

## Discussing Coronavirus with Children

Helping children understand events, such as the Coronavirus, can be challenging and overwhelming. As a parent, you are on the frontline of supporting children as they learn to understand and deal with these experiences. Providing children with stability and reassurance can help them feel safe and secure. Below you will find some guidelines and tips to support children at home.

### Tips for Families:

- **Keep routines as consistent as possible.**
  - Children thrive on routine. Therefore, if we keep their routines consistent, it can help children feel more secure in their lives.
- **Maintain expectations.**
  - Children will be able to resume their daily routines if they understand that we maintain the same expectations as we did before the traumatic event.
- **Be aware of the signs of distress.**
  - Understanding the different signs of distress can help you identify when a child may need additional help.
  - Signs of distress include irritability and anger, loss of appetite, sleep issues, rise in behavior challenges, regression of mastered tasks, fear of being alone, and lack of interest in activities.
- **Pay attention to what children see or hear on TV, the radio, or online.**
  - Hearing too much information about the Coronavirus can lead to anxiety within children. By limiting their exposure, we can help children understand the Coronavirus on an age appropriate level.
- **Reassure. Reassure. Reassure.**
  - Reassure children that you are there to keep them safe! Let children know that you are doing everything you can to ensure they remain safe and healthy.
- **Teach children how to reduce the spread of germs.**
  - Show children that they can have control over this situation. There are steps they can take to reduce the spread of germs. This includes:
    - Staying away from people who are coughing, sneezing, or sick
    - Covering their coughs and sneezes with a tissue or their elbow
    - Frequently washing their hands and creating a good handwashing routine. This includes using soap and water, scrubbing their hands for at least 20 seconds, and using their paper towel to turn off the water and open the garbage.

## How do I respond to a child's questions?

Determining how you are going to respond to a child's questions about events can be confusing for families because it is hard to determine how much information to give. The most important thing to remember is to keep the answers simple and reassuring.

### Talking about Coronavirus:

- **What is Coronavirus?** The Coronavirus is a virus that doctors are still learning about. It has made a lot of people sick, but doctors think that most people will be okay. They are working really hard to help everyone stay healthy!
- **What happens if I get sick with Coronavirus?** If you do get sick, it could be something other than Coronavirus. We will have to talk to the doctor to determine what you are sick with and what steps we can take to make you feel all better. It's very important that we keep washing our hands and cover our coughs and sneezes to ensure that we are not spreading germs.

### Additional Tips for responding to questions about Coronavirus:

- **Ask open-ended questions.** *How does that make you feel? What can I do to help you? What are some activities you think would make you feel better?*
- **Acknowledge children's feelings.** *I can see that this makes you feel scared. Do you want to talk about it some more?*
- **When a child is stressed, they may act out behaviorally.** We can respond to those behaviors by offering the child assistance. *"It's okay to feel scared about this, but we cannot hurt others. Instead, let us press our hands tightly together like this. That can help us control some of our fear!"*
- **Calm a child's worries.** Let them know that it is okay to be scared or angry about something. However, you also want to provide reassurance and let them know that you are here to protect them and keep them safe. *I understand that this is scary. I am here to keep you safe.*