

Navigating Family Engagement Today

Talking to Children About COVID-19

It is no secret: COVID-19 has changed all our lives. Adults and children alike are frustrated, confused, and frightened. None of us know what to expect. We don't have a clue how long we will be stuck in our homes – how long we won't be able to go to work, school, the movies, or even many stores. Yet, as parents and adults, our children turn to us for answers – answers we may not believe we have.



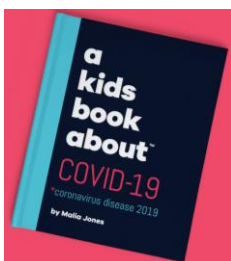
Image by Gunderesen Health System

This situation provides us with a unique and positive opportunity. Staying at home provides us the gift of **TIME** – time we can choose to spend with our children. Spending time with them will make them feel safe, cared for, and loved. If we take advantage of this opportunity, we can help our children feel safer and less anxious as long as we keep the interactions positive, loving, and enjoyable.

Additionally, following a **routine and developing a schedule** (see the previous installments of this newsletter) will have a calming influence on children.

We have also gleaned **some advice from the “experts”** about what we should do to help our children deal with this experience. Here is a summary of that advice:

- **Learn all you can about COVID-19** so you have enough knowledge to answer your child(ren)'s questions. Perhaps the best source of information is the Center for Disease Control (CDC), but your doctor or your child's school may also have resources.
- **Deal with your anxiety** so you can help your child(ren).
- **Make yourself available to your child(ren)** to answer their questions. Often the questions will come up while you are doing something else with them.
- To the best of your knowledge, do not tell your child(ren) anything that isn't true. **Answer their questions honestly, clearly, and without emotion.** Avoid saying too much. Answer only the questions they actually ask.
- **Remain calm and reassuring.** Tell them that the adults around them will do everything they can to keep them safe. If everyone in your family is well, emphasize that.
- **Talk to your child(ren) about what they must do to stay healthy:** WASH their hands often! Avoid touching their face, putting their hands in their mouths, picking their noses, etc.
- **Monitor what your children watch about the virus on TV or the Internet.** There is a lot of misinformation out there that can mislead and frighten them.



We are recommending a wonderful book, ***A Kids Book about COVID-19*** by Malia Jones. Dr. Jones is an epidemiologist and a mother. Her book explains COVID-19 in a way that is very effective for children and will be a great source for parents. The book is designed for parents to read to their children. Here is a link to a site where you can download this book for free:

<https://akidsbookabout.com/pages/covid-19>.
