

Tips for talking to children and adults about the Coronavirus

1. Take care of yourself, eat well, get enough sleep and exercise. Keeping your own anxiety in check will help you to stay calm for those around you.
2. Assess what the individual knows and how he or she feels. You can ask and/or observe behavior.
3. For those who are verbal, discover if they are worried and what they are worried about. Do not dismiss their fears with an easy "You'll be fine." Listen and reflect back what they are saying. Validate their feelings. After you have listened you may offer some support and coping mechanisms.
4. If the person is not afraid or not interested, don't talk about it. Don't be afraid to discuss but don't give too much information or information they will have difficulty processing. Take cues from each individual as to what they want and need.
5. Speak at a level that the individual will understand. For instance: This illness is different because it's new. People are working really hard to make sure it doesn't spread and make lots of people sick. That is why we're staying home, so no one gets sick. If someone does get sick, the doctors will take care of them. Doctors and scientists are working really hard to figure this out.
6. Use visuals when possible.
7. Offer simple coping strategies such as counting to 10, taking deep breaths, listing the things we are grateful for or taking a walk. It is important to help the individual feel a sense of control in managing their feelings. Coping skills are often taught best when things are calm. You may consider practicing daily at a set time.
8. Emphasize good hygiene as something we can do to keep ourselves and others safe.
9. Create and maintain a daily routine.
10. Use daily activity schedules including visual prompts to help people know what is coming next.
11. Maintain contact with family and friends. They may be worried and not able to verbalize. It is also comforting to connect to familiar people.
12. Include time every day for preferred leisure and fun.