

Guidance for parents to reduce anxiety around the Coronavirus

The coronavirus (COVID-19) is causing a lot of concern and worry. We know our children look to us for reassurance and to see how to think and feel about what is happening. Here are five things that we can do to help them feel safe and calm:

1. Stay calm and positive: Children pick up on the feelings of adults, so it is important for you to be calm and positive when you are with them. Try to keep everything as normal as possible and talk to your child about how they are feeling. Having calm, panic-free conversations with you can ease their worries and help them feel less anxious. Highlight positive news e.g. reductions in increase in some areas, everyone working together and helping each other.

2. Stick to the facts: To calm children's fears about the news, adults should explain the truth, but only as much truth as a child needs to know. The key is to be honest and help children feel safe. There is no need to go into more details than the child is interested in. Encourage your child to talk openly about what they are thinking and feeling and what scares them. Let them know that not everything they hear or see about the virus is real. If you are unsure of some answers to their questions you can look to find the answers and let them know that you are keeping up to date with information. It can also be comforting to remind them that people around the world are working together to stop this and that most people get better. More guidance about talking to your child about the coronavirus can be found here:

[https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)

3. Consider Media Consumption: Think about how often you and your child are checking media and be aware of what your child is viewing on-line. You may need to reduce how often you are looking at or hearing stories about the virus. When looking online, think about the source and fact-check to prevent sharing fake news. If possible, watch the news with your child and monitor the content of what they hear and see. There are children's TV news programs and magazines that are good at sharing news in a child friendly way. Try to keep a good balance (both online and offline) in your daily routines and lifestyle.

4. Be aware of blame and stigma: It is important to think about how the coronavirus is explained to your child to avoid any person/group being blamed. Also, to help your child understand that if someone has a fever or cough it does not always mean this person has the coronavirus.

5. Boost Your Coping Strategies: Change or uncertainty can make people worried and anxious. When this happens, it is important to use positive coping strategies to help us think differently and feel calmer. Coping strategies can include positive self-talk, being active and doing things with your child that you enjoy, are fun and make you feel good for example, reading a story together, playing games, dancing singing, drawing, music, Netflix/movies, create a gratitude list, meditation, yoga, coloring, cooking/baking.

Further information, contacts and signposting to other services can be found on the school website at:

Warm regards