



## ELSA Newsletter 2 - Anxiety about Coronavirus in children

Your child may well be feeling anxious and scared about the Coronavirus situation.

Reassure them that it is normal to be feeling a bit wobbly about things and that grown-ups worry sometimes too - after all, this is new and strange for all of us. They will be watching how you react to the situation, so try to model calm responses to events. It can be a relief for children to know that adults can feel worried about things but still be OK.

Listen to your child's worries and do not dismiss them. Provide them with the level of information that you feel is appropriate, without overwhelming them. It is OK not to have answers to all their questions - not knowing all the answers is part of life.

Your child may be used to seeing the "Worry tree" at school, which helps them to work out if a worry is something they can do something about or not.

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/the-worry-tree/>

Currently, there are lots of worries that grown-ups are dealing with and children may feel helpless, so emphasise what they CAN do - staying at home and washing their hands may not seem important to them, but that is exactly what will make a big difference to the spread of the virus. They are being superheroes!

Writing down or drawing worries may help your child understand and share them. Maybe they could design a "worry monster" to feed their worries to?

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/design-a-worry-monster/>



### Coping Techniques

Although it is good to listen to your child's worries, try not to let the worries take over. Talk through their concerns, but also let them know that there are things they can do to feel less worried. Calming techniques, distraction techniques or physical activity can help them to cope. Help your child work out what makes them feel good when they are feeling anxious, and make a list or even a calming bag or box. Some children may find physical exercise calms them down, while others will find quiet activities more relaxing.

For a printable list of techniques to try with your child, see <https://store.copingkillsforkids.com/products/coping-skills-checklist> - different activities will work for different children (and adults!)

These "monster" calming choices are a fun way to try new coping skills: <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/take-a-calming-strategy/>

### Calming Techniques

Muscle relaxation, calming breathing and mindful activities will reduce physical symptoms of anxiety. Imagining a happy place or memory can also help.



I have recorded some videos about ways to relax, to remind the children:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcLE99T59NSl5WihG\\_LszUA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcLE99T59NSl5WihG_LszUA) and there's a great list of ideas to try at <https://copingkillsforkids.com/calming-anxiety/>.

## Distraction Techniques

If anxiety is taking over, try using a distraction to change your child's focus. Our minds can start to dwell on the past or worry about the future, so keeping them busy by focusing on the present can help to break the cycle. For a quick distraction, ask them to name things that start with every letter of the alphabet, or do the [5,4,3,2,1 grounding technique](#).

Reading, drawing, doing word puzzles, cooking, gardening, coding, building with Lego, learning a new craft or writing stories or comics will all help your child stop focusing on their worries.

## Useful Links

ELSA Support have written social stories to help your child understand what it is happening.

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

Someone I know has Coronavirus: <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/someone-i-know-has-coronavirus-story/>

We are at home right now: <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/we-are-at-home-right-now/>

How to talk to your child about the coronavirus:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/anxiety-is-not-the-boss/202002/how-talk-your-anxious-child-about-the-coronavirus>

For children who are missing relatives or friends, the book "The Invisible String" reminds them that we stayed connected through love, wherever we are. There are lots of readings of this on YouTube, eg [https://youtu.be/\\_cO2LBBtAI](https://youtu.be/_cO2LBBtAI)

For older siblings, Young Minds have advice for teenagers who are anxious about Coronavirus:

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

