Supporting your child through COVID-19

It's understandable for children and adults to feel concerned or anxious about this virus and it is natural for parents to want to support and protect their children. You might do this in many different ways – giving them a hug, playing a game or having a chat. The most important thing is for your child to know that you are there for them, ready to help them if things get hard.

1. Talk to your child about what is going on. You could start by asking them what they have heard about coronavirus.

2. Try to answer their questions and reassure them in an age appropriate manner. You do not need to know all the answers, but talking can help them feel calm.

3. Explain to your child that it is natural to worry sometimes and everyone does it. This feeling, like all feelings, will come and go.

4. Don't try to shield your child from the news, as it's likely they will find out somehow from being online or from friends.

5. Be aware that your child will often copy your behaviour, so if you are feeling anxious or overwhelmed, you may need to limit how much you express this in front of them.

6. Reassure your child that it is unlikely they will get seriously ill, and if they do feel ill you will look after them. Your child might be concerned about who will look after you if you catch the virus. Let them know the kind of support you have as an adult so that they don't feel they need to worry about you.

7. Give some practical tips to your child about how they can look after themselves. For example, show them how to wash their hands properly, and remind them when they should be doing it.

8. Keep as many regular routines as possible, so that your child feels safe and that things are stable.

9. Spend time doing a fun activity with your child (e.g. reading, playing, painting, cooking) to help reassure them and reduce their anxiety. This is also a great way of providing a space for them to talk through their concerns, without having a 'big chat'.

10. Encourage your child to think about the things they can do to make themselves feel safer and less worried. Help them find things that distract or relax them.

11. Be aware that your child may want more close contact with you at this time and feel anxious about separation. Try to provide this support whenever possible.

12. Remember to look after yourself too. If you are feeling worried, or anxious about coronavirus, talk to someone you trust.

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