

**Talking To
Children
About
COVID-19**

Dear East Rutherford School District Families,

News coverage about the Coronavirus, COVID-19, has become more widespread, accessible and constant! Managing our own anxieties about this disease can be an overwhelming task, let alone our children's. It is entirely understandable if you and your children are feeling anxious about COVID-19. Children might find it difficult to conceptualize what the news coverage is reporting – or hearing from their peers – or hearing from people in the community – so they can be particularly vulnerable to feelings of stress, anxiety and even panic. It is important to remember that children worry more when they are kept in the dark, so here are some helpful tips about how to talk to your children about the Coronavirus.

1. ASK OPEN QUESTIONS & LISTEN

Invite your child to talk about the issue. Assess how much they already know and allow their knowledge level to guide the rest of the discussion. Meet your child where he/she is and be prepared to address their fears with a delicate balance between facts and love.

2. DISCUSS NEWS COVERAGE

Media coverage is coming at us fast and furious! Reduce your child's access to the constant barrage of news updates regarding the Coronavirus as it can cause panic to set in. Discuss with your child that checking a reliable source that you trust, once a day, can be a way to stay informed and prepared.

3. PROVIDE A CALMING INFLUENCE

Your child may feel like he/she is in imminent danger. Bring a sense of normalcy back! Reassure your child that the family remains informed, prepared and safe. Be intentional about creating time for your child to cope with the stress by making opportunities for them to play and relax, when possible. Maintaining their regular schedule with regard to eating, sleeping and family time is ideal.

4. EXPLAIN THE TRUTH IN DEVELOPMENTALLY-APPROPRIATE WAY

Your child has the right to truthful information about what is going on in the world and in their community, but the delivery of the message is important. Use age-appropriate language, watch their reactions and be sensitive to their level of anxiety.

5. OFFER REASSURANCE THROUGH WAYS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES & THEIR FRIENDS

The [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) encourages the following preventive actions: Wash hands frequently, avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth, stay home from school when you are sick, cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or in your elbow and help the family clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home.

6. DISCUSS STIGMA

Words and actions matter. COVID-19 is not a disease related to a specific ethnic or racial group or a specific geographic region of the world. It is easy to associate fear with 'others', but encouraging this stigma undermines social cohesion, promotes social isolation of specific ethnic groups and fosters racism and xenophobia.