

In a time when there have been rapid changes to our community from the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact has been felt at many different levels – i.e. seeing family and friends, financial, education, work, the ability to engage in familiar activities such as going to parks or engaging in sports and leisure activities etc.

These impacts have been far reaching in terms of creating much uncertainty and anxiety about the future for many. It is in these times that as parents and educators we look at ways that we can support the children in our lives. There are things that we can do to help our children that can aid them in keeping a sense of normality, and act as a protective factor in their lives.

Here is list of things that we can do to help:

- **Keep routines in place.** Routines are essential for children to grow and develop typically. In the event of enforced changes to school and work routines, implement an adapted daily routine within your household (i.e. regular self-care, chores, homework). Include fun and stimulating activities, as permitted by health regulations. Some ideas include baking, family games and outdoor play. Frame changes to routine in a positive way.
- **Recognise and manage your own feelings.** Children are highly attuned to the responses and feelings of adults around them. Remain calm when speaking to your children and others about the virus, and model calm behaviour in implementing prevention efforts (including hygiene practices or other changes to routine).
- **Find out what information your child already knows.** For school aged children, gently ask what they have heard about the Coronavirus. Offer them an opportunity to discuss any concerns, and calmly correct any misconceptions they may have. To avoid unnecessary anxiety in young children, you may not wish to raise the topic with them directly. Instead, listen carefully for any worries they may raise, or references they make to the virus. Offer reassurance and calmly correct any false beliefs. This can be done by going to reputable websites.
- **Provide children with the information they need to know.** Be honest and accurate in the information you provide and answer any questions they may have. Do not dismiss any questions or concerns they raise. Inform your children calmly and reassuringly about any changes to hygiene practices or school and home routines, this will help in managing children anxiety about Covid-19. and prevent children from gathering inaccurate information elsewhere.
- **Make yourself available** to spend quality time with your children. This helps to reinforce that they are safe and offers them ample opportunities to speak to you about how they are feeling. Engage in activities that are enjoyable to both of you, such as a physical activity or game, or other meaningful activity. This can provide a sense of normality and also open an avenue for conversation.

- **Limit exposure to media.** Non- age-appropriate information may increase anxiety and confusion, especially in young children.
- **Positively encourage hygiene practices.** Provide a sense of control in which they feel they can contribute to theirs and others wellbeing by prompting your children to engage in positive hygiene practices in a calm and positive manner. Where possible, make it fun and enjoyable for your children (eg. timing hand washing routine to a popular song).

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References

Australian Psychological Society. (2020). Tips for Coping with Coronavirus Anxiety. ([Retrieval date](#): 12th May 2020).

Quirky Kids website: <https://childpsychologist.com.au/managing-children-anxiety-about-covid-19/>