Talking with Kids about the Corona-19 Virus

Everywhere you turn whether it be the TV, internet, print media or just the conversations in the neighborhood while you are walking to get some fresh air, kids have been exposed to the topic of the corona virus pandemic. So, what are adults to do? **Here are a few tips:**

Have the Conversation! By not talking about things, you may add to any anxiety your child may be feeling. Just like adults, they feel more confident when they are informed with information that is fact based. It is the job of the trusted adult to filter the information and deliver it. Coming from you, it can be absorbed and processed better than just what they catch from the news. If you are feeling particularly anxious, that is not the time to start the conversation with your child. They are able to read and sense what you are feeling. So take some time to lower your anxiety and then have the conversation.

Keep a Routine. Humans like predictability and so do kids (especially in times of uncertainty). Without the structure of school, it is even more important to try to stick with a routine. The days may look different, but you can structure meal and bedtimes. This also helps keep them healthy.

Keep the door open for ongoing conversations. Follow your child's lead but be ready to revisit the conversation when there is updated information to share. Be ready to listen when they bring it up. You still will not have all the answers, but your willingness to hear them is helpful regardless.

Keep in mind where your child is developmentally. We are sometimes too quick to offer too much information. Let your child lead with their questions and answer clearly, accurately and honestly. Remember sometimes "I really don't know" is the accurate answer but them knowing they can ask is helpful in and of itself.

Reassure your child and Focus on what is within their control. Children may worry that they will catch the virus or someone they care about will. You cannot promise that it could never happen, but you can empower them by discussing what they can do to keep safe (staying at home, social distancing, covering their mouth when coughing or sneezing, not touching their face and please don't forget the action of Washing your hands).

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For more assistance addressing emotional and behavioral health needs during COVID-19 please call 866-202-HELP (4357) 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week.