

A Few Thoughts on Corona Virus

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Children are watching and listening to daily news reports and hearing frightening information. Everyone is rightly anxious at the moment but in our children this anxiety can spiral and become a huge problem. Adults are talking openly on the phone and to other family members in the home about the seriousness of the current escalating situation.

There are a few things we can do to reduce our risk of catching the virus and also to help our children cope. Overheard comments by adults can be reduced by choosing to talk about this subject away from the child in a quiet voice, being mindful that our children sometimes have exceptional hearing. Reducing the amount of information reaching the child unsupervised through TV, radio or online channels is only sensible.

Providing information in an accurate but reassuring way is extremely important and also updating it when things change, as they will, with as much preparation as possible will help. Social Stories can help here (see attached Story below). Remember to be as positive and reassuring as possible, recognizing that our children are less able to read the current context and may leap to even more terrifying conclusions than is the case.

Demonstrate to the child how viruses can spread to surfaces with just a touch of the hand. One way of doing this is to sprinkle cocoa powder on a plate and then place the palm and fingers of both hands in the powder. Then walk around the room touching the back of the chair, the table, the handle of a cup or a door. Touch your face briefly, wipe your chin. Brown cocoa prints will be everywhere. Explain the cocoa powder is like a virus and then demonstrate thorough washing of both hands how the brown powder is washed away.

Parents will need to help children learn how to wash hands thoroughly for a prolonged period of 20 seconds. Using the child's special interest may help here. Choose a song that is special to the child, sing it with them until 20 seconds is up. Alternatively use their special interest to employ them in counting to 20 eg counting to 20 penguins. Wash all areas of the hands – between fingers, around the nails, covering the tips of the fingers to the wrists back and front. Leave no area not covered in soap and wash off with warm/hot water. Doing it thoroughly will take 20 seconds. Doing it twice will prevent any area being missed. Place a photo of penguins/ whatever favourite character is being used or the song above the sink as a reminder, and of course praise your child when they manage it well, and reward them.