheet and fans it upward while one of you runs under.
- **Clean-up race:** Set a timer or put on a song to see who can clean up the room the fastest.
- **Carnival:** Set up carnival games such as "Knock Down the Milk Cans" using Tupperware
- **Hallway bowling:** Fill up water bottles and use any ball you have.
- **Hopscotch:** Use chalk or tape to make a game on your floor or outside



## HOW YOU AND YOUR KIDS CAN DE-STRESS & CONNECT WHILE AT HOME

### **Mindful Breathing**

Mindfulness is the ability to be aware of what we are thinking, feeling and sensing--an important skill to help us deal with stress, anxiety and negative emotions. Mindful Breathing is a way to develop mindfulness. Set aside as little as 2 minutes or perhaps try 5 or 10 or 15 minutes by setting a timer on your phone. Sitting upright (so you don't fall asleep) in a chair or on the floor, simply observe each breath *without trying to adjust it*; it may help to focus on the rise and fall of your chest or the sensation through your nostrils. As you do so, your mind will eventually wander, distracted by thoughts, emotions, and other sensations. *That's okay. That's expected and an important part of the practice.* Just notice that this is happening, perhaps silently say to yourself "thinking" and gently bring your attention back to your breath again and again.

### **Deep Breathing**

Sometimes, especially when trying to calm ourselves in a stressful moment, it might help to start by taking an exaggerated breath: a deep inhale through your nostrils (3 seconds), hold your breath (2 seconds), and a long exhale through your mouth (4 seconds). With a young child, perhaps try having them pretend your fingers are birthday candles and blow them out one by one. Or maybe your child will respond to a "breathing buddy." Have them lay on their back, put a favorite stuffed animal on their tummy, and both of you watch the animal slowly move up and down as they inhale and exhale.

### **Creating and Recalling Positive Events**

1. Choose an activity that you or your child enjoys doing (1) alone, (2) with others, and or (3) considers personally meaningful, such as helping a neighbor or calling to check in on a friend. Set aside some time during the day to complete each of these activities.
2. At the end of the day talk about what occurred during and after each of these three activities. What did you do and how did it make you feel?

### **Three Good Things**

Each day talk about three good things that what went well today and share your thoughts on why they went well. Encourage your child to do the same.

### **Have a conversation with no distractions (*phones away* :)**

1. Invite your child to share what's on their mind or is going on in their life.
2. Paraphrase what they said to make sure you understand and show that you're paying attention.
3. Ask questions. When appropriate, ask questions to encourage your child to elaborate
4. Express empathy. If your child voices negative feelings, strive to validate these feelings rather than questioning or defending against them.
5. Use engaged body language to show that you are interested such as making eye contact, nodding, facing your child and maintaining an open and relaxed body posture.
6. Avoid judgment. Your goal is to understand your child's perspective and accept it for what it is, even if you disagree with it.
7. Avoid giving advice. Problem-solving is likely to be more effective after you both understand each other's perspective and feel heard. Moving too quickly into advice-giving can be counterproductive.
8. Take turns. After your child has had a chance to speak and you have engaged in the active listening steps above, ask if it's okay for you to share your perspective.

References:

<https://gqia.berkeley.edu/>

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-you-and-your-kids-can-de-stress-during-coronavirus>