

Dear Colleague

Concern over COVID-19 can make children and families anxious and so we have put together some resources to help parents talk to children about this new disease. Helping children cope with anxiety requires providing accurate prevention information and facts without causing undue alarm.

Remember that children will look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. If parents seem overly worried, children's anxiety may rise. Try to reassure your children that everyone is working hard to ensure that we all stay healthy but be ready to give factual, age appropriate information about the potential seriousness of the disease and clear guidance on how to avoid infections and the spread of disease. Teaching children positive preventive measures, talking with them about their fears, and giving them a sense of some control over their risk of infection can help reduce anxiety.

Here are some helpful links for parents with younger children to explain what COVID-19 is:

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

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

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus?t=1583831807433>

<https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>

https://www.e-bug.eu/eng_home.aspx?cc=eng&ss=1&t=Information%20about%20the%20Coronavirus

Advice for children about handwashing:

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ELEPHANT-HAND-WASHING-2.pdf>

<https://www.e-bug.eu/>

Other websites that you may find useful:

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/#talk-to-someone-about-how-you%E2%80%99re-feeling>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

[Helping children cope with stress during the COVID-19 outbreak \(World Health Organization \(WHO\)\)](#)

[Coronavirus: Helpful information to answer questions from children \(Place2Be\)](#)

[Looking after your mental health while self-isolating \(YoungMinds\)](#)

Things you can do to support your child:

- Take time to talk with your child about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions about COVID-19 in a way that your child can understand (see some of the links above)
- If true, emphasise to your children that they and your family are fine. Let your children know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your family's exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Try to keep up with regular routines. If they are not at school, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Stay connected with family and friends, even if you can't meet up.
- Make yourself available and give them plenty of affection. Children may need extra attention from you and may want to talk about their worries, fears and questions
- Be honest and accurate - in the absence of factual information, children often imagine situations far worse than reality.

If you need extra guidance and support there are organisations who can help:

- Anna Freud - Supporting Schools and Colleges booklet
<https://www.annafreud.org/media/11160/supporting-schools-and-colleges.pdf>
- Advice and support for parents from
<https://www.healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk/parents-and-carers>
- Advice from the NHS can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/talking-to-children-about-feelings/>
- General advice and links to other national services
<https://ymcatrinitygroup.org.uk/counselling/about-mental-health/>

Remember if you are concerned about a child's mental health then see your GP for further advice or call 111 option 2 in a mental health crisis.