



A Family Guide to Discussing the Pandemic

Many families have experienced unprecedented changes, stress, and challenges during the pandemic. Family and friends may have experienced severe illness, education has been disrupted, and relationships limited by lockdown and social distance. Both parents and children may experience loneliness, emotional stress, and loss of support systems. This guide is aimed at helping parents to be a resource for their children during these times.

How to Talk to Children About the Pandemic

Begin by considering your own stress and whether you can discuss the topic calmly and reasonably. Children will quickly pick up on and influenced by their parent's stress.

It is important to be guided by the child's questions and curiosity, so start by asking what they think they know about the virus and the pandemic. Pay attention to misinformation and correct it with simple and accurate explanations.

Pay special attention to questions that reveal the child's anxiety, such as "Will I get sick if I go to school?", "Are grandma and grandpa in danger?". Your response may include describing precautions that help you stay healthy and how you will help each other stay safe.

Stick to the basics: there is a virus going around and so, for now, they have to take special care, such as wearing a mask, keep their distance from people other than family, and washing hands regularly. Not many people are sick, but we all have to work together to stop the virus from spreading. It will not go on forever.

Remember that you do not have to have all the answers. It is OK to say you do not know. You can always learn more and talk again.

Finally, let the child know it is safe to talk and they can ask questions any time.

Suggestions

Model and talk about how you are keeping the family safe by washing your hands, wearing a mask, and getting vaccinated.

Give the child some actions to take, such as:

- Drawing is an effective strategy to help children express themselves. Encourage them to make a picture about the pandemic.
- Look for helpers who are keeping people safe (nurses, doctors, first responders, teachers, etc).
- Write get well or thank you cards for people.
- Observe the people around you wearing masks and keeping their distance.
- Make a list of safe activities, such as outdoor activities and activities where people can maintain social distance.

Some Precautions

News reports about numbers, deaths, and conflict over public health can add to a child's anxiety. Monitor and limit such exposure.

If someone in your family is not vaccinated or declines to wear a mask, discuss how to help protect them without demonizing their decision.

Watch for signs of excessive anxiety or stress, such as withdrawal, acting out, over eating or not eating, etc. Keep communication open and respond with

Other Resources

[World Vision: How to Talk to Kids About the Pandemic](#)

[How Do I Explain the Pandemic to My Child?](#)

[CDC: Covid-19 Parental Resources Kit](#)