



# How to Help your Child Understand COVID-19

1	<b>Stick to Age Appropriate Facts</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep it honest and simple when talking about COVID-19 - you could say something like,             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>“You know what it’s like to have a cold or the flu — how sometimes you get a cough or have a fever? This is kind of like that. Most people who catch this sickness stay home, rest and get all better. And we have wonderful doctors and nurses who can help people when they need it.”</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

2	<b>Remain Calm and Reassuring</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children will respond to your verbal and non-verbal cues.</li> <li>• Remind them that you and other adults are working to keep them safe.</li> <li>• If true, remind them that they and your family is fine.</li> </ul>

3	<b>Fighting Germs at Home</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage your child to practice every-day good hygiene.</li> <li>• Wash hands multiple times a day for at least 20 seconds.</li> <li>• Cover their mouth with a tissue or the crux of their arm when they sneeze.</li> <li>• Do not share food or drinks with others.</li> <li>• Encourage your child to eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, and exercise daily to develop a strong immune system.</li> </ul>

4	<b>Monitor Social Media</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to avoid listening to or watching information (news, social media, etc.) that may be upsetting when your child is present.</li> <li>• Speak to your child about how many stories about COVID-19 on the internet may be based on rumors and inaccurate information.</li> </ul>

## Parents: Help your Child Cope with Stress and Anxiety

The amount of change caused by these circumstances can be very overwhelming and difficult for children to understand. The unexpected separation from family, friends, schools, and change in routine can cause anxiety in children. They may not be able to fully understand what is going on. A child’s reactions to stress may depend on their age, previous experiences and their typical coping skills.

- **Signs your child may be experiencing stress or anxiety:**
  - Being more clingy.
  - Withdrawing.
  - Angry, agitated, irritable.
  - Bedwetting.
  - Trouble sleeping or eating.
  - Excessive worrying.
  
- **How to respond:**
  - Be supportive.
  - Listen to their concerns and give them EXTRA love and attention.
  - Remember you are the role model for your children.
  - Assure your children you are prepared to keep them safe.
  - Set a good example by managing your own stress through healthy lifestyle choice.
  - Shift expectations and priorities to focus more on what give you and your children fulfillment, meaning, and purpose.



## ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

It is important to maintain normalcy in your child's schedule. Below are ideas of activities you can use!



Make opportunities for your children to relax. This could include naps, coloring and drawing, reading, or deep breathing.



Encourage children to handwrite letters and draw pictures to send in the mail.



Keep them close to parents and family. If separation must occur, have a plan to have regular contact via phone or skype, etc.



Get outside! Create opportunities for your children to explore. Talk to neighbors safely from your porch or yard.



Find time to talk to them about their emotions/feelings and normalize it- let them know it is okay to feel how they feel.



Find a routine that involves school/learning as well as time for playing and relaxing. Keep your family's bedtime and meal schedules consistent.



Try something new! Learn a new skill, learn a new fact, or watch a tutorial video.



Make time to do activities and talk about fun topics that your family finds enjoyable. For example, watch television/movies, listen to music, or play games

## SEEKING ADDITIONAL HELP

If you or a loved one is having a difficult time coping with the outbreak, there are ways to get help. Contact your physician or insurance company (if they have a consultation line) to ask health-related questions or to seek mental health support. Some additional resources also include:

- SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUS 66746
- United Way: <http://211.org/> or call 211
- [www.NCTSN.org](http://www.NCTSN.org)
- [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)
- [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov)

*\*The common reactions to distress will fade over time for most children. If children continue to be very upset or if their reactions hurt their relationships or schoolwork, parents may want to talk to a professional or have their children talk to someone who specializes in children's emotional needs.*

### RESOURCES USED

1. "Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope With the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)" - The National Child Traumatic Stress Network
2. "Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak" - The World Health Organization
3. "Coping With Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks" - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
4. "Helping Children Cope During and After a Disaster a Resource for Parents and Caregivers" - Centers for Disease Control
5. Talking to Children About COVID-19 (Coronavirus): A Parent Resource - National Association of School psychologist