

Supporting Children and Families through the Coronavirus

Sharing Information

What is COVID-19?

- COVID-19 is the short name for "Coronavirus disease 2019". It is a new virus. The most world's most capable doctors and scientists are researching the virus and learning about ways to keep people healthy and safe.
- Within the past few months, the virus has made a lot of people sick. Still, most people will remain healthy, especially kids.

Staying in Control

Healthy Habits

- Cough or sneeze into a tissue. If you sneeze or cough into a tissue, throw it in the trash right away.
- Avoid touching your face, this will keep germs out of your body.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Follow 5 steps: wet, lather (make bubbles), scrub (rub together), rinse and dry. Try singing happy birthday to yourself twice 😊
- If you are in a situation where you are unable to wash your hands, use hand sanitizer. Wash hands once soap and water become available.
- Sanitize items in your home on a regular basis including; toys, doorknobs, light switches, remote controls, desks, etc.
- If you feel sick, stay home. Have a neighbor, friend, or family member go grocery shopping and everyday tasks for you and your family.

Discussing COVID-19 with your Child

Developmentally Appropriate Conversation

- Talking about the current health crisis is likely to lessen your child's anxiety, however, it is important to filter the information that you hear from the media. Share facts and set a hopeful tone for your child as rumors via social media and among friends may be powerful at this time (See information listed above).
- Avoid sharing too much information or allowing your child to listen to the news/read news articles on a regular basis. Encourage your child

to share what they have heard and ask questions, allow yourself to say “I don’t know”.

- Attempt to focus on the fact that there are people all around the world who are testing vaccines and treatments that will alleviate this pandemic. For now, the community of Morton and the state are taking measures to keep kids and adults safe, healthy, and happy.
- Model healthy coping strategies (i.e. working out, talking about the virus in a calm tone, doing crafts, etc.) and avoid discussing the situation when you feel overwhelmed or anxious.
- Reassure your child that although the virus is a significant topic of conversation right now, it is actually quite rare. The flu is still much more common, a sickness that comes and goes fairly quickly!
- Inform your child that you will continue to talk to them about this situation as you learn more so that he/she does not fear the unknown.
- Talk about COVID-19 as a sickness that has affected people regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, etc. Encourage empathy for those who have contracted the illness rather than stereotyping or blaming certain groups of people.

Implementing Structure without School

- Structure and Routine allows kids (and adults!) to feel a sense of control. Create a visual schedule for your child and post it in a place for all to see (i.e. refrigerator). Include school work, daily chores, meals, talking with friends, exercise, family activities, and down time. – See resources listed below for an example.
- Try to find the silver lining by carving out quality family time. Encourage your child to help you prepare breakfast, lunch, or dinner and make it fun! Implement a family game night, take daily walks around your neighborhood, do a scavenger hunt around your house (i.e. put clues around your house with funny to-do’s – dance to no music for 20 seconds), start a garden outside, look through baby books, have your older children read to younger siblings/teach a new skill, write a letter to family members, challenge them to make a snack with up to 3 random items from your pantry, and encourage your family to embark on a kindness challenge (see resources below).
- Encourage your child to connect with his/her teacher, school social worker, principal, etc. to provide a sense of normalcy.

Managing Anxiety

Education

- Educate your child about anxiety and worry;
 - Example: Being worried about something is very common! Our brains have a “switch” called the Amygdala that turns on when we need protection by something (i.e. the virus). This part of our brain does an awesome job of protecting us from actual danger(i.e. if a mean dog was running towards us) by giving us the strength or speed to run away or fight by flooding our body with adrenaline, oxygen, and other helpful hormones. Our bodies are able to respond without even thinking, pretty neat huh?! Sometimes, this “switch” turns on when there isn’t an actual threat, which causes us to experience unneeded anxiety or worry. Our body responds to this in several ways; shallow breathing, racing heart rate, dizziness, sweating, stomach ache, dry mouth, and/or nausea. When you begin to feel this way, it’s important to stop and think about ways to calm your body down.
 - Help your child name give his/her anxiety (i.e. the scaries) to help depersonalize their uncomfortable feelings. Refer to their anxiety by the name given when he/she begins feel a lack of control over their situation.
 - Check out some great children’s books about anxiety via Youtube, including; Ruby Finds a worry and Thelma Lou and the Worry Machine
- Normalize your child’s anxiety while also putting their concerns into perspective. Remind them that the chances of contracting the virus remains very low, and even if they do it will likely resemble a cold or the flu, two sicknesses that they have recovered from in the past. Also, focus on the variables that are within their control (i.e. see healthy habits section above).

Coping Strategies

- In addition to educating your child about COVID-19, answering questions, and allowing him/her to share what they already know, you may also encourage your child to do the following strategies to manage their anxiety and/or feelings towards the extended break from school; embark on a kindness challenge to shift their attention, FaceTime with friends/classmates on a regular basis, set aside 5-10 minutes each day to worry, journal about their feelings, exercise for 30 minutes per day, write down worries & separate into two categories: those we can control vs. those we cannot, practice deep breathing exercises, engage in guided meditations via Youtube, practice positive self-talk, write down negative thoughts and rip them up, take a mental vacation by imagining your favorite place, engage in grounding technique (see resources), listen to

music, following a daily routine, distract yourself by engaging in favorite activities, color/paint/create, and reach out for help.

Resources

Managing Anxiety:

https://www.virusanxiety.com/?fbclid=IwAR2TOlimNUwgJPF_47LwLfXD4J20uoyqlUCYG9c_Qws2d1ZZ0C7UOyEWfBM

Comic Explaining COVID-19 to kids:

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



5 4 3 2 1

GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

5 things you can see

4 things you can feel

3 things you can hear

2 things you can smell

1 thing you can taste



Daily Schedule

30-Day Kindness Challenge

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
Write a thank you note for small things	Post a kind comment online	Help around the house without being asked	SMILE	Give a compliment	Take out the trash	Call a family member you don't live with	Tell someone WHY you appreciate them	Your choice!	Set the dinner table
11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19	20.
write happy, encouraging chalk messages on the sidewalk	read a book to someone	Say please and thank you all day	Write your teacher a note telling him/her why you appreciate them	Teach someone something NEW	Say something kind to a family member	Text a compliment to a friend	"No complaining day" (24 hours of positivity)	Tell your parents how much you love and appreciate them	Make a list of 10 things you love about yourself!
21.	22.	23.	24.	25.	26.	27.	28.	29.	30.
Volunteer to do chores that aren't yours	Create your own kind act	Ask a parent how he/she is doing	Make a list of your friends 3 best qualities and give it to him/her	Help make breakfast/lunch/dinner	Give your sibling a compliment	Play a game with a sibling	Put all the dishes away after dinner	"No complaining day" (24 hours of positivity)	Send your teacher a compliment via email

30-Day Kindness Challenge