

TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS

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At Al Ain English Speaking School, we pride ourselves in achieving *excellence* in everything we endeavour. In the uncertain times we currently face, we are not only ensuring that we provide high quality distance learning, but also want to guarantee the safeguarding of the emotional well-being of every student in the AAESS family.

Many parents are enquiring on how to discuss the epidemic in a way that will be reassuring and decrease levels of anxiety. It is very important to remember: our children are looking towards us for comfort and cues on how to react and respond. As a parent, you take on the news and *you* are the person who filters the news to your child.

Here are few strategies to keep in mind in order to build resilience, and have reassuring conversations with our kids amidst these difficult times we face:

Deal with your own anxiety: 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. Children are masters in the replication of our emotions and we often project our own fears and thoughts onto them without being aware of it.

Don't be afraid to discuss the issue: Most children will have already heard about the virus or seen people wearing face masks. Don't avoid talking about it. Avoiding difficult topics actually make kids worry more! The conversation can be used 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 what they're hearing from their friends, news or social media.

Be age appropriate: Avoid volunteering unnecessary information, as this may be overwhelming. Give your child ample opportunity to ask questions and try to answer them honestly and clearly. Your goal is to avoid encouraging frightening fantasies. It's okay if you can't answer everything; being available to your child is what matters!

Focus on what you're doing to stay safe: Children feel empowered when they know what to do to keep themselves safe. Remind kids that they are taking care of themselves by the washing of hands, sanitising etc. If children enquire about face masks, explain that the experts say they aren't necessary for most people. If kids see people wearing face masks, explain that those people are being extra cautious and keeping their germs to themselves.

Stick to routine: Children feel emotionally secure and safe when there is routine and predictability. Make sure you are taking care of the basics just like you would during a vacation. Structured days with routine ie. regular mealtimes and bedtimes are an essential part of keeping kids happy and healthy.

Should you realise that your child is still anxious or worried, be assured that this is a *normal* reaction to abnormal circumstances. In the case where additional support is required, please feel free to contact me via email at ivanrensburg@aaess.sch.ae.

"Life is not about waiting for the storms to pass... it is about learning to dance in the rain"
Vivienne Greene