Tips to Help Children Manage Coronavirus Anxiety

We are living in a time of high uncertainty, and with adults becoming increasingly anxious about coronavirus, including the impact on the economy, work, school, and family life, it’s inevitable that the **children in our lives are noticing that tension**.

When the nervous systems of parents, educators, and other adult authority figures are activated, it acts as a warning to children, whose own nervous systems become activated as a result.

**After all, if the people in charge seem scared it only makes sense to be concerned.**

While we can’t eliminate the transmission of our own anxiety to the children in our lives, we can mitigate the impact in some significant ways:

* **Manage Your Own Nervous System:** Do what you can to support your own well being, and manage your own fears. Remember that simply intentionally slowing down your breath, and feeling your feet on the ground, can go a long way towards calming the nervous system. Here is a wide range of helpful resources specifically on coronavirus and health anxiety from the [Anxiety and Depression Association of America](https://adaa.org/finding-help/coronavirus-anxiety-helpful-resources).

* **Be Honest But Not Alarmist:** Kids hear their grownups talking and see their worry, and if we are secretive on top of all that they are left to manage their fears alone. It’s important that we share what is happening with children (keep it simple!), and give them time to ask questions. Here is a great resource from NPR that can help with the conversation in [comic book form](https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus).

* **Teach Kids What They Can Do:** Being able to take action in a situation that feels threatening is usually very helpful. You’ve undoubtably heard all the recommendations to wash hands frequently, and are likely telling your kids to do so. Making the direct connection for them that every time they do a good handwash, they are not only helping themselves, but others as well, can make things feel a little less out of control.

* **Reassure Them The Grownups are On It:** Tell children explicitly that some of the smartest and most educated doctors and scientists in the world are working to learn more about this virus every day, that you are paying attention to what is happening and that you’ll talk with them about any new developments. For many kids, this kind of direct language allows them to in effect outsource their worries to you. If the person in charge is on it and honest, then they don’t have to keep trying to figure it out.

* **Reduce Anxiety with Exercise and Fresh Air:** Often children’s anxiety needs to be addressed from the body up, and one of the quickest ways to change the biology of anxiety in our bodies is with outdoor exercise. Take advantage of some early spring weather, and get your kids walking or running outside, onto bikes and scooters, on hiking trails, and anything else that is accessible to you. Do it as a family and you’ll reduce your own anxiety as well!

Source: Little Yoga Flower: Embodied Mindfulness Helping Kids Thrive