**Talking to Kids about COVID-19**

Whether or not the youth in your life have existing anxious symptoms, this may still be a stressful time for them. If they do live with symptoms of anxiety, you may notice their symptoms getting worse or more intense.

Kids may not have the words to talk about what they are feeling or going through, so it is especially important for parents to check in with their kids and keep an eye on how they may be reacting.

**Below are tips for parents of youth in general:**

* Don’t be afraid to talk about COVID-19 with your child. A great way to start is to ask them what they know and/or might have heard already, and let that guide your discussion. Answer whatever questions they may have to the best of your ability, and with developmentally appropriate language.
* Validate whatever feelings or concerns your child may have, and provide realistic assurance (for example, “Doctors say that the best way to stay healthy is to wash our hands, so we are!” or “Scientists and doctors are working hard to learn more about this new virus so we can know how to beat it.”).
* No matter their age, maintaining routines and consistency is important for all youth.  If routines are disrupted by COVID-19-related guidelines (e.g., school closures), work to build other routines and predictability to help them adjust to this new, temporary normal.
* Model good coping strategies, and consider doing some activities together as a family — read a book together, have a dance party in the living room, have a group video call to a beloved relative.
* Do your best to manage your child’s news/information consumption. COVID-19 is getting a lot of coverage in the news and on social media, not all of which is factual or helpful. Continue to engage your child about what they have seen and heard, help them to understand what they are reading, and work to clarify any misconceptions they may have. Furthermore, limit overall exposure to information on various media outlets.
* If you co-parent or otherwise share child-raising duties, make sure you are all on the same page and giving your child the same messages. Disagreements or conflicting information can cause confusion and anxiety in youth.
* If you notice your child start to obsess/seek reassurance about the uncertain future (e.g. “Will it be like this forever?” “What if things never get back to normal?”), try some activities to keep them in the present moment - do a baking project, start a puzzle, etc.
* MOST IMPORTANTLY: Take care of yourself, and whatever you might be feeling or going through. You are the best support to your children when you are feeling good yourself!
* Try to keep your outward mood as neutral (or positive) as possible, as your children may read into your outward signs of fear or anxiety and let it fuel their own fear or anxiety.

**Specific Resources for Parents**

* <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff_2>
* <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>
* <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/well/family/coronavirus-teenagers-anxiety.html>

Adapted from Reference: <https://iocdf.org/covid19/talking-to-kids-about-covid-19/>