

# Discussing with children about the Coronavirus COVID-19: Helpful advice for parents

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Discussions and concerns about the new virus can cause significant anxiety and stress to children.

The best way to help our children is to talk to them about this new situation without panic but also to make sure they understand its seriousness.

It is important to remember that children turn to their parents to understand how they should react to stressful events. If parents are overly anxious, children's anxiety is likely to grow.

To help children avoid stress, we need to give them simple practical tips on how to protect themselves, calm them out of their fears, and help them gain a sense of control over the situation.

Be calm and reassuring

Keep in mind that children react and follow the reactions of the adults in charge of their care.

What we say to children in relation to the virus, in terms of preventive measures taken and related developments can either increase or decrease children's anxiety.

Emphasize to children that they and their families are in good health as long as this is the case.

Remind them that you and the teachers at their school are there to keep them safe and sound.

Be honest - Give children accurate information

If children are not properly informed, it is easy to start imagining things far worse than they actually are.

Find out about the virus, its symptoms, how it is transmitted and how we can protect it from the EODY site: <https://eody.gov.gr/>

Be available for discussion

Children may want to talk to someone about their fears, their worries, their questions.

Let your children talk to you about their feelings and reassure them. It is important to feel that they have someone to talk to.

Avoid making accusations

When there is tension, it is sometimes easy to start blaming someone or groups of people.

It is important to avoid stigmatizing groups of people who are responsible for the virus and to avoid making such negative comments when talking to our children, explaining that they should not reproduce such negative comments that they may have heard somewhere.

Limit children's exposure to television and social media

Try to limit children's exposure to images and news about the virus that may frighten

Keep your child's day-to-day routine as much as possible.

Maintaining a routine is reassuring for children as it helps them maintain a sense of security and regularity in their daily lives.

Important points we need to focus on in our discussions with children:

Adults at home and at school take care of your health and safety. If you have any concerns, talk to an adult you trust.

Not everyone will get sick from coronavirus (COVID-19). The health authorities and the school authorities are particularly careful to ensure that as few people as possible are affected.

It is important that all students treat each other with respect and do not come to arbitrary conclusions about who has or does not have the virus.

Focus on what children can do to protect themselves, rather than what they cannot control. This will help them regain a sense of control over things and the world.

For any further information or clarification you can call “TheLine SOS 1056”, which is supported by specialized scientific staff (Social Workers and Psychologists) to respond effectively to questions of children and adults, providing them with psychosocial support in relation to the management of emerging issues and the daily new data.

The Line is available 24 hours per day, with free of charge mobile and landline calling.

The text is based on the following texts:

- Australian Psychological Association (2020). Coronavirus: psychologists offer advice for maintaining positive mental health. Retrieved from <https://www.psychology.org.au/About-Us/news-and-media/Media-releases/2020/Coronavirus-psychologists-offer-advice-for-mainta>
- Harvard Health Publishing Harvard Medical School (2020). How to talk to children about coronavirus. Retrieved from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/how-to-talk-to-children-about-the-coronavirus-2020030719111>
- NASP National Association of School Psychologists & NASN- National Association of School Nurses (2020). Talking to children

about COVID-19 (Coronavirus)-A parent resource. Retrieved from [https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)