

What Parents Should Say about COVID-19



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Don't Be Afraid to Talk

- Children often judge how to react to a situation based on their parent's reaction.
 1. Respond calmly to any questions
 2. Be supportive
 3. Be confident in your ability to provide
 4. Help your child feel connected, cared about and loved
 5. Model good self-care

“Talk” at their level not yours

Infants and toddlers:

- comforting touch, hugs, rocking (behavior talks)
- Reassure them
- short, simple explanations, 3-5 words
- Toddler’s why statements are a normal developmental step

Preschool and Kindergarten:

- Get down on their level, calm voice
- Short and few sentences, 2-4 sentences at a time
- Answer the question, don’t give a history lesson
- Validate any feelings

“Talk” at their level not yours

Elementary School:

- Validate feelings and help identify where worries come from
- Empower them so they feel they have some control
- Answer questions honestly. Ok to say “I don’t know”

Middle School and High School:

- Help them find answers to their questions together
- Validate feelings-behaviors may be indicative of unspoken feelings
- Correct misinformation with facts

****SPEAK TO THE STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT NOT THE AGE****

SAMHSA gives 4 ideas to manage responses

1. Pay attention and be a good listener:

- *Allow expression through conversation, writing, drawing, play, music, song
- *Accept their feelings, Ok to cry it relieves stress

2. Allow them to ask questions:

- *Ask teens what they know about COVID-19? What have they heard?
- *Watch news coverage on TV or internet with them.
- *Careful to not let talking about COVID-19 to take over.

SAMHSA gives 4 ideas to manage responses

3. Encourage positive activities:

- *See the good that comes out of the outbreak
- *Look for the Helpers as Mr. Rogers would say
- *Empower to take control by doing helping activities

4. Model self-care:

- *Set routines, exercise, take deep breathes
- *Eat healthy, get enough sleep

Resources

1. **Emotional First-Aid for Children: Compassion in Action: How to Quickly Help in Times of Trouble** by Deborah D. Miller, PhD & Jondi Whitis, MToT, 2020; ISBN: 978-0-9763200-0-5 Kindle or Paperback
<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0976320002/>
2. **Talking With Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks;**
<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Talking-With-Children-Tips-for-Caregivers-Parents-and-Teachers-During-Infectious-Disease-Outbreaks/PEP20-01-01-006>
3. <https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/helping-children-cope.html>
4. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fcoping.html
5. **[Once I Was Very Very Scared](https://piploproductions.com/stories/once/)** by [Chandra Ghosh Ippen](https://piploproductions.com/stories/once/) at <https://piploproductions.com/stories/once/> This amazing book is available in a Free PDF version, paperback or hardcover. The story is about a "little squirrel who announces that he was once very, very scared and finds out that he is not alone. Lots of little animals went through scary experiences, but they react in different ways. Turtle hides and gets a tummy ache, monkey clings, dog barks, and elephant doesn't like to talk about it. They need help, and they get help from grown-ups who help them feel safe and learn ways to cope with difficult feelings. This story was written to help children and grown-ups (parents, teachers, and other important adults) understand how stress can affect children and ways to help them."

Resources continued

- 1. Simple Activities for Children and Adolescents:**
[https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/simple activities for children and adolescents 4.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/simple%20activities%20for%20children%20and%20adolescents%204.pdf)
- 2. Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope With the Coronavirus Disease 2019.**
Provides information for parents and caregivers about coping with COVID-19 in your community. Also available in Spanish and Chinese.
[https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak factsheet 1.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak%20factsheet%201.pdf)
- 3. Taking Care of Yourself:** Offers providers a list of self-care strategies that they can use to help determine how they feel, restore balance, and build connections after a difficult event.
https://www.nctsn.org/resources/taking-care-of-yourself?utm_source=spotlight&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=nctsn-spotlight
- 4. Look For the Helpers** by Fred Rogers https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LGHtc_D328&blm_aid=903212

Contact Information



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TIC Project website:

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