



Concern over coronavirus (COVID-19) and disrupted routines have created stress and anxiety for families across the country. Kids of all ages look to the adults around them for cues on how to cope with stress and change. This is a chance for us to model resilience and healthy coping strategies. Here are some strategies for talking to children during this unprecedented time.

Gently ask what your child knows or has heard about coronavirus.

Let their questions be your guide. Be aware of how older kids are getting information, especially online, and point them to age-appropriate resources. For young children, you might explain that a virus is a type of germ—a living thing so small we can't see it. When germs get inside our bodies (from touching our eyes, nose or mouth), sometimes they make us sick with a cold, flu or other type of illness.

Give children specific things they can do to feel in control.

Staying home, covering coughs/sneezes, and washing hands are steps we can all take to prevent the spread of germs. Be a good role model and let your kids see you washing your hands often. Remind children (and yourself!) that eating well, getting enough sleep, and spending time active and/or outside each day strengthens our bodies and helps us fight off disease. This can give kids a greater sense of control and reduce anxiety about getting sick.

Share factual information in words your child can understand.

It can be hard to explain why school, church or daycare is closed, or why favorite activities have been cancelled. You could say, "We know germs spread when there are a lot of people around. The people in charge of your school want to keep all the kids safe, so they asked everyone to stay home for a while to slow down the spread of germs. Staying home helps more people stay healthy, and gives doctors and nurses time to take care of the people who are sick." Reassure children that adults are working on solutions to the germ spreading right now (like medicines and vaccines) to make it easier for us to stay healthy and get back to our regular routine.

Talk with children about their fears.

Listen to your child without minimizing their fears. Reassure them about their safety, while also letting them know it's okay to feel sad, scared or upset. Recognizing these feelings and knowing that stressful times pass (and life does get back to normal eventually) helps build resilience.

Be patient with your children—and with yourself.

Do your best to offer love, affection and connection every day. Practice self-care, even if all you can find time for is a short walk or five-minute meditation.

For more information and resources, visit www.thementornetwork.com/coronavirus.