



Strategies for Parents Supporting Children (COVID-19)

Stay Calm. Do your best to stay calm and avoid being unnecessarily reactive. Be a good role model for handling challenging situations. “During upsetting times, kids are emotionally safest if they believe that their adults are calm and in charge (*Kidpower*).” Anxiety is contagious. Remember to care for yourself so you are able to have a calm and controlled presence when communicating and caring for your child.

Offer Extra Support and Reassurance. Kids often benefit from extra time, hugs, and reassurance during times of transition. If your evening ritual is to read together before bed, continuing this daily practice (and possibly extending it a little) can be stabilizing. Extra verbal reassurances such as extra “I love you’s” and reminders about when they will see you again, “I will pick you up after school” can help, too.

Limit Exposure. Take charge of what your child is exposed to on television, in the media, and online. Do your best to prevent children from being bombarded by news that might be traumatizing or scary for them. Try to have conversations that may be perceived as distressing away from children.

Offer Age-Appropriate Explanations. Offer basic information about how you will help your family stay safe and healthy, as well as basic, age appropriate explanations about events that may impact them. “This is hard for the people who have been impacted and lots of people are working hard to help people stay healthy and safe.” Statements such as these can be modified based on the age and stage of the child. You may decide to describe some specific safety and response measures that are in place in an age-appropriate way.

Allow Children to Express Feelings. Allow time and space for your child to express their feelings, without feeling like they need to take care of the adults feelings. Keep in mind that kids absorb and often take on our feelings. Sometimes we (adults) have big reactions to events that are occurring in our lives, in our community, and in the media. In response, focus on what you are doing to help your family stay safe. Sometimes this is just a reminder that we will still have our daily routines and I will still be tucking you in bed each night and reading our favorite book together (reminders that the parent(s) have control so the child can minimize worry).

Be Aware of Behavioral Changes. If your child starts to complain of tummy aches or headaches, first rule out any health concerns, then consider that they may be somatizing their experience, feeling and experiencing anxiety in their body. If you suspect this is happening, start with the basics: Strengthen daily routines (morning, evening, bed routines), limit exposure to anything distressing including adult conversations, prioritize healthy meals



Strategies for Parents Supporting Children (COVID-19) together (offers time to connect), offer support and reassurance, and reach out for help if needed.

Give Children Positive Ways to Feel In Control. As much as possible, try to keep daily routines as consistent as possible. This helps children feel in control. You can give them more opportunities to feel in control by offering choices and additional responsibilities. This can be as simple as asking what they would like for dinner, spaghetti or chicken and salad. Other examples: “What movie should we watch on family movie night this week (narrow down choices)?”; “Should we walk or drive to school today?”; “On Saturday would you rather go on a bike ride, or, have a playdate?”

Resources:

[Talk with your Kids about the Coronavirus \(Child Mind Institute\)](#)

[A Comic for Kids Exploring the Coronavirus \(NPR\)](#)

[Difficult Conversations: What to say when the News is Scary to Kids \(NPR\)](#)

[Talking to Children about COVID-19, A Parent Resource \(NASP\)](#)

[A Guide to Keeping your Child Safe and Reassured \(CNN\)](#)

[CDC: Resources for Households](#)