

Talking to your child about Coronavirus.



We're hearing that parents & carers are unsure about how to talk about it with their children.

The pointers below will hopefully help you to structure how you discuss this with your kids.

To access phone based support from Beam, email us at AskBeam@childrenssociety.org.uk

Should I talk to my child about Coronavirus?

Absolutely.

You may instinctively feel that you should not talk to your child about Coronavirus as you are worried that you may cause upset and fear. However, our lives have changed hugely and children are bound to be curious about how and why this has happened.

Keep your discussion age appropriate and don't bombard them with too much information that they cannot cope with.

Take your child's lead and don't dismiss their worries.

Acknowledge them and answer their questions as factually as you can.



Should I let my child watch the news?

Children will be naturally curious about what is happening around them. If your child is old enough to access the news themselves, they may find it useful to read or watch about Coronavirus.

However, talk to your child about news sources; some are sensationalist, some go for shock tactics and some are plain wrong.

Perhaps choose a website or news channel together that you know is reliable.

Guard against accessing info too frequently as this can begin to dominate in a child's mind.

If appropriate, become your child's own newsreader. You can summarise the facts and discuss further if this feels right.



What if my child is worried about me?

A child, whatever their age, may well be worried about what might happen to you if you get ill.

Make sure that your child knows what support network would be in place should this happen.

If you are a key worker, or leaving the house for any reason, explain to your child how you are being protected when you are away from the house.



My child is worried about returning to school and I am worried about it too. What should I say to them?

Remember that children will take their lead from the way that you are talking about the pandemic.

Even if you are concerned about the eventual return to school, try not to show your child that you are feeling worried about this.

Reassure your child that government decisions are informed by scientific advisors, doctors and experts in viruses and diseases who will have very carefully decided how to ease lockdown.



Empower your child.

It is easy to feel out of control in a situation like this. If we, as adults, are finding things tricky, children might be too.

How can we ensure that our children feel that they have some control over things too?

Make sure your child knows about how to wash their hands properly. Tell them when they need to do this.

When lockdown eases we will know more about the social distancing measures that we will need to continue. Make sure that your child knows about these.

Whilst we are separated from loved ones and perhaps unable to visit older members of our family due to shielding, stress to your child that they are being a responsible citizen by protecting others.

Children may be missing friends and relatives. Make sure that they can communicate with others either via FaceTime or other platforms.

Don't forget the joy of receiving a letter or a postcard either.

Children can send pictures, stories or poems to loved ones, the list is endless.

Look after yourself.

It can be quite hectic spending lots of time at home, managing home schooling and the increase in cooking and household chores.

Add worries about jobs, being isolated from your own friends and the huge shift in routine and you might well be feeling stressed about the situation too.

Make sure that you have a chance to sound off safely to other adults and perhaps explore your own fears without your children being aware of this.

If at all possible, try to spend some time each day doing something just for you as this will give you space to think and re-charge your own batteries.



Adapted from:

- mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/parenting-during-coronavirus-outbreak
- youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-to-your-child-about-coronavirus

For more information and resources, please visit:

- <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/>
- <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/beam/coronavirus>