

HOW TO KEEP YOUR CHILD CALM DURING THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC

Your child may understandably be concerned or worried by what they see, read or hear in the news, online or wherever they go, regarding coronavirus (covid-19). As a parent or carer, we have an amazing opportunity to open up conversations about this topic. Having relaxed and calm discussions will open the doors to other conversations which can only build your relationship with your child.

Let's remember that kids are resilient so we don't need to ignore or shield them from what is going on in the world.

Children look to adults in their life for comfort when they are distressed, and will take a lead on how to view things from you.

Remember, you don't have to have all the answers, but it is better to have a conversation to reassure your child that they can talk to you so they don't feel that they are on their own.

If our kids are anything like us, they are probably feeling quite overwhelmed!

Here are 15 tips to get going:

- 1) Talk to your child about what is going on. you could start by asking them what they have heard.
- 2) Don't expect things to run perfectly or the way you planned. Things are uncertain and that's ok. Be flexible.
- 3) Try to answer their questions and reassure them in an age appropriate manner. Remember, it's not about giving them the answers, but talking can help them feel calm.
- 4) Reassure your child that it is unlikely they will get seriously ill, and if they do feel ill you will look after them. Your child might be concerned about who will look after you if you catch the virus. Let them know the kind of support you have as an adult so that they don't feel they need to worry about you.

- 5) Give some practical tips to your child about how they can look after themselves. For example, show them how to wash their hands properly, and remind them when they should be doing it. **How to blow their nose and throw tissues in the toilet and flush. Sneeze into your elbow.**
- 6) Keep as many regular routines at home as possible, so that your child feels safe and that things are stable.
- 7) Spend time doing a positive activity with your child (e.g. reading, playing, painting, cooking) to help reassure them and reduce their anxiety. This is also a great way of providing a space for them to talk through their concerns, without having a 'big chat'.
- 8) Ask your child to think about the things they can do to make them feel safer and less worried.
- 9) Be aware that your child may want more close contact with you at this time and feel anxious about separation. Try to provide this support and **social distancing contact** whenever possible.
- 10) Remember to look after yourself too. If you yourself are feeling worried, or anxious about coronavirus, talk to someone you trust who can listen and support you.
- 11) Telling kids everything's going to be OK may seem like a good way to handle it, but it can backfire. It doesn't address their fears and it's not something you can guarantee. Instead, respond: "I know you're worried. The good news is there are ways we can help make things better."
- 12) Lead by example. Kids watch to see how you respond to the situation. If you're calm and rational, that can help settle some anxiety. Even if you don't feel calm, try to act that way.
- 13) Help kids separate what's currently happening from what they worry about happening. Let them know that you'll deal with the "what ifs" if (or when) they come up.
- 14) Place a hand sanitizer by your front door and in your car so it's easy to remember to sanitize.

15) Sometimes, When kids are worried or afraid, they don't always want to talk about it. For kids who learn and think differently, there can be added challenges that keep them from opening up. kids who struggle with language may have a hard time expressing their feelings, kids with slow processing speed may need more time to take in the information and process it.

If your child doesn't want to talk, it's important to respect that and not push.

Instead, just say you're happy to talk or answer questions any time your child wants to.

Just be there for your kids. As parents, we can do the best we can. When they come to you, put your phone down, **converse with them**, and be their rock.

