



TALKING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT COVID-19

Just as you might feel a little overwhelmed by the news stories, social media, and water-cooler conversations surrounding COVID-19, it's fair to expect your children are feeling anxious as well, and they're vulnerable to stress.

Join us in helping our children and communities better understand, cope, and show compassion for others, during this time.

TELL THE TRUTH. Young children don't always understand what they're hearing around them or what they're seeing online or on TV, but you can bet they're paying attention. Being open and honest with children will help them navigate stressors and even be of help to others. If you don't know the answers to their questions, use the opportunity to explore the answers together at trusted websites such as:

- [CDC COVID-19 Info, Updates, and FAQs](#)
- [Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services COVID-19 updates](#)

EXPLAIN CONCRETELY. Show children what they can do to help themselves and their friends stay healthy. Demonstrate handwashing, and explain why people are encouraging them to sing Happy Birthday or other silly songs while they're doing it. By now, your children probably already know to cover their cough or sneeze with their elbow, but take time to tell them why it's best not to get too close to people who have those symptoms – especially if they are wondering why their school or daycare has closed or if they're impacted by quarantine in some way.

DON'T DENY. Ask open questions and listen. Invite your children to talk about what they're hearing and experiencing about this issue. Find out how much they already know, and follow their lead to find out what questions you need to address.

EXPECT MANY EMOTIONS. Don't minimize or avoid your children's concerns. Rather, acknowledge their feelings, and reassure them that it's natural to feel all sorts of emotions during this time – fear, anger, sadness, worry, even relief that they don't have to go to school . . .

BE ALL EARS. Allow your child to talk freely, and let them know they can talk to you whenever they like.

ENCOURAGE PLAY. Play is a normal and healthy outlet for children. It is not uncommon for children to play getting sick or going to the doctor or other things of that nature. Encourage your children to express their emotions through play.

ALLOW CHOICES. Situations like this can make a child's world feel out of control. Offering choices will help children regain some sense of control, and it promotes their healthy expression.

ROUTINE & REASSURANCE Because of this "out of control" feeling, it is also important to maintain a routine as much as possible. This provides children with a sense of stability and security and reassures them that the adults in their lives will continue to take care of them. If you are experiencing an outbreak in your area, remind your children that: they are not likely to catch the disease, that most people who do have coronavirus don't get very sick, and that lots of adults are working hard to keep them, their families, and their friends safe.

Last, but not least. . . Take care of yourself. You'll be able to help your kids better, if you're coping well, too.

**Special acknowledgement to UNICEF and a host of local human/social service agencies who are also working diligently to keep their programs/services available to their clients and who are promoting similar messages.*