Ways to Help Children Cope with Anxieties & Fears of COVID-19

Providing honest information is crucial.

Honest information can help reduce anxieties and clear up misconceptions that lead to unnecessary stressors.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Use the terms "COVID-19" or "Coronavirus" to help children differentiate from a common cold/illness. Explain that this is one virus with two names.

- Help them understand the facts rather than the rumors.

- Explain that people are getting sick from new germs.

- Explain that people are not getting sick because they did something wrong or didn't follow the "rules". It is not a punishment.

- Reassure them that first responders and healthcare workers are trained to care for sick people and are working hard to help everyone.

- Limit media coverage. Prolonged exposure may increase anxiety.

- Assess your own fears as they may be affecting your children's fears. Model appropriate relaxation techniques and self-regulation.

- Encourage play and activities for healthy expression of emotions and as a tool for self-regulation.

- Provide opportunities for movement and release of energy.

- Provide opportunities for them to ask questions. Ask them direct questions such as:

  "What is something you are wondering about?"
  "What is something you are scared about?"

- Be honest with children when you don't know the answer. Let them know we're all figuring this out together.

- Establish routines, even if it's simply going over some of the main events planned for the day. This helps children establish predictability in the midst of the unknown.

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