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Know! To Reassure and Support Children During the COVID-19 Crisis

The World Health Organization has declared COVID-19, also known as coronavirus, a pandemic. Whether or not you believe the response to COVID-19 is proportionate, there is no doubt that children are being directly touched. Their schools are closing, their academic and extracurricular activities are being cancelled, their spring break family trips are being postponed, and restrictions are being placed on mass gatherings. They're also seeing and hearing the vast concerns of some and outright panic of others as local and national leaders attempt to control the spread of the virus.

Everyone is talking about coronavirus. The question is, are you talking about it with your children?

Signs of Fear

While individuals will react differently to stressful situations, children in general, tend to experience more intense emotions. Some level of fear and anxiety in this type of crisis is an expected and appropriate reaction.

Keep an eye out for these common changes in young people that may signal a negative response to the current events unfolding around them (according to the CDC):

- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors (such as increased fighting with siblings or parents)
- Poor academic performance/avoiding schoolwork
- Difficulty paying attention and concentrating
- Avoiding activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Using alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

How to Talk about COVID-19

Children will look to us, as parents and caregivers, to see how we respond to the pandemic. If we deal with this situation calmly and confidently, our children are much more likely to do the same. It is important that we, along with our children, take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, eat well, stay connected to friends and family, and stay positive. In doing so we are better able to support our children.

Other things we can do to support our children include (according to the CDC):

- **Take time to talk with them about the COVID-19 outbreak.** Answer questions and **share facts** in a way that our children can understand.
- **Reassure our children that they are safe.** Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how we deal with our own stress so that they can learn how to cope from us.
- **Limit our children’s exposure to media coverage.** Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- **Help our children to maintain a sense of structure,** especially for those young people whose schools have closed and extracurriculars have been put on hold.

We may not have all the answers for our children. That said, it’s imperative for us to sit down with them to provide the facts that we do know, filter out misinformation, reassure them of their safety, and help them to remain positive and hopeful – to the best of our ability.

For additional and up-to-date information on COVID-19 visit:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: White House Coronavirus 2019 Task Force.](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Guidance for School Settings.](#)

Sources

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) - Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19.](#)

About Know! Parent Tips

Everyone has a role in prevention. By reading and sharing this Know! Parent Tip today, you're doing your part to prevent substance misuse and create a healthier world for all.

We created these free parent tips to empower parents like you. Know! helps you promote health and wellness and protect the young person in your life from unhealthy behaviors, including alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. However, we rely on donations from people like you to provide these tips. If you found this tip interesting or helpful, **please consider donating at preventionactionalliance.org/donate.**

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