



25.3.20

Dear parents and carers,

It can feel stressful and overwhelming during an event like the outbreak of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and we can all be affected differently. You or your children might feel overwhelmed by the information, conversations and the increased levels of stress in your community. I've collected some tips to help you and your family manage the stress as best as possible.

Stay Informed

Accessing reliable information during an infectious disease outbreak will help ensure you and your family members are taking appropriate steps to stay healthy.

Stay up-to-date about developments related to the infectious disease outbreak by using a reliable and accurate source of health-related information, for example, through the services listed below.

- Australian Government Department of Health | www.health.gov.au
- Healthdirect hotline | 1800 022 222 | www.healthdirect.gov.au
- Coronavirus Health Information Line | 1800 020 080

Supporting Children

Children will inevitably pick up on the concerns and anxiety of others, whether this be through listening and observing what is happening at home or at school. Providing opportunities to answer their questions in an honest and age-appropriate way can help reduce any anxiety they may be experiencing. You can do this by:

- o Speaking to them about coronavirus in a calm manner- attached are some stories that you could share with younger (https://www.mindheart.co/descargables?fbclid=IwAR0--wtczsF2OodUPcHve9Mnyh9VJuGMzk6cviSdxtJqZZdDl0JHn7_caJQ) and older children (https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus?utm_campaign=storyshare&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&fbclid=IwAR3zVymbqIJB8ihHPHsAlldv78JDclhkzWgZqNBCS_Lkfhb2_RJrv4YM4b0)
- o <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-talk-your-child-about-coronavirus-covid-19>
- o Asking them what they already know about the virus so you can clarify any misunderstandings they may have
- o Letting them know that it is normal to experience some anxiety when new and stressful situations arise
- o Giving them a sense of control by explaining what they can do to stay safe (eg wash their hands regularly, give people space and a bigger 'personal bubble' for the moment)
- o Not overwhelming them with unnecessary information (eg death rates) as this can increase their anxiety
- o reassure them that coronavirus is less common and severe in children compared to adults
- o allowing regular contact (eg by phone) with people they may worry about, such as grandparents, to reassure them that they are okay.

Go even further back to basics. Our children learn by observing. Keep doing the stuff you love to do (where possible) and the things that are important to you, model that there is a life outside of the pandemic, and ensure you're having conversations about other things as well. Try not to let the children worry about financial or other stresses that may be occurring in your family as a result of the virus.



Schooling from home

If you are schooling from home, try and keep to the most regular routine you can. Wake at the same time, begin school activities at the same time, and go to bed at the same time. Regular sleep routines will help reduce stress. Reduce access to TV news and social media hysteria to decrease anxiety.

Provide opportunities for your kids to switch off, watch a movie together or play a board game. Staying active will help them (and you!) to sleep better, manage stress and boost mood and will provide some much needed fresh air and vitamin D - even going for a walk as a family or down to the local park are safe options. Follow your regular routines in a modified way as much as possible- for example, footy in the back yard, instead of at training.

Stay hydrated and continue to enjoy a healthy diet.

For further information on setting up routines for learning from home see <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/learning-from-home/advice-to-parents-and-carers#Establishing1>

When to seek additional help

During this outbreaks, particularly when the nature and impact of the disease is still unknown, it is understandable to experience emotional distress about the outbreak and its potential impact on you, your family and your community.

Below are some services for children and adults

- Kids Helpline is available in online chat <https://kidshelpline.com.au/kids> and by phoning 1800 55 1800 for children from the age of 5.
- Beyond Blue has online chat <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/> and phone options 1300 22 46 36 for adults.
- Lifeline13 11 14 <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

If your emotional distress becomes severe please call the Mental Health Access Line on 1800 011 511, or arrange to see your GP. If in danger call 000.

Together we can support each other to get through this difficult time.

Take Care,

Mark Scotton (Principal)