



Home Learning – Talking to your Children



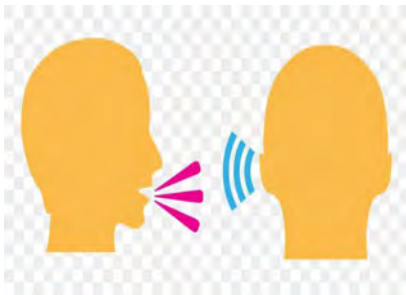
Within this newsletter your School's Family Support team are providing some tips and techniques for parents on how to ensure we keep talking to our children during this difficult time and some tips on making talking to our children.

Managing your feelings is tough work for adults let alone young children. Children's social and emotional skills begin to develop from a very young age. Building a good understanding of emotions when you're young helps you relate to others and manage your own mental health later on. Talking openly with children about how they feel and why, enables them to start recognising and understanding different emotions

The following are a number of simple steps to help start a conversation with your little one and help them understand their emotions.

Remember to contact your family worker if you feel you need additional support.

Visit www.gadeschoolsfamilysupport for more information.



Start Talking

Try asking your child to describe how they are feeling, and follow up with open questions about what's happened to make them feel this way. For example; 'Tell me about how you are feeling?' or 'What has happened to make you feel like this?'

Being curious about a feeling rather than trying to make it go away helps children learn that they can tolerate difficult emotions. Don't be too quick to try and cheer your child up or solve their problem, sitting with them and their feelings teaches them that feelings are not scary and can be overcome and that you can cope with them together. This is true for both young children and teenagers.

Name the Emotion

Once your child has described how they are feeling help them name what the emotion is called. Are they feeling angry? Worried? Scared? Frustrated? Happy? Doing this will help increase their vocabulary, and make it easier to recognise the emotion the next time they experience it. Even older children including teenagers can struggle to name the feelings they may be experiencing and you may see the emotions coming out through changes in behaviour. Try to show empathy and understanding during this time.

You can also help children recognise feelings in characters in the books they are reading or programs they are watching and asking them how they know what the character is feeling, this will develop links to non-verbal cues.

It's Okay to Feel This Way

It's important that your child knows that it's okay to feel different emotions, even if it's not a nice feeling. Experiencing emotions like jealousy, envy or even feeling selfish can help us learn about ourselves and other people. Explain that we all experience challenging feelings and that it is normal to feel different things and it is good to talk about how we are feeling. Try to lighten the mood and make it fun and not a big deal otherwise their emotions could be heightened, especially if they are feeling sad or anxious.

Feelings faces

Encouraging your child to recognise different facial expressions helps them to make connections between what they're feeling and what that might look like. Even older children sometimes don't pick up on emotional queues from facial expressions. For younger children play a game together where you can make different faces to go with different feelings, this will help younger children understand how different emotions can look.

Share your Stories

There are lots of complex emotions that might seem hard to describe to your child. Help them understand by giving examples of a time you felt this way. You could describe what happened to make you feel this way and share what you did to make yourself feel better. It can also be difficult for them to explain exactly what they are feeling, so talking about your own experiences, asking open ended questions, can really help children and young people.

Don't be Afraid to Ask for Help

If you find that your children seem really anxious, upset or angry a lot of the time, and you just don't know why, it is ok to ask for help. Children and Young people can feel scared with new emotions and they can have a lot of emotions bubbling around inside of them, they just don't know what to do with them. You can help them by talking, being completely open and honest, but if you find that you are worried or struggling yourself, it is ok to go and talk to your school, your family support service or your GP.

Content courtesy of bbc.co.uk

How to Talk to Children about the Current Health Crisis

- **Don't be afraid to discuss the coronavirus.** Most children will have already heard about the virus or seen people wearing face masks, so parents shouldn't avoid talking about it. Not talking about something can actually make children worry *more*. Look at the conversation as an opportunity to convey the facts and set the emotional tone. Your goal is to help your children feel informed and get fact-based information that is likely more reassuring than whatever they're hearing from their friends, on social media or on the news.
- **Be developmentally appropriate.** Don't volunteer too much information, as this may be overwhelming. Instead, try to answer your child's questions. Do your best to answer honestly and clearly. It's okay if you can't answer everything; being available to your child is what matters.
- **Take your cues from your child.** Invite your child to tell you anything they may have heard about the coronavirus, and how they feel. Give them ample opportunity to ask questions. You want to be prepared to answer (but not prompt) questions. Your goal is to avoid encouraging frightening fantasies.
- **Deal with your own anxiety.** "When you're feeling most anxious or panicked, that isn't the time to talk to your kids about what's happening with the coronavirus. If you notice that you are feeling anxious, take some time to calm down before trying to have a conversation or answer your child's questions.
- **Be reassuring.** Children are very egocentric, so hearing about the coronavirus on the news may be enough to make them seriously worry that they'll catch it. It's helpful to reassure your child about how rare the coronavirus actually is (the flu is much more common) and that kids actually seem to have milder symptoms.
- **Focus on what you're doing to stay safe.** An important way to reassure kids is to emphasize the safety precautions that you are taking. Children feel empowered when they know what to do to keep themselves safe. We know that the coronavirus is transmitted mostly by coughing and touching surfaces. The [CDC recommends](#) thoroughly washing your hands as the primary means of staying healthy. So remind kids that they are taking care of themselves by washing their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds (or the length of two "Happy Birthday" songs) when they come in from outside, before they eat, and after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the bathroom. If kids ask about face masks, explain that the experts say they currently aren't necessary for most people. If kids see people wearing face masks, explain that those people are being extra cautious.
- **Stick to routine.** No one likes uncertainty, so staying rooted in routines and predictability is going to be helpful right now. This is particularly important whilst your child's school is not available to them on a day to day basis. Make sure you are taking care of the basics just like you would during a spring or summer school holiday. Structured days with regular mealtimes and bedtimes are an essential part of keeping children happy and healthy.
- **Keep talking.** Tell children that you will continue to keep them updated as you learn more. Let them know that you will always be there to talk to them about any worries they may have. You can say, "Even though we don't have the answers to everything right now, know that once we know more, we will let you know, too."

Information courtesy of [childmind.org](#)