

How to Talk to Your Child About Fear and the Coronavirus

In a time where we as adults are dealing with a lot of uncertainty and unknowns, it's hard to know just where to start when communicating with our kids as we face the reality of a coronavirus outbreak. There are a few key ways of starting a conversation with your child about coronavirus:

Remain Calm: Kids are constantly looking to parents and guardians for how to respond to stressful situations. If you are filled with anxiety and fear, then that will be easy for your child to read. But if you approach this conversation calmly and reassured, your child will most likely follow suit.

You Can Initiate: Don't be afraid to start a conversation with your child. If your child is school-aged, it is likely that they have heard or overheard some information from friends, teachers, etc. Find out what they already know and make sure your child knows that YOU are their main and correct source of information, not television or their friends.

Age Appropriate Matters:

5 and Under: Try to use words that your child already understands. Focus on germ prevention and how we keep ourselves healthy. Say things like, "A lot of people have been getting sick recently and we can help keep ourselves and other people well by washing our hands."

School-Aged: Keep the message simple, but use facts to explain what has been going on. NPR put out a fantastic comic strip that factually explains to school-aged kids what is going on and how to prevent the spread of germs. Feel free to use it in your conversation. It can be found [HERE](#).

Pre-Teens and Teenagers: Stick to the facts and dispel any rumors that they have heard. The coronavirus will be all over social media and in their conversations, they will have heard about it. Encourage them to find credible sources, such as the CDC for their information. If you're finding that you're pre-teen or teenager is dealing with fear and anxiety, check out [THIS RESOURCE](#) from Fuller Youth and Family Institute.

Be Honest and Be Present: You know your child best and how best to talk to them about this. Your presence alone is reassuring in the midst of unknowns and routine changes that are bound to happen. Keep showing up, remain calm, and openly and honestly communicate how to keep your family safe.

If you need some additional support on specific, age-related behaviors that stem out of fear and uncertainty and how to address them, check out [THIS GREAT RESOURCE](#) from The National Child Traumatic Stress Network.