

Supporting Children during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak



Due to the uncertain and changing nature of the coronavirus pandemic, anxiety and stress can often be high among children and families. Helping children manage anxiety requires calmly communicating factual information, without raising unnecessary alarm. It is important that children understand the potential risks of the disease and the recommended guidelines to avoid spreading the virus. Listening and recognising your child's concerns, without panic, is crucial.

Children often look to adults for guidance on how to respond to stressful events, so it is essential to remember the following points:

Remain calm

- » Children usually mirror your responses both verbally and nonverbally.
- » Reassure children that you are there to keep them safe and healthy.

Be honest

- » Children often imagine the worst if they are not included and told the truth.
- » Use age-appropriate language and examples that children can understand.
- » Be vulnerable and acknowledge everyone is a bit scared, but this means we are focused on being safe and healthy.
- » Reassure children that the world's best doctors and scientists are working on a cure.

Remain available

- » Children may require more attention to discuss their fears and ask questions.
- » Validate their feelings.
- » Let them know that you are there to listen to them.
- » Reassure them that you love them and provide lots of love and affection.

Discuss changes at school

- » Reassure them that the school will send information on what they need to do.
- » Reassure them that while school may have stopped, it will start again.

Maintain routine

- » Maintaining routine creates boundaries often, resulting in a sense of control.
- » Create new daily routines at home with schoolwork and play activities.

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Monitor social media and television

- » Limit access to unconfirmed information from social media and the Internet.
- » Explain that what appears on the Internet is sometimes inaccurate because it can be based on rumours and incorrect information.
- » Limit the watching of repeated updates on the news, as this has also been shown to increase anxiety.

Have fun

- » Create and schedule a daily time to have fun with your children.
- » Be inventive, find activities that are fun, engaging and interactive.
- » Look at this time as an opportunity to connect deeply with your children.
- » Create a safe space, share vulnerability and create purpose through new daily routines.

Download the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement's *MyGrief* App for immediate information about how to receive bereavement support or how to support someone who is grieving.

Contact the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement on (03) 9265 2100 to arrange to speak with a specialist bereavement counsellor about telephone and online bereavement counselling.