

How to talk to your child about the Corona Virus.

Our psychologists at Save the Children's Support share their top tips for parents and caregivers on how to talk to children about the Coronavirus and what is happening in our society right now.

Talk to children about what's worrying them.

Children are affected by everything that is happening right now. They hear adult discussions and news reports on the Corona virus. Most importantly, children are affected by how adults are reacting to the situation.

Preschools and schools may be introducing new procedures to prevent the spread of the Corona virus and this can lead to children believing that something very grave is about to happen or is happening.

All children are different. Some children will barely notice the buzz around them, while others may interpret everything and potentially see all new routines and adult discussions as signs of danger.

Take the time to listen.

Make sure you are present when talking to children about the Corona virus, away from distractions or interruptions. It is also advisable to have the discussion when you have enough time to discuss at length and answer all the questions the child may have. A tip would be to choose a time when you normally talk to each other, for example at the dinner table or at bedtime. Choose a moment when you the adult are calm and able to be reassuring.

Take your cues from the child and their questions.

When talking to children about the Corona virus, it is important that you start with the child's questions. Try to focus on what the child is actually interested in finding out rather than more detailed information that maybe more relevant for adults.

Children of preschool age, often need a lot of help from adults to translate their emotions and thoughts into words. It is important that adults notice if and when, children react out of concern. They may react to a change in their regular routine or a similar change. It is key to remember that younger children respond more to what adults do than what is said, neither do they understand news reports in the same manner as older children.

When talking to children of school age, it is safe to assume that they already have quite a lot of information, since they understand some of the news reporting and are often active on social media. For this group of children, it is very important that you start from what the child knows about the corona virus, enquire about their thoughts, assumptions and questions.

Children of this age are often interested in concrete facts and understanding how things work. They generally, come up with a question and then have to think about the answer for a while before formulating a new idea.

Keep in mind that children often understand bigger scary issues, a little at a time.

Stick to facts

When discussing the Corona Virus and addressing the child's questions, try to be as objective and state the facts as much as possible, it is also important to adapt your language to the child's age. It is good to give children information about new routines and explain why such routines are important. For example, you can share that there are adults in Sweden who are working on giving advice on what we should do to reduce the risk of contamination as smartly as possible. Most people who become infected with the virus become mildly ill, but there are some people who become seriously ill or in some rare cases die. They belong to so-called risk groups, they are often the elderly or people who have existing illnesses:

Here are the most important routines are to:

- Do not visit people who are elderly and sick
- Wash your hands frequently or use hand spirit
- When coughing and sneezing do so in a tissue (dispose of it immediately) or in the fold of your elbow
- Stay at home when you are unwell and rest until you are fully healthy again

Be calm, stay positive and spread hope

As an adult, it is important to keep calm. When adults exhibit signs of anxiety this very often, triggers the child's own anxiety. The effect for the child can be much stronger than actual knowledge of what is going on.

It is naturally important that you as an adult continue to trust the information provided by certified bodies such as the Public Health Authority who give regular updates on the progression of state of affairs.

