

Greetings Parents/Guardians,

In light of the school's extended closure and in an effort to support our community and students, the WAJ guidance team has put together a parent guide to help our families cope with the present circumstances.

We are aware that concern over the COVID-19 virus can make children and families very anxious. Helping children cope with anxiety requires providing accurate prevention information and facts without causing undue alarm. The following are guidelines aimed at facilitating open and honest communication between children and their families in order to support our students during this trying time.

It is very important to remember that children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. If parents seem overly worried, children's anxiety may rise as well. Acknowledging some level of concern, without panicking, is appropriate and can result in taking actions that reduce the risk of illness. Parents should reassure children that health and school officials are working hard to ensure that people throughout the country stay healthy. However, children also need factual, age appropriate information about the potential seriousness of disease risk and concrete instruction about how to avoid infections and spread of disease. Giving students concrete things they can do to keep themselves and others healthy will reduce stress. Teaching children positive preventive measures, talking with them about their fears, and giving them a sense of control can help reduce anxiety.

Helpful tips for talking to your child about COVID-19:

- Remain calm and reassuring.
 - Children will react to and follow your verbal and nonverbal reactions.
 - What you say and do about COVID-19 can either increase or decrease your child's anxiety. The following link is a helpful resource with specific advice for parents: <https://www.enildaclinic.com/learning>
 - If true, emphasize to your children that they and your family are fine.
 - Remind them that you and other adults are there to keep them safe and healthy.
 - Let your children talk about their feelings and help reframe their concerns into an appropriate perspective.
- Make yourself available.
 - Children may need extra attention from you and may want to talk about their concerns, fears, and questions.
 - It is important that they know they have someone who will listen to them.
 - Be patient; children do not always talk about their concerns readily. Watch for clues that they may want to talk, such as hovering around while you do the dishes or yard work.
 - As always, tell them you love them and provide plenty of affection.
- Monitor television viewing and social media.

- Try to avoid watching or listening to information that might be upsetting when your children are present. Constantly watching updates on the status of COVID-19 can increase anxiety.
- Speak to your child about how many stories about COVID-19 on the Internet may be based on rumors and inaccurate information.
- Engage your child in games or other interesting activities instead:
 - Enjoy free access to Fluency & Fitness.com to keep your child learning and to help burn off extra energy <https://fluencyandfitness.com/>
 - Encourage children to draw pictures and/or write notes to local nursing homes
 - Play games and incorporate physical activity - this reduces stress and can help build relationships
 - Incorporate movement and mindfulness from <https://www.gonoodle.com>
 - Kids can create and publish their own books for free (downloading and printing available at extra cost): <https://www.storyjumper.com/>
 - Access <https://pinna.fm/> for kid-appropriate music/podcasts/audiobooks
 - Consider specially designed exercises for kids: <https://app.sworkit.com/collections/kids-workouts>
 - Explore e-learning projects from: <https://www.definedstem.com/elearning-projects/>
- Maintain a normal routine to the greatest extent possible.
 - Keep to a regular schedule, as this can be reassuring and promotes physical health.
 - Encourage your children to keep up with their schoolwork and extracurricular activities, but don't push them if they seem overwhelmed.
- Review and model basic hygiene and healthy lifestyle practices for protection.
 - Encourage your child to practice every day good hygiene—simple steps to prevent spread of illness:
 - Wash hands multiple times a day for at least 20 seconds (singing Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star slowly takes about 20 seconds).
 - Cover their mouths with a tissue when they sneeze or cough and throw away the tissue immediately, or sneeze or cough into the bend of their elbow. Do not share food or drinks.
 - Practice giving fist or elbow bumps instead of handshakes. Fewer germs are spread this way.
 - Giving children guidance on what they can do to prevent infection gives them a greater sense of control over disease spread and will help to reduce their anxiety.
 - Encourage your child to eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, and exercise regularly; this will help them develop a strong immune system to fight off illness.
- Be honest, accurate, and age appropriate.

- In the absence of factual information, children often imagine situations far worse than reality.
- Don't ignore their concerns, but rather, talk to your child about factual information of this disease—this can help reduce anxiety.
- However, be aware that developmentally inappropriate information (i.e., information designed for adults) can cause more anxiety or confusion, particularly in young children.
- Use your best judgement. You know your child best. Let their questions be your guide as to how much information to provide.
- Information is rapidly changing about this new virus—to have the most correct information stay informed by accessing <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

This guide has been adapted from the National Association of School Psychologists' parent guide, available here: [NASP Parent Guide \(English\)](#); [NASP Parent Guide \(Spanish\)](#)

For more information and specific age-related guidelines, please refer to the link above.