

Helpful Tips for Hard Conversations: How to Talk With Children About the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Created by Rachel Lawton, PhD
Cincinnati Children's Behavioral Medicine and Clinical Psychology

Ask what your child knows (“What do you know about the coronavirus?”):

Take your child's lead. If they have questions, start a conversation by asking your child what they know and explore where they got their information. This provides an opportunity to correct errors and ensure that they're getting their information from a good source.

Ask what your child is worried about (“What are your biggest worries about the coronavirus?”):

Provide your child with an opportunity to share their biggest worries. These may or may not be related to the virus itself (e.g. they may be worried about getting sick, or they may be worried about parent employment, money, or not finishing the school year).

Answer their questions about the coronavirus in small, child-size, age-appropriate responses:

Be honest, children are smart and aware. If you don't know an answer, that's ok (“I don't know that answer, but let's look it up together!”) Try to answer their questions, but don't give too much “grown-up” information or details.

Focus on your child's safety:

Children are very aware of both their safety and their family members' safety. Remind them that they are safe, and identify who is responsible for keeping them safe, including caregivers, doctors, nurses, and community members (“I know this is scary, but mommy and grandma are here to keep you safe”).

Use facts:

Remind your child what doctors and scientists know about the coronavirus—it does not generally impact children and teens, and if it does, the illness is typically less severe. Few children get very sick from this virus.

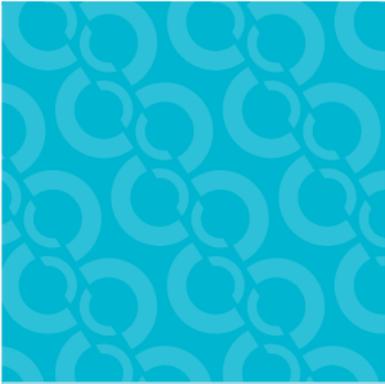
Look for the helpers:

Show your child all the ways that the community is working together to keep each other safe, including everyone washing hands, using social distancing, doctors/nurses helping patients, business owners closing their stores, teachers helping students online, police officers making sure that people follow the rules, etc.

Remind your child what they can do to keep themselves and everyone safe:

- 1) washing hands
- 2) covering their coughs
- 3) staying home

It will help them feel more in control.



What do I do when my child is home all day?

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Having your child home all day can be wonderful AND difficult.

Expect that some parts will be fun. Many parts may be frustrating. This is normal! To help with this time at home, we recommend:

- Use a routine during the day. Have your children try to wake up, have meals, and go to sleep at the same time every day.
- Try to encourage some outside activity if it's safe.
- Set clear expectations for both schoolwork and chores.
- Set clear expectations for rewards when schoolwork and chores are complete (TV/tablet time, playing, drawing, etc.).

If you're frustrated, that's ok! Have a "break time" for both you and your child. Spend 10 minutes doing something that you each enjoy, and then return to the task at hand.

Be mindful of your own anxiety! This is very hard for everyone –make sure that as a parent or caregiver you have support as well.