



HASSENFELD  
**CHILDREN'S  
HOSPITAL**  
AT NYU LANGONE

Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Educational Webinar at the Child Study Center

# Everyone is anxious Talking with Children/Students About Coronavirus

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# Overview

- Talking about COVID-19  
General information about COVID-19
- Strategies to talk about COVID-19 with your child
- Diagnosis specific information

# Talking about COVID-19

- Avoiding topic can increase worry!
- Discuss coronavirus and use developmentally appropriate language
- Provide space to talk when not feeling rushed, stressed, tired to provide full attention
- Encourage your child to explain what they've heard or know and how they're feeling

# Talking about COVID-19

- Calm, reassuring tone that validates many people are talking about this A LOT and are anxious so of course it makes sense that you're worried
- Based on what they know, can then correct/ provide fact-based information
  - Explain where your information is coming from
  - Can limit media exposure during this time
  - Provide reassurance that adults are informed and will do what's best based on information to keep children safe

# Talking about COVID-19

- For children who may worry about parents
  - Reassure that you are okay and have support you need
- Lastly, let them know they can ask questions at a later time
  - We don't have all the answers but as we learn more, parents will also inform their children

# What to do

## Recommendations from CDC

- What we know so far: transmitted through coughing and touching surface
- Stick to routine while following what CDC recommends:
  - Thoroughly washing hands (soap and water for 20 seconds)
    - Before eating, when coming in from outside, blowing nose or coughing/sneezing or using bathroom
    - Avoid touching face
    - Cough and sneeze into their arm or elbow, not their hands
    - Face masks have not been found to be helpful as means of prevention

## Specific strategies:

- Don't overdo it on new coverage/information!
  - Some kids may ask a lot of questions of parents or ask for a lot of reassurance
  - Parents should set a reasonable “information diet” for their anxious kids- Enough to keep them informed, but don't allow them to immerse themselves in it!
- Practice compassion/self-compassion. Many people **\*without\*** an anxiety disorder are anxious about COVID-19, of course you are going to feel anxious about this
- At the same time, it's important not to let this situation overwhelm you or undo your therapeutic progress

# Anxiety Disorders strategies:

- Validate the anxiety
- Probability not possibility
- Avoid time on searches
- Set worry time
- Productive vs Unproductive (action vs what if)
- Tolerate uncertainty
- Make Daily Goals



# OCD-related concerns

- Follow the recommended guidelines- CDC and WHO have the expertise to make recommendations- Your child's OCD does not!
  - These are valid recommendations- OCD's recommendations are not. OCD may not like that and following above recommendations can be part of exposure
    - Feelings of disgust/contamination may linger- allow yourself to feel them without engaging in compulsion
- As stated - cut back on compulsive checking of news (e.g., once a day no more than five minutes)
  - You've got this! Many are anxious because there's a lot still unknown. Those who've engaged in ERP, have learned the skills to manage uncertainty and anxiety.

# ASD strategies:

Use social stories to provide education about the coronavirus:

- What to do/what not to do
- Use a lot of visuals for how to keep germs from spreading
- (handwashing, coughing/sneezing etc).
- Incorporate handwashing into visual daily schedule of activities during the day.

**Let's Wash Our Hands!**

Whooshy washy!  
Wet our hands  
Under running water  
Add some soap and  
Rub them hard  
Don't miss any part!

Between our fingers  
Under the nails  
Get germs without fail

Front and back  
And round the wrist  
No germs will be missed!

They may hide  
But we shall seek  
So we will not fall sick!

Spishy splashy  
Bye bye germs  
Down the drain they squirm

With clean towels  
We dry our hands  
Now let's show our friends!

1 Palm to palm  
2 Between fingers  
3 Back of hands  
4 Base of thumbs  
5 Back of fingers  
6 Fingernails  
7 Wrists  
8 Rinse and wipe dry

**Remember to wash our hands:**

- After using the toilet
- After sneezing or coughing
- After playing with pets
- After sports or playing outside
- Before eating

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Whooshy washy!  
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Palm to palm



Between fingers



Back of hands



Base of thumbs



Back of fingers



Fingernails



Wrists



Rinse and wipe dry

## Remember to wash our hands:



After using  
the toilet



After sneezing  
or coughing



After playing  
with pets



After sports or  
playing outside



Before eating



# ADHD-ODD strategies:

- “Catch them being good”
- Reinforce positive hand washing, coughing into elbow-
- Practice these behaviors
- Model these behavior
- Use fidgets
- Care givers stay calm

# Mood Disorders strategies:

- Identify thinking errors
- Look at the evidence
- Engage in positive activities
- If high distress, utilize distraction strategies

# Children with chronic medical conditions

- Variability based on condition and severity
- Important to consult with medical providers!
  - They will have a conversation with your child regarding risk/benefits of attending medical appointments
  - They can also walk through best course of action
- Obtain information from trusted sources:
  - American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
  - CDC
  - Local and state health departments
  - [Healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org). Website sponsored by AAP has written and audio information. Also in multiple languages.

# TEACHERS: As usual--- can you also...

- Have kids make posters- projects
- Reinforce good habits
- Correct misinformation
- Monitor discrimination
- Teach reading, math, etc...keep routine

# Questions?

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# Thank you



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