



Hello Liberty Parents

March 18, 2020

I hope this message finds you all to be well and in good spirits. As we face these challenging times, I have attached a few things I thought you might find helpful during your children's time away from school.

Attached you will find information about talking with your kids about coronavirus (article from the New York Times) along with some activities from a website called centervention that I find helpful in my work with kids.

Let me know what you think!

Sincerely,

Crystal Miller, Social worker

The New York Times

Explain to your daughter or son, in an age-appropriate way, that in many cases, schools are closing in an effort to slow the spread of this virus in the wider community, even as kids have so far shown milder symptoms than adults. Since many schools have unclear timelines for when they will reopen, it's also important to reinforce that, in the grand scheme of things, even a few weeks off will one day be a "remember when" story and nothing more.

Declare the first day off a faux snow day. Allow your child to sleep late, wake up to hot cocoa and marshmallows and do the spring equivalent of building a snowman. Enjoy the freedom and frivolity that come with an unscheduled break. One day won't matter to your kid's schoolwork, but it will set the tone and ensure that everyone starts with a positive outlook.

Organize your time

On Day 2, think about what defined schedule will work for your family. Research shows that children are more likely to thrive with predictable, consistent routines at home that provide, among other things, a sense of security, and help their social and emotional well-being. This source of stability will be even more critical during what may be a prolonged period without the structure of a normal school day.

Decide what aspects of the daily routine will stay the same, and use your kid's regular schedule as a starting point. Wake-up time shouldn't slide too late, despite what your daughter or son might prefer. Even if you allow them to sleep in a bit, make sure they are up, dressed and ready by whenever their first class would typically begin.

After that, use the school schedule to frame the day. Keep the same "periods" between classes, which will help allot set times for different activities and provide both structure and variety to each day. Also try finding different quiet places they can work throughout the day; perhaps morning study time is at the kitchen table, but midday reading is on the front stoop and afternoon study time is in the den.

Serve lunch at the same time as it would be at school, and encourage your child to use that break to catch up with a friend using FaceTime to provide more personal social engagement with peers. Likewise, keep other activities on schedule, if possible, even if it takes some creative thinking. I know one family conducting piano lessons via FaceTime to practice social distancing from a music teacher.

[How to talk to your kids about coronavirus.]

How to Talk to Kids About Coronavirus- The New York Times Keeping your own anxiety in check is key.



By **Jessica Grose**

As coronavirus continues to spread across the globe, we're working to answer [the questions on many parents' minds](#). This is a fast-moving situation, so some information may be outdated. For the latest updates, [read The New York Times's live coronavirus coverage here](#). This story was last updated on March 13, 2020.

By now, your children may have heard about the new coronavirus, whether it's from a snippet of a news briefing or from other kids at school. They may have family members who have been quarantined here because of recent international travel, or they may even know someone who is sick. "My patients are scared," said Dr. Nia Heard-Garris, M.D., an attending physician at the Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago. So what should you tell kids about the coronavirus, and how? We spoke to a pediatrician, two psychologists, a pediatric infectious disease specialist and a safety expert for their best tips.

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Assess what your child knows

Dr. Heard-Garris said that you should start the conversation by asking what your child has heard about the virus. If they've heard that people all over the world are dying, and the Grim Reaper is coming for us, too, that's a very different conversation than if they've just heard it's like [the flu](#), Dr. Heard-Garris said.

If your child is under 6 and has not heard about the virus yet, you may not want to bring it up, as it may introduce unnecessary anxiety, said Abi Gewirtz, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist and professor at the University of Minnesota, and the author of the forthcoming book “When the World Feels Like a Scary Place: Essential Conversations for Anxious Parents and Worried Kids.”

Process your own anxiety first

Make sure “you’re not panicking in their presence around the topic,” said Dunya Poltorak, Ph.D., a pediatric medical psychologist in private practice in Birmingham, Mich. “Your demeanor is going to stir this massive pot of anxiety.” So try to process any fears you may have before you talk to your children, whether it’s by talking to a friend, a partner or a therapist. “We don’t want our children to feel like the world is so scary,” said Dr. Gewirtz, because that might keep them from being curious and engaged.

Don’t dismiss your child’s fears

If your child is afraid because some kid on the bus told him he might die, that’s a real fear and you should take it seriously, Dr. Gewirtz said. If you simply tell the child, “You’ll be fine,” they might not feel heard. “Listen to them and track what the child is feeling,” she said. You can say something in a calm voice like, “That sounds pretty scary, I can see it in your face.” You can also relay an anecdote from your own childhood about a time when you were scared. Then, after the child has calmed down, perhaps over dinner, you can bring up coronavirus again.

Talk at an age-appropriate level

If you are talking to your young child about the virus, you can say something like, “There’s lots of different viruses, like when your tummy hurts, or sometimes when you have a bad cold. Coronavirus is another type of virus,” Dr. Poltorak said.

Depending on how old your child is and how much they know, you might also say something like, “This illness is different than a cold because it’s new, but people are trying really hard to make sure it doesn’t spread, and they treat people who are sick. If you ever have questions, talk to me,” Dr. Heard-Garris said. You can also say, “Scientists and really smart people all around the world are trying to figure out how to keep people safe and healthy.”

Emphasize good hygiene

Make sure your kids are washing their hands for at least 20 seconds before and after meals, after they go to the bathroom, after they come in from outside and after they’ve blown their nose or put

their hands in their mouth, said Dr. Rebecca Pellett Madan, M.D., a pediatric infectious disease specialist at N.Y.U. Langone's Hassenfeld Children's Hospital. Children should sing "Happy Birthday" twice to know how long to wash their hands, and then make sure they are drying them thoroughly. Hand sanitizers may be less effective for small children, Dr. Madan said, because they need to evaporate fully to kill all the germs, and little kids may be rushing off to touch toys or other kids before the sanitizer has dried. For people of all ages, hand washing is preferable to hand sanitizer, though sanitizer is a decent option if hand washing is not possible.

Several experts recommended making hand washing into a game. "You can even make it into a competition," said Judith Matloff, who teaches conflict reporting at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and is the author of the upcoming book "How to Drag a Body and Other Safety Tips You Hope to Never Need: Survival Tricks for Hacking, Hurricanes and Hazards Life Might Throw at You." Compete with your kids to see who can wash their hands the longest, or who can make the suds the biggest.

If you have a little nose picker, Dr. Madan suggested saying something like, "Do you remember when your friend was out sick last week? Being sick is part of being human, but when you're picking your nose, you can get boogers on your fingers and they can spread germs to your friends." She also recommended an episode of the show "Ask the StoryBots" on Netflix called "How Do People Catch a Cold?" for an age-appropriate explanation for little kids about how germs work.

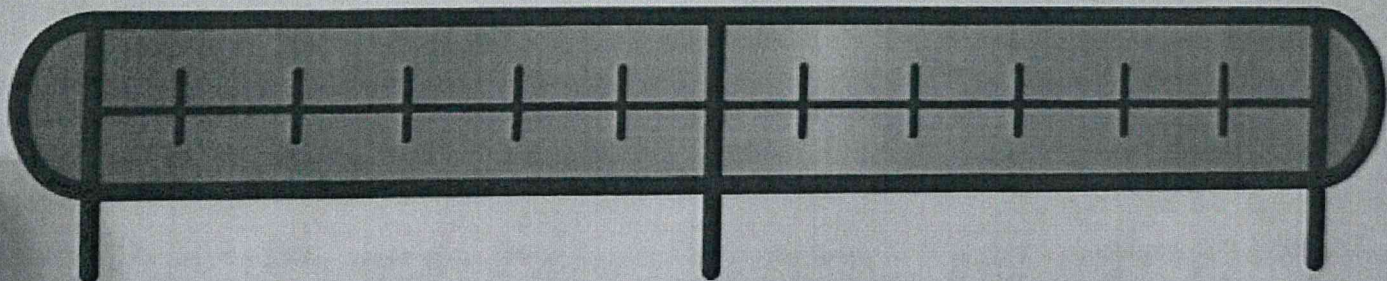
Name: _____

THE WORRY SCALE

Directions: In the space below, list a few things that you worried about or that you are fearful of.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Directions: Take a look at the scale below. Think about each of the things you listed above and where it falls for you on this scale.



Not
worried/scared

Worried/scared

So worried/scared
it's all I can think
about

This lesson from (Centervision.com) has been slightly modified from an educator's lesson to a parent's tool.

The Worry Scale Lesson

Parent (speaking to your child) : "Have you ever been scared? (Whether the answer is yes or no), parent follows-up with, "We all have certain things that scare us, and that's OK. And there are a lot of things going on in the world today, (optional to say, "like coronavirus"), and sometimes those things make us worry to the point of being afraid, and that's called fear.

Can you tell me what fear is?

***give time for child to answer**

Fear can sneak up on you and make you feel all-weird, your heart might race and you might get that frog/lump in the back of your throat or your stomach might feel funny or nervous.

Sometimes fear can completely overcome us and make us feel like we can't do anything. "

***Hand our worksheet**

Parent: "I'd like you to look at this worksheet. Please write down a few things that scare you or that you worry about. (It's ok to help with the writing by writing what your child says).

After you've listed a few things, look at the scale. Think about where each thing you listed belongs on the scale.

For example: If I wrote down that bugs scare me, I'd look at the scale, and it would fall on the "little worried/scared" because they scare me but not so much where I'm really scared."

***Give child time to write**

Parent: "Now that you've written down your worries or the things that scare you and where they fall on the scale, let's talk about them together.

Ask your child to talk about some of their fears (if they are comfortable doing so).

Explain that many kids may be very fearful about something another kid isn't fearful of at all. Explain how helpful it can be to talk about our fears. Parents, teachers, and friends are here to talk about it with you. By talking about what we are fearful of, making a plan to help with that fear or move past it, will make us feel better. It will also help us to overcome the fear, or it will move down the worry scale for us.