

# HOW TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS AT ANY AGE

## DURING THE CORONAVIRUS

1

### TODDLERS

Keep hygiene as fun as possible. Sing songs when washing hands. Play fun music when sanitizing. Pay attention to your body language, breathing and tone of voice. Your voice will communicate a sense of safety. Say “mommy/daddy needs a break” when feeling overwhelmed.

2

### PRESCHOOL-3RD GRADE

I know you have been hearing a lot about people being sick and things being closed because of germs. There are some scary germs out there and we all need to be extra careful to wash our hands and keep things clean. Our family is doing everything we can to make sure you are as safe as possible. How do you think we can beat the germs? Color a picture of your favorite superhero defeating germs or play out a game with favorite toys beating germs. Give lots of hugs and focus on ways they are being helpful, brave, and creative.

3

### 4TH GRADE - HIGH SCHOOL

Share facts based upon your child's maturity level. Ask questions about what they are hearing from friends and others. Help correct any misinformation in a non-shaming way. Affirm their feelings. Acknowledge they might be scared and look for things they can control (ex. Sending cards to grandparents, face timing friends, taking care of personal hygiene.) Help them identify things they may be sad about such as events that might have been canceled. **Above all, listen, listen, listen.**

# GENERAL TIPS

- Kids pick up and are aware of more than we know! Don't assume your child is too young to be aware something is different or that they are too young to talk about what is happening in an age appropriate way.
- Never dismiss their fears (Oh honey, you don't need to worry about that) or tell them something that isn't true (This virus won't impact us). Instead, tell the facts in an age appropriate way.
- Don't make things scarier to get your child to listen (If you don't wash your hands the germs will get you and you won't be able to see us for weeks!)
- With anxiety, it is always helpful to guide children in developing a sense of competency and control. Help your child find solutions to the problem that they can be a part of.
- Ask if they have any questions and if there is anything you can do to help them feel better. Empower them to think for themselves and identify their own needs right now.
- Don't be afraid to let your children know you are scared or sad about what is going on. Modeling emotions and how to manage them in a healthy way increases a sense of safety.
- Follow a routine as much as possible. Structure = sense of safety. Use a whiteboard to schedule each day in large blocks.
- Get creative about ways to do things at home. Look into online options for music, dance lessons. Pinterest is full of ideas.
- **GET OUTSIDE!** The fresh air and time outdoors is one of the best anxiety reduction skills.
- Give extra love to your pet. Animals lower blood pressure and improve overall mood.
- Learn some coping skills together. Practice deep breathing as you count to 10. Do stretches/exercise/yoga together as a family. Talk about the highs and lows of each day. Set aside a block of time each day where you talk about everything **BUT** the pandemic and its impacts.
- Finally, be gracious to yourself and to others. This is a crazy time. We are all feeling a lot and having to do a lot of things we don't normally have to do (like work from home with screaming kids in the background). Give yourself some credit as a parent and make sure you are still taking some time for yourself, even if its just utilizing Starbucks drive through for your favorite drink.