

# CORONAVIRUS SUPPORTING CHILDREN IN ISOLATION

As the spread of the Coronavirus continues to gain momentum globally, more and more individuals are finding themselves in self-isolation after potentially coming in contact with the virus.

This can be a challenging experience for children and can potentially affect their mental health for weeks, months and years to come.



## TEN SIMPLE TIPS: HOW ADULTS CAN HELP KIDS COPE.

### TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT HOW THEY ARE FEELING

Encourage (but don't force) children to talk about their thoughts and feelings about coronavirus and other scary things. Tell them that it's normal to think and feel that way. Expect that kids might ask the same questions over and over as they attempt to make sense of events.

Inform yourself so you can give clear and factual information that is appropriate to their age and developmental level. Correct any misinformation and put things into perspective.

### BE AWARE OF YOUR OWN REACTIONS

Children and young people's emotions 'feed' off the adults around them, so it's important to remain calm yourself when talking about Coronavirus and isolation so they don't pick up on any anxiety you might be feeling.

Children often see and hear far more than adults are aware of, and they will take their cues for how to respond from you. Shield children from in-depth adult discussion about Coronavirus, especially if they cannot join in at their own age or stage of development.



### STAY PHYSICALLY HEALTHY

Mental wellbeing is linked to our physical health. So, by ensuring your child is eating nutritious foods and staying active, even if it's just doing light stretches before bedtime, this can all help enhance their mental health.

### STAY CONNECTED

Although we are being encouraged to remain physically distant, it is important you and your child stay socially connected. By embracing technology you can connect safely with loved ones. This can be done through phone calls, emails, face time, and social media. If those more immediate means are not available, writing letters is another great way to keep connected!

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### MAINTAIN ROUTINES

It's crucial that parents maintain routines and rituals where possible. Knowing what's going to take place in their day makes children feel safe and provides a sense of stability.

### LIMIT MEDIA EXPOSURE

Children can become anxious after listening to or watching repeated, distressing stories about coronavirus, and can come to believe that everywhere is under threat. If possible, try to prevent children from watching the news reports and footage of people with Coronavirus. However, if children view the media stories, it's important that you watch it with them. They need your adult presence and perspective. Being able to talk about the material with a caring and reassuring adult can greatly reduce anxiety.

### REASSURE CHILDREN

Let children know that there are people all over the world working hard to make sure that people stay safe, and that these people are very good at their job.

Do calming activities with children who are distressed. Reassure them that you are watching out for them.

Try to spend more time with your children and provide them with plenty of affection through cuddles and hugs.

### LEAVE CHILDREN WITH A FEELING OF SECURITY BUT ALSO HOPE

Help children to see that their world is basically a safe place, and that life is worth living.

### LOOK AFTER YOU!

When parents are feeling cared for themselves, they are better able to respond to the needs of their children.

### MAKE TIME TO PLAY WITH YOUR KIDS

Sometimes children can better express their feelings through play than through words, so make time to play with them. Try creative means such as painting, drawing or journaling to help them expressing any big feelings, or try keeping busy with things like crosswords, watching movies or boardgames. Diverting their attention is a powerful alternative. You can use games, cooking activities, stories and conversation starters to take the attention away from frightening talk of the virus.

