



## TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUR CHILDREN

Children are very sensitive to change. We are living in world that is changing every day due to the COVID-19 health emergency. This may result in feelings of anxiety, confusion, stress, and uncertainty for both adults and children. It is important to provide children reassuring information while being careful not to overload them with information that may cause increased distress.

### SETTING THE STAGE:

- Remind your children that people often get sick from a cold, a fever, or a sore throat.
- Sometimes people need to go to the doctor to get medicine to help them get better.
- Resting and staying home can also help people get better.
- In an emergency, someone may need to go to the hospital, but most people who get sick do not need to go the hospital.
- Remind children that we are staying home right now and wearing masks in public to protect people who are older or already sick.
- Remind children that we are lucky to have so many community helpers like doctors and health care workers to help when people get sick.
- Explain that it is okay to have a lot of questions about COVID-19 and how things have changed.
- Let your child know that you are there to help in any way that you can.
- Discuss who the Trusted Adults are in their children's lives that they can go to when they need help with questions about COVID-19 or any other concern. Remind them that with social distancing, talking with these adults may look a little different - like FaceTime or a phone call - but that these adults are still here to support them.

### SHARING THE FACTS:

- COVID-19 is a new virus.
- Doctors and healthcare workers are learning how to help people who get sick with COVID-19.
- When someone catches COVID-19 they may have a fever, a cough, and have trouble breathing.
- Most people who get COVID-19 stay at home, stay away from other people, and use medication to get better.

- The virus spreads when the germs from one person jump to another person, which is why people are social distancing and wearing masks in public.
- If someone comes in contact with someone who has the virus, they will be asked to stay quarantined. That means staying away from other people.
- When someone is quarantined, they must stay in a separate part of the house away from other family members.
- If someone gets sick from the virus they must be isolated at home, or if needed, in a hospital.
- If a child gets sick, parents and trusted adults will take care of them. They will wear a mask and gloves. Caregivers and doctors will work together to help the child get better.
- Doctors are not sure why, but not very many children are getting sick with COVID-19. This is great news.
- Then why can't we go to school or play with our friends? We are all members of a community. Kids may not get sick, but they may carry the virus and share it with teachers, parents, coaches, church members, grandparents, and other people. We are all staying in our homes and wearing masks to protect others – like the elderly and people who are already sick – and keep our community healthy.



### FEELINGS MATTER:

- Ask your children about the feelings they are experiencing. Remember, there are no right or wrong feelings.
- You may need to help your child find the words to express their feelings. You can share some of your feelings such as worried, confused, sad, lonely, anxious, mad.
- Remember, children may not be able to identify anxiety – but a tummy ache, fast or jumbled thoughts, tingling in the body, or too much or too little energy may be physical manifestations of anxiety.
- Acknowledge and recognize whatever feeling your child shares. For example, if they share that they are feeling sad, ask, “What are you sad about?” Based on their answer, reassure them that you are there to help and support them.
- If you are not sure how to respond to a feeling your child shared, you can thank them for sharing, and take a moment to gather your thoughts.
- Your child will have many questions and may ask the same question again and again. Be careful not to dismiss their thoughts or feelings. If they are asking a question again, it is because they need to continue to talk about it.
- Respect your child's concerns. This situation is very confusing and overwhelming for everyone, especially children.

### HOW CAN I STAY SAFE?

- Wash your hands with soap and water to wash away the germs. Find a song you like to sing for 20 seconds to help you know how long to wash your hands.
- Stay home to avoid contact with people outside of your family.
- If you have to leave your house, stay a safe distance from other people. If you can reach out and touch each other – you are TOO CLOSE.

- Avoid touching your face.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Wear a face mask in public places.

#### **POINT OUT THE POSITIVE:**

- Notice the positive things that are happening in your home. It may be sharing with a sibling, working quietly to allow a parent to make a phone call, or offering to help cook dinner. No matter how small, pointing out acts of kindness helps to create a positive and cooperative atmosphere.
- Create a family gratitude jar for family members to share their gratitude and what they are thankful for.
- Remind your child that this will not last forever.
- Look for the helpers – remind your child that people all throughout our community are helping to make sure we are able to get the things we need. From grocery store workers to mail delivery people and health care professionals, point out the helpers and reflect on gratitude with your child.

#### **YOU CAN BE A SAFETY SUPER STAR**

- Have your child draw a picture of something they can do to stay safe. For example:
  - Washing hands
  - Keeping a safe distance
  - Staying at home
  - Avoid touching your face
  - Cover mouth and nose if you cough or sneeze
  - Follow face mask rules

