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FAMILY CENTER

COVID-19: Tips for Elementary School Families

Here are some tips for talking with your child about COVID-19:

Speak calmly. Your calmness will help your child be calm. Find out what your child knows about what is going on. Tell your child the truth but leave out unnecessary information that may increase your child's anxiety. Let your child know you will always try to answer questions. You can find facts about COVID-19 at the Centers For Disease Control's website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/2019-ncov-factsheet.pdf>. Listen to your child's feelings. Some children may be afraid or worried. Some may be disappointed about missing cancelled activities. Say that it is OK to feel that way. If your child doesn't want to talk about the situation, don't force it. Reassure your child. Say that you will cope with this together. Help your child feel a sense of control. Explain that by following instructions, like washing hands thoroughly, your family is taking action to keep yourselves and others safe. Let your child make other choices at home, such as what to wear.

To relieve stress and fear:

Limit your child's access to the news.
Share positive information, such as the increasing numbers of people who are recovering from the virus.
Reduce background noise. Noisy, chaotic environments can contribute to anxiety. Turn off TVs, radios, etc. when not in use. If possible, create a quiet, cozy corner where your child can unwind.
Create routines. A daily routine for waking, eating, learning, playing and sleeping helps your child maintain a sense of order.
Find ways to exercise. Physical activity is a great stress reliever, and it is a great way to spend time together as a family. You can: have a family jump rope contest; work out to an exercise video; walk 10 times up and down the stairs; put on favorite music and dance; even do some spring cleaning together.

To support and promote learning at home:

Give your child a daily responsibility to carry out.
Establish a study area, and a daily time for learning.
Ask your child open-ended questions that promote thinking: What if people had no hands? How many ways can you think of to make learning more fun?
Help your child draw maps. Let your child hide something and draw a map for you to find it.
Play listening games, like Simon Says.
Give your child step-by-step instructions. Gradually increase the number of steps.
Get out old clothes for costumes and act out favorite stories.
Establish a family reading time.

To develop your child's reading skills:

Take turns reading aloud. First you read, then let your child read to you. Ask older children to read to younger ones.
Discuss the reading. Talk about plot and the characters and your child's reactions to them.
Label household items with their names. Ask your child to spell the words, then check the label to verify.
Challenge your child to find letters or words on boxes, cans of food or household supplies. (For example, find three words that start with "ch.")
Make a book. Have your child write or dictate the text and draw the pictures.

To develop your child's math skills:

Play Math Concentration. Write a math term on an index card. Write its definition on another card. Repeat until you have several pairs. Then deal out five or six pairs of cards face down. Your child can only turn over two cards at a time. The goal is to make a match by turning over a math term and its correct definition.