HELPING YOUR CHILD: ANXIETY & CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

There is so much confusing information about COVID-19 that it can be hard to keep it all straight. It is natural to feel anxious and worried. Our children feel anxious too and look to the adults in their lives to help them feel safe.

HOW SHOULD PARENTS TALK TO THEIR CHILDREN ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)?

Take care of your own anxiety first. Take 5 minutes to take some deep breaths. Call the Montefiore CALM line (718-920-2256), which can guide you through short relaxation exercises. Check out the other side of this page for more ideas.

Start the conversation & let your child ask questions. Ask your child what they have already heard on TV, social media or from their friends and teachers at school. Answer their questions honestly. Use short sentences and age appropriate explanations. It is ok to not have all the answers. Tell your child that they ask such good questions that you will have to do some research to answer them!

Keep the focus on what is being done to help children & families. You can say something like, “Doctors and teachers are working really hard to keep everyone healthy and to take care of people who get sick.”

Tell your child how they can help. Tell your child that washing their hands is the #1 thing that they can do to help keep themselves healthy. Ask your child to wash their hands with soap for at least 20 seconds before and after meals, after they use the bathroom or after they blow their nose etc. Tip: Children can sing “Happy Birthday” twice to know how long they should wash their hands for. Other ways kids can help: call quarantined family/friends to keep them company, or take on a new chore at home.

Create structure and routine. When things feel uncertain, having a predictable schedule can help. If your child’s school closes, create a schedule at home & hang it up where everyone can see. Schedule time for meals, work and play.

Focus on the positive. This is a chance for the family to spend more time together!

Move your body & keep breathing. This keeps our bodies relaxed and decreases anxiety. Schedule a family dance party and 5 min of relaxing music every day. Tip: To help children take deep breaths, ask them to pretend to smell fresh baked cookies, breath out, and then take another breath.

DO YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19?


DO YOU HAVE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR CHILD’S HEALTH?

Call your child’s doctor, who can give you the best advice for your specific situation.