

Talking to Students about Coronavirus/COVID-19

Family and Educators Resources

› WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO DISCUSS COVID-19 WITH STUDENTS?

All people are involved in efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Students, educators, families, and communities need to be aware of the facts and have knowledge surrounding the infectious outbreak.

› WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE DISCUSSION?

Families and educators should remember to keep the conversation appropriate to the child's developmental age. Include the facts using age appropriate terminology, actively listen to concerns, and answer their questions as best as you can. It's okay to let them know if you are unsure of the answer.

› HOW TO COMMUNICATE INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19 TO STUDENTS

TALKING POINTS

- › Stay calm and reassuring
- › Ask what they know or have heard
- › Keep children updated with facts
- › Be honest and available for discussions
- › Allow children to express their feelings
- › Validate their feelings
- › Limit media exposure
- › Clarify misinformation or misunderstandings such as [Stigmas and Racial Inaccuracies](#) and [Historical Context](#)

HELPFUL RESOURCES

National Association of School Psychologist (NASP)
[Talking with Children about Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Parent Resource](#)

Child Mind Institute
[Talking to Kids About the Coronavirus](#)
 Includes a how-to-video on talking with children

Zero to Three *Early Connections Last a Lifetime*
[Answering Your Young Child's Questions About Coronavirus](#)
 Age appropriate responses for children 0-3

› REACTIONS TO CONSIDER FROM STUDENTS DURING AN INFECTIOUS OUTBREAK

Age Group	Reactions <i>caused by stress and anxiety</i>	How to Help
Preschool	Fear of being alone, clingy with trusted adults Speech difficulties, physical aches and pains	Patience and tolerance Provide verbal and physical reassurance of safety Encourage expression through play, reenactment, story-telling, and drawing



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	<p>Expresses fears through stories or play</p> <p>Change in appetite</p> <p>Increased temper tantrums, whining, or being withdrawn</p>	<p>Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements</p> <p>Model self-care, eat and provide healthy meals, maintain good sleep routines.</p> <p>Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime</p> <p>Maintain regular family routines</p>
<p>Elementary Children (Ages 6-10)</p>	<p>Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior</p> <p>Clingy with trusted adults</p> <p>Nightmares</p> <p>Sleep/appetite disturbance</p> <p>Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches)</p> <p>Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest</p> <p>Competition for family/parents' attention</p> <p>Forgetfulness about chores and new information learned</p>	<p>Patience, tolerance, and reassurance</p> <p>Play sessions and staying in touch with friends through telephone and Internet</p> <p>Be present and tolerant</p> <p>Regular exercise and stretching</p> <p>Participate in structured household tasks</p> <p>Engage in educational activities</p> <p>Discuss the current outbreak and encourage questions. Talk about what they have seen/heard online or in the media</p> <p>Include what is being done in the family and community</p> <p>Encourage expression through play and conversation</p> <p>Help create ideas for enhancing health promotion behaviors and maintaining family routines</p>
<p>Middle and High School Adolescents (Ages 11-19)</p>	<p>Physical symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.)</p> <p>Sleep/appetite disturbance</p> <p>Agitation or decrease in energy, apathy</p> <p>Ignoring health promotion behaviors</p> <p>Isolating from peers and loved ones</p> <p>Concerns about stigma and injustices</p>	<p>Encourage self-care by modeling healthy eating, exercise, good sleep hygiene, deep breathing and meditation</p> <p>Allow time to unwind</p> <p>Encourage connecting with others</p> <p>Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise and eat well</p> <p>Reassure safety. Let your children know it is okay to be upset and scared. Share with them how you deal with stress and anxiety in a healthy way</p>



The National Child Traumatic Stress Network and SAMHSA

➤ **RECOURCES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WELL-BEING**

[Parent/Caregiver Guide for Helping Families Cope with COVID-19.](#) (2020). *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network.*

[Talking with Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers.](#) *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).*

Bartlett, Griffin, J, Thomson, D. [Resources for Supporting Children's' Emotional Well-being during the COVID-19 Outbreak.](#) (2020). *Child Trends.*