

# TRAUMA RESPONSE PROGRAM

## HOW TO TALK WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT COVID-19 “CORONAVIRUS”

COVID-19 “coronavirus” is all over the media and has been raising concerns for many families in the community. Children often become aware of these concerns, especially as stress increases and daily routines are being disrupted. As parents, it is important to talk with your children about what is happening and provide a place where children can express their fears and concerns. In this guide below, we want to provide some helpful information for how you can talk with your child about coronavirus and some resources where you can go for support.

**It is helpful to talk about the virus in a way that your child can understand.** If your child is younger, it may be helpful to use terms such as “germs” and “being sick” instead of “virus” and “diseases.” For older kids, it may be helpful to have a more in-depth conversation about the virus. One thing to remember is to use supportive language such as: “school is canceled to help make sure that we don’t get sick” instead of using language that causes fear and anxiety.

**Talking to your child about the common symptoms of coronavirus is helpful for both you and your child.** Going through the common symptoms of coronavirus such as fever, fatigue, dry cough, and shortness of breath with them

encourages your child to know what the symptoms are and tell you if they are experiencing any of them. This also brings comfort in your child knowing that you know what to look for.

After talking about the common symptoms of coronavirus, it will be good to bring up that these symptoms can be prevented by washing hands for at least 20 seconds and with both soap and water after going outdoors, before eating, and after using the bathroom. **Making handwashing a habit by singing a song or listening to music is a great way to make the activity more engaging.**

You may have had to cancel sporting events, school, daycare, and other activities. Your child may ask why and it's okay to tell them that you are canceling these things to stay healthy and avoid getting sick.

Lastly, **stay informed and pay attention to what is happening in your local community through credible sources and news outlets** such as [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov). There is a lot of misinformation about coronavirus on social media that is causing anxiety, especially in children. We encourage you to stay up to date with reliable information.

## MANAGING SOCIAL ISOLATION FOR PARENTS

During this time, you are most likely staying home more. Plans and vacations have been canceled and your kids are moving to an online platform for school. This transition can be very difficult, and these disruptions can leave many feeling lost and confused.

Maintaining a daily routine or consistent schedule is also very important during this time. Even though many plans have been canceled and things have been changing, having a daily routine creates predictability in your child's life and can reduce feelings of anxiety. Routines like setting an alarm and getting dressed encourages you and your children to start the day on time and be prepared for the day. Even though you may be spending the day at home, waking up on time and getting ready can help with productivity. Depression and other behavioral issues tend to escalate when we stay in bed all day.

Having some sort of schedule, calendar on the wall or even a dry erase board that can be seen by the kids is a great way to keep yourself organized during this chaotic time. Your child may get a sense of security knowing where you are by checking the schedule, even if you are in another room or running a quick errand.

Blocking out time in the day for school and other educational learning is very critical during this time.

Being at home all day may seem like school is over for the year and it can be extremely difficult to adjust to a new style of learning. However, adding in an appropriate time for school and other educational activities can help your child stay on top of their learning and will prevent them from falling behind.

Limiting electronics by applying a time limit or creating a “quiet time” encourages kids to engage in more educational activities and spend more time with family. If there is an opportunity to walk outside or get some exercise in, that can also be very helpful to help keep their minds and body healthy.

Being socially isolated can create feelings of loneliness. If your child does not have a phone or a way to communicate with friends or other family members it can be helpful to schedule some time where they can talk to their friends or family members over the phone or a platform such as Skype.

Lastly, this time can be used as an opportunity to explore new hobbies and interests at home or around the house. This can be developed into new coping skills that can be used in the future.