

HELPING KIDS COPE: COVID-19

How to help children during times of stress and uncertainty



Managing the Fears of our Children

During this time, children across the country are beginning to worry about their own health and safety as well as that of their friends and family. It is more important now than ever to be mindful of how our children are consuming and managing this unfolding information. With the spread of this virus, the daily lives of all of our children have been impacted in some way. - whether that be parents who are home, cancelled school trips, closed schools, postponed vacations, or the removal of sports programs. How we manage our own reactions can have a large impact on how our children respond.

If you are struggling with either your own response or need help managing the conversations and fears of your children, please know that you are not in this alone. We are only a phone call away and can be reached 24/7/365 on our crisis line.

We are also available for telehealth, telephone, and face-to-face sessions.



HOW TO CONTACT US:

The Counseling Team International (TCTI)

(909) 884-0133

(800) 222-9691



Things to Do:

- **Remain calm and encouraging:**
children react to not only *what* we say, but also *how* we say it. Our children are constantly learning from our emotional reactions in both conversations with them and the conversations we have with others. Speak to them in a calm and straightforward way.

- **Be available:**
make yourself available for them if they feel the need to talk and process what is happening.

- **Provide appropriate information:**
when speaking with children about their fears and concerns, be sure to provide them with age appropriate, accurate information. Every child is different and will be able to manage different levels of information. Be mindful of what information is appropriate for your child and know that it is ok to let them know that some questions can't be answered at this time since the information, knowledge and awareness is constantly changing.

- **Address the misinformation they may have:**
some children may be under the false pretense that everyone who gets sick is going to die. Help them understand that the majority of people who get sick will make a full recovery. Also encourage them to understand that not all of the information they hear from friends, family, or the media is accurate.

- **Don't offer false promises:**
be careful not to offer any false promises to children such as "nothing will happen to us". This is not something we can guarantee. Instead, support them by helping them understand that no matter what happens, you will do your best to get through it together.

- **Help children focus on what they can control:**
encourage your children to be aware of the things they can do to help protect themselves and the people around them. This may include washing their hands, staying away from people who are coughing or sneezing, and coughing or sneezing into their elbow.

- **Remind them that they are not in this alone:**
one of the most isolating and fear invoking feelings is the feeling of loneliness. Encourage your children to always remember that you are in this together and they can always come talk to you about their fears and questions, but they can also speak to another adult, or clinician as well.



"If you look scared or tense or your voice is conveying that you're really scared, the child is going to absorb that and feel anxious as well."

-Eli R. Lebowitz, Ph.D.