

COPING WITH CORONAVIRUS AS A PARENT

Tips and Scripts for Parents
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Coping with Coronavirus - Tips and Scripts for Parents

Small business owners have difficult conversations all the time, so explaining the Coronavirus to their kids is no different. Here are some tips and suggested scripts to turn to when you need a hand.

TIPS:

Children below 5.

There is no need to talk about it or expose them, they don't have the cognitive capacity to understand the nature and complexity of the current climate.

Be their source.

Let them jumpstart the conversation and respond with honest age-appropriate answers. It's a good sign if your kids talk to you, and it's important they express how they are feeling. Make sure your messages are consistent and all adults relay the same information. The risk, if you don't? You are simply not seen as dependable and they may not raise their concerns with you again.

Stick to a consistent routine.

This is hard right now and the new routine you will create, is the routine you want to try and repeat.

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Be mindful of your own emotions.

Easier said than done. It's O.K. to express how you feel, for example, "We all feel worried from time to time, it's normal to feel that way, I do, Dad does/Mum/sister/brother does."

This is how kids learn to express and manage emotions and it's an important learning moment to grab. Just avoid flooding them with any pointless information.

Modify your attitude.

Kids brains are very adaptable, and they can be easily persuaded. You have so much control over shaping and influencing their attitude, so be mindful of this.

Watch for changes that are not wanted.

You know your kids better than anyone, so watch out for any changes in their behaviour such as – sleep changes, nightmares, aggressive or clingy behaviour, and excessively expressing they are worried. If this is the case, it is best to seek professional help.

Naturally, avoid overly exposing kids to media sources – you too.

This goes without saying. There are many useful videos explaining hand washing and the virus, so use your discretion and enjoy the useful side of technology.

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SCRIPTS: WHAT TO SAY

Above 5.

The main message: they are safe, and you've got this. It will be an evolving conversation, there are numerous scenarios and you may need to explain further, but here are some scripts to get the flow of the conversation going:

You might say - "There is a virus, it's like when you get a cold – you might have a sniffly nose, cough (you don't need to list all the symptoms), called coronavirus."

Do people die? "Some people who had coronavirus have died. Most people don't die."

Why can't we see grandad/grandma? "He/she is older and his/her body isn't strong enough to fight off germs like ours is, so we must give him/her space for now. You can still speak/skype to him/her."

Why do we have to wash our hands – great videos on social media for this. "We wash our hands to stay clean and protect us from germs."

Why do I have to stay home – "The Government (or people who look after us) and doctors, want us to stay home because they don't want people to get the virus. If we keep washing hands like we have been and keep some space between us and, other people we may see or walk past, it will stop the germs from spreading. We don't need to do anything different than what we are doing, and you are safe."

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Scripts: WHAT TO SAY

Above 5 - Continued

Why can't I see Mum/Dad or why is Mum/Dad in their room all the time - "Mum/Dad travelled recently or stood next to someone/spoke to someone with the virus, she's/he's O.K, but the Government and Doctors have said it's better, if we have been near someone with the virus, to stay away from others who haven't. Like when your brother/friend is sick, it's better not to touch them or spend time with them because you might catch a cold. It's so the germs don't spread. Once Mum/Dad is better, you will be able to see/cuddle/kiss like you normally do. For now, we can talk to Mum/Dad on the phone/skype."

If a parent has coronavirus, no different to the above but you need to tell them the truth: "You know the virus I told you about, well Mum/Dad has it. Mum/Dad is doing what she/he needs to get better, Mum/Dad is resting and keeping space between us because she/he doesn't want to spread the germs."

If there are further restrictions – explain them and reinforce the above messages.

Adolescents are easy.

Bet you never thought you'd hear that. You don't need a script because they won't listen to you anyway. They don't need the wise words of their parents they are already approaching it from a very age appropriate 'knower' attitude.

So, my tip is to be open to hear what they know and stay curious – like in business when you are a receiver of feedback. Even if you don't agree, see this as an 'in,' you got some conversation going and they shared their view.

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Scripts: WHAT TO SAY

Adolescents are easy - continued

Adolescents prefrontal cortex is still undergoing many changes and they are not able to see an alternative view like adults can.

Try and share your view but acknowledge their view first – you might say, “Oh, so you read that, that’s interesting, I read something different, I read.” So, it’s almost like you are helping them perceive the situation differently; understand there are alternative points of views. The thing is with adolescents, if you let them be heard, they’re likely to hear you!

One Last tip:

In line with Dominate Thought Theory, the more you tell kids/adolescents not to do something, the more likely they’ll do it!

So, given you’re going to spend more time than anticipated with them - pick your battles, stay calm, and self-care – you’re no good for them if you have nothing in reserve. Now these suggestions are not set in stone. My personal advice is - take what you like and leave the rest. You know your kids better than I do. This time will not last forever and your family will survive this.

Thinking of you. Dr Emmanuella

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