

# How to support your child if they are feeling anxious about coronavirus



It's understandable for children and adults to feel concerned or anxious about this virus and it is natural for parents to want to support and protect their children. You might do this in many different ways – giving them a hug, playing a game or having a chat. The most important thing is for your child to know that you are there for them, ready to help them if things get hard. We hope these tips help you support your child at this time.

- 1. Talk** to your child about what is going on. You could start by asking them what they have heard about coronavirus.
- 2. Try** to answer their questions and reassure them in an age appropriate manner. Remember, you do not need to know all the answers, but talking can help them feel calm.
- 3. Explain** to your child that it is natural to worry sometimes and everyone does it. This feeling, like all feelings, will come and go.
- 4. Don't** try to shield your child from the news, as it's likely they will find out somehow from school, being online or from friends.
- 5. Be aware** that your child will often copy your behaviour, so if you are feeling anxious or overwhelmed, you may need to limit how much you express this in front of them.
- 6. Reassure** your child that it is unlikely they will get seriously ill, and if they do feel ill you will look after them. Your child might be concerned about who will look after you if you catch the virus. Let them know the kind of support you have as an adult so that they don't feel they need to worry about you.
- 7. Give** some practical tips to your child about how they can look after themselves. For example, show them how to wash their hands properly, and remind them when they should be doing it.
- 8. Keep** as many regular routines as possible, so that your child feels safe and that things are stable.
- 9. Spend** time doing a fun activity with your child (e.g. reading, playing, painting, cooking) to help reassure them and reduce their anxiety. This is also a great way of providing a space for them to talk through their concerns, without having a 'big chat'. For activities ideas, visit our **starting a conversation with your child guide**.
- 10. Encourage** your child to think about the things they can do to make themselves feel safer and less worried. Help them find things that distract or relax them.
- 11. Be aware** that your child may want more close contact with you at this time and feel anxious about separation. Try to provide this support whenever possible.
- 12. Remember** to look after yourself too. If you are feeling worried, or anxious about coronavirus, talk to someone you trust who can listen and support you.



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## Helplines and Resources

### YoungMinds Crisis Messenger

- Provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis.
- If you need urgent help text YM to 85258.
- All texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical supervisors.
- Texts are free from EE, O2, Vodafone, Three, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile and Telecom Plus.



### Parents Helpline

- Our Parents Helpline is available to offer advice to parents and carers worried about a child or young person under 25.
- Call our free helpline for confidential, expert advice on 0808 802 5544.
- Available Mon-Fri from 9.30am to 4pm- available in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Out of our operating hours, you can contact the Parent Helpline via our online contact form.



### Childline

- Comforts, advises and protects children 24 hours a day and offers free confidential counselling.
- Phone 0800 1111 (24 hours).
- Chat 1-2-1 with a counsellor online.



### The Mix

- Information, support and listening for people under 25.
- Phone 0808 808 4994 (24 hours).
- Get support online.



### Samaritans

- 24 hour confidential listening and support for anyone who needs it. (Adults included.)
- [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)
- Phone 116 123 (24 hours).

