

# SUPPORTING CHILDREN DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Created by Kelly Cox, Certified Child Life Specialist  
Updated 3/25/2020

## Remain Calm and Provide Reassurance

- Children often pick up on the feelings and emotions of adults around them, the calmer we are, the calmer they are
- Reassure children they are safe and will be taken care of
- Acknowledge the challenges that go along with all these sudden changes for yourself and for the children
- Reassure children that it is normal to feel stressed during times of change

## Provide Opportunities to Talk and Listen

- Check in with children daily to see how they are doing emotionally
- Encourage open communication between you and the child
- Children often have big feelings but limit the words to express them, use open ended questions to engage conversations
- If you are asked a question you don't know the answer to, be honest and suggest an opportunity to learn together i.e. visiting the CDC or WHO website

## Help Children Feel in Control

- Keep as much of a routine as possible, routines make things predictable and allow for a sense of control
- Provide them with appropriate choices when able
- Assign simple tasks around the house (doing dishes, picking up their room, helping with pets or cooking)

## Engage Children's Brains While at Home

- DO NOT stress over structured schoolwork, children often bounce back from crises better than adults, they will catch up in no time
- Take this as an opportunity to teach life skills and work on STEM projects
- Read for at least 60 minutes a day
- Go outside, when able

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## Provide an Age Appropriate Explanation of COVID-19

- COVID-19 is a virus, similar to the cold or flu which can make SOME people very sick, usually people have difficulty breathing, are very tired, have a cough and a fever, most people recover from COVID-19

## Child Friendly Definition of Common Terms

- **Virus:** viruses are a type of germ, they're very tiny, and when they get inside your body, they can make you sick
- **Germs:** Germs are tiny organisms, or living things, that can cause disease, germs are so small and sneaky that they creep into our bodies without being noticed
- **Contagious:** is when an virus or sickness can jump from one person to another through things like coughs, sneezes and contact with others

*Definitions from [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)*

## Teach Children Everyday Actions to Reduce the Spread of Germs.

- Remind children to stay away from people who are coughing or sneezing or sick
- Remind them to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow, then throw the tissue into the trash
- Get children into a handwashing habit
  - Teach them to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (sing the happy birthday song 2x for fun), especially after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food
  - If soap and water are not available, teach them to use hand sanitizer. Hand sanitizer should contain at least 60% alcohol
  - Supervise young children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent swallowing alcohol, especially in schools and childcare facilities

*Handwashing tips from [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)*

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## Additional Resources

### WORKBOOK

Free, Printable COVID-19 workbook (available in many languages)

<https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>

### VIDEOS

["What is COVID-19"](#)

<https://www.kcra.com/article/video-parents-explain-covid19-coronavirus-kids/31707838#>

"Helping Kids Manage Anxiety around the Coronavirus"

<https://gozen.com/coronavirus-anxiety/>

### WEBSITES

- <https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-you-and-your-kids-can-de-stress-during-coronavirus>
- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/coronavirus-prepare.html?ref=search>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>