

What You Can do to Help Children Cope with a Disaster? (Or the Coronavirus)

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Talk to your children:

- Kids worry more when they're kept in the dark (Ehmke, 2020)
- Not talking about something can make kids worry more.
- As a parent, our goals are to help our children feel informed and get fact-based information that is reassuring rather than the playground chat or on the news.
- Talk to your children in a way they can understand. Keep it simple and factor in the child's age.

Deal with your own reaction:

- Stay calm and reassure your children
- Kids can pick up on the panic and anxiety parents are expressing. This isn't the time to talk to your kids. If you notice the panic and anxiety, take some time before trying to have a conversation with your child.

Remember what you are doing to stay safe:

- Empower your children in giving them information to keep themselves safe. The CDC recommends

washing your hands as the primary means of staying healthy. Remind your children that they are taking care of themselves by washing their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds.

- Review your family's emergency plan. If you don't have one, get one done now!
- Stay within your routine. Make sure you are taking care of the basic with regular mealtimes and bedtimes. This is also comforting for your children to maintain their day to day routine.

Keep talking:

- Have an open door for your children to talk about what they are going through and what they are thinking. Always encourage them to share concerns and ask questions.
- Keep them updated on any changes- school closures, etc.
- You can help your children feel a sense of control and manage their feelings by encouraging them to act directly related to the disaster. For example, children can help others after a disaster, including volunteering to help community or family members in a safe environment.

Resources:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) - <https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/helping-children-cope.html>

Child Mind Institute (2020) - <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>