



Cornwall Educational Psychology Service

Talking to children about Covid 19 – Tips and information for schools and families

We all realise how difficult it can be trying to talk to children and young people about global crises. As psychologists we are often asked about how much to tell children, how and when to talk to them, and how we can feel prepared for challenging conversations. We have therefore started to compile information, a list of resources and helpful websites for you to use over the coming weeks.

Helping children manage in unsettling times

The novel Coronavirus outbreak has led to a high degree of worry, uncertainty and concern. The issue has been very present in the news, and all adults and children will have some degree of awareness of events so far and may have had their lives disrupted.

During these times both children and adults can potentially feel anxious and unsure about their safety. Alongside school, parents can help provide opportunities where feelings can be discussed within a safe context, as well as maintaining a sense of normality, routine and calm. Supporting children will enable them to process and manage their feelings and build resilience.

The following suggestions may be helpful:

Reassure children that they are safe: Children will need to be reassured regularly they are safe, and that adults will faithfully try to keep them safe.

- **Let children know that it is alright to be upset:** Tell children all feelings are OK, but it is important to still behave in a polite and respectful way to others.

- **Maintain a normal routine:** Set up a work/leisure/exercise routine for students at home. Make extra time to listen to what your children need to tell you.
- **Place an emphasis on resilience and strengths:** Focus on the child's skills, in terms of their daily life. Help them see they have many strengths to help them cope if feeling anxious or upset.
- **Look for opportunities to help others:** Acts of benevolence, charity and humanity help to restore positivity about the world.
- **Provide opportunities for children to be honest about their feelings:** Sharing worries or feelings of upset with other family members reduces a sense of vulnerability and isolation, raises optimism and self-esteem. Checking in with your children to see if they have any worries can help them start these conversations.
- **Provide opportunities for physical exercise:** Exercise is valuable in developing natural chemicals in the brain to help us cope with feelings such as shock or worry.
- **Provide opportunities for creative activities:** Creative activities such as drawing, music, dancing, painting and writing allow children to find different ways in which to process the events that are happening around them.
- **Communicate any concerns with school:** If you have any worries or concerns about your child's emotional behaviour please do let the school know. There will be things the school can do to help further.
- **Look after yourself:** A time of stress can mean less energy and more potential for illness for you, as well as others. So please take care of yourself.

Websites

American Psychological Association: Information on Pandemics (a wide range of resources)

https://www.apa.org/practice/programs/dmhi/research-information/pandemics?utm_source=linkedin&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=apa-pandemics&utm_content=pandemics-resources

Anna Freud: Self-Care and Coping Strategies

<https://www.annafreud.org/selfcare/>

BBC: How to protect your mental health

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51873799>

CBBC: Video and Questions

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51861089>

ChildMind: Talking to Children

<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

ELSA: Coronavirus Story for Children

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/coronavirus-story-for-children/>

National Association of School Psychologists: Parent Resources

[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)

Young Minds: Feeling Anxious about Coronavirus

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus>

Books

Something Bad Happened: A Kid's Guide to Coping with events in the News

Dawn Huebner. How to process different world events (ages 6-12).

The Day the Sea Went Out and Never Came Back

Margot Sunderland. A story for children who have lost someone they love (ages 4-12).

Draw on Your Emotions

Margot Sunderland. A resource to help people express and communication their emotions.

What To Do When You're Scared & Worried: A Guide for Kids

James Crist. A help guide to processing fears and worries (ages 9-13).

Have You Filled A Bucket Today? A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids

Carol McCloud. Encourages positive behaviour and expressing kindness and appreciation.

How are you Peeling: Foods with Moods

Saxton Freymann & Joost Elffers. Explores how emotions look through pictures of Foods. A good way to talk about emotions with young children.

The Way I Feel

Janan Cain. Explores feelings and a helpful way to talk about emotions with young children.

A Terrible Thing Happened

Margaret Holmes. A story for children who have witnessed violence or trauma (ages 4-8).

Resources about Covid 19

We'll continue to update this with resources that can be used to talk to children about COVID-19 and also resources to support adults with self-care.

[Anna Freud Self-Care Infographic \(1\).pdf](#)

[BPS Talking to children about Coronavirus \(3\).pdf](#)

[Coronavirus Social Story \(1\).pdf](#)

[Coronavirus Workbook for Children](#)

<https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/>

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3210-tips-for-families-coronavirus>