

HARC'S GUIDE TO HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH THE PANDEMIC



HOW TO TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT COVID-19



You may be uncomfortable discussing COVID-19 with children, and that is okay! Here are some tips to make you feel better: Be honest with kids and invite them to talk about the issue. When discussing COVID-19 with children, use age-appropriate language, pay attention to their physical reactions and be sensitive to their emotions. If you are having trouble talking to a child about COVID-19 or if you do not know all of the answers about the virus, then look for an educational way for you and the child to learn together about the coronavirus. For instance, NPR has published a [comic](#) specifically for children to learn about COVID-19 in terms they will understand.

1 EDUCATE

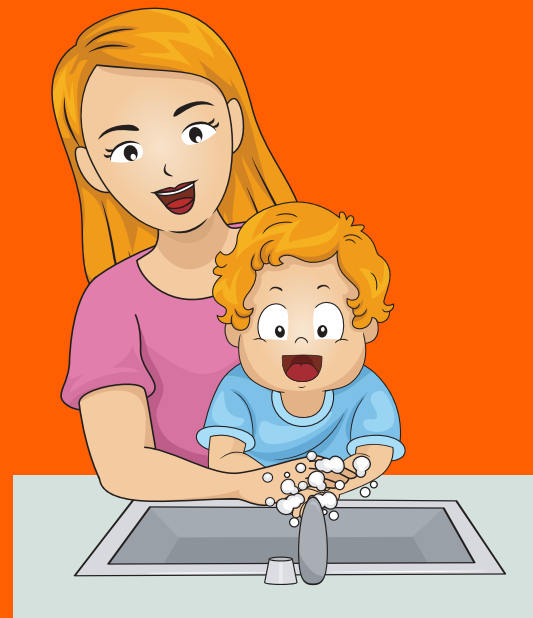
Use this opportunity to educate children about the importance of hygiene and physical distancing. There are several ways to make hand washing fun such as watching the following videos from [The Wiggles](#) or [PBS](#) or [Neatorama](#).¹

2 COMMUNICATE

Explain to children the importance of communicating with you if they begin to experience the following symptoms: dry cough, shortness of breath, or fever. Additionally, it is also important to avoid language that spreads stigma. Emphasize that anyone is susceptible to contracting the virus. Lastly, let them know you will be monitoring the media they consume and reducing their screen time to avoid feelings of distress or anxiety.¹

3 REMAIN CALM

When talking to children try to remain calm and reassuring because they pick up on social cues. It is important to remain cool and collected because kids may react to your physical and emotional responses when you talk to them about the virus.²



HOW TO TEACH CHILDREN DURING LOCKDOWN

Many children are experiencing disrupted learning during the pandemic. Schools have shifted from in-person instruction to remote instruction. Due to this change, it may be challenging for parents, guardians, caregivers, and other adults to bear the responsibility of ensuring children are still learning while on lockdown.



PLAN A ROUTINE

Establish a weekday schedule for children. They may view this disrupted time as a vacation, but it is not. It is important for children to have structure during this uncertain time because a routine establishes certainty and a feeling of normalcy. This is not to say you must maintain a strict schedule every day. Do allow for flexibility, but try to maintain a regular schedule.

TAKE YOUR TIME

Take your time when teaching children lessons. For instance, if you plan on having a one-hour lesson plan, then do it in small increments. Begin with a 15-minute lesson and gradually increase learning time until you meet your goal for the day. Be creative with breaks. For example, use everyday activities such as cooking and baking to apply math and science skills.

USE THE INTERNET

Many schools are providing virtual instruction for students. Make sure children are attending class and completing their assignments in a timely manner. Utilize the Internet to supplement children's textbook material. Educational publisher [Scholastic](#) has curated a free digital hub to support virtual learning plans for children in pre-kindergarten to grade 9.³

HOW TO EXERCISE



Exercise is a great way for adults and children to deal with stress and anxiety, prevent obesity, and boost the immune system. There are several ways to help children remain physically active during a pandemic.

- Exercise as a family (e.g. playing hide-and-go-seek; going on hikes; walking the dog; bike riding; family yoga; etc.)
- Watch online fitness videos geared towards children to motivate them to exercise. Consider the following videos: [9-minute exercises](#); [Frozen-themed yoga exercises](#)
- Assign calorie-burning chores such as mowing the lawn, working in the garden, washing a car, or cleaning out the garage. It is a proactive way to accomplish household tasks and get daily exercise.⁴

HOW TO STAY IN TOUCH

We are naturally social beings. Therefore, the hardest part about lockdown may be the loss of social connection. Allow children to reconnect with friends and family members. Have the kids reconnect with a different family member each night. It will be beneficial for all parties involved.

Do allow children privacy to speak with their friends, but also monitor who they are speaking with. Add parental controls to electronic devices when possible.

Explain to your child that social connection is still possible with the use of technology and that they will see their friends soon.⁵



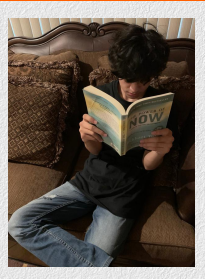
HOW TO TAKE A BREATH

Do not be afraid to reach out to others for help when you are feeling overwhelmed. If possible, take turns watching the children. "It takes a village to raise a child" is an old saying that rings true. Lastly, it is important for you to take care of yourself, so find ways to decompress and take breaks whenever possible.



Remember that there are many resources available to support both adults and children. For example, [CSUSB's Institute for Child Development and Family Relations](#) offers newsletters, free classes, and content specific to supporting parents, guardians, caregivers, and other adults involved in the children's lives.

STAFF TIPS



Our research assistant, Jerry has a younger brother who reads a book of his choice that is not school related. This is fun for him and it is also a great way to practice reading comprehension skills.



Our CEO, Jenna, has two young godchildren. They have been keeping busy with free drawing lessons and yoga lessons on YouTube. Their mom recommends to explore activities thoroughly and not rush through when they are having a good time.

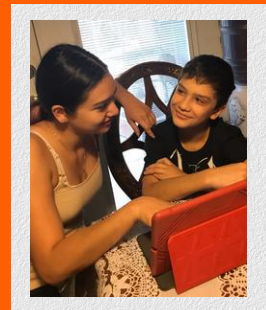


Our administrative manager, Theresa, has a great niece and a great nephew. The teachers at their elementary school did a caravan throughout the school district and it made the children's day. Their signs read "We love our teachers!" The caravan was a fun and healthy way for the children to practice social distancing with their beloved teachers.



Our director of research and evaluation, Casey, keeps in touch with her niece through Facetime. This allows both of them to continue interacting.

Our research assistant, Amairani recommends to try to make school work fun and interactive when possible. She knows her brother enjoys using his iPad a lot so she sits down with him to go through his reading on his iPad. They also found games to practice his math skills.



SOURCES:

1. <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-talk-your-child-about-coronavirus-covid-19>
2. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/talking-with-children.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fschoools-childcare%2Ftalking-with-children.html
3. <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/5-tips-help-keep-children-learning-during-covid-19-pandemic>
4. <https://www.danburyhospital.org/newsroom/articles/kids-exercise-and-covid19>
5. <https://nyulangone.org/news/schools-out-parents-guide-meeting-challenge-during-covid-19-pandemic>

For more information, please visit: HARCdata.org/covid19

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