

Please see below an extract from **Calm Kid Central** resource published by **Developing Minds Psychology**. This resource is available to parents as well as the free regular newsletter subscription. Please check out their website for further details:

How to respond to children and young people when talking about Coronavirus:

Dealing with Coronavirus is tough for everyone – kids, young people and adults – from all walks of life. For children with “big feelings” and challenges, it can be even harder.

Here are some ideas about how to answer children or young people’s questions or respond to their worries. Before we get started, a few general principles about how to do this:

1. **Try to ask a question or two before you respond to a child/teen’s concerns** – you may be able to get more information about exactly what they are worried about and therefore answer more helpfully.
2. **Express care and sympathy** rather than entirely dismissing their concerns .
3. **Answer with a matter of fact, calm and confident voice and facial expression.** If you can’t do that, step away and say “I think I might just need some adult time for a moment, and I will come and talk to you again in a few minutes”. Then take some time to talk to a friend/family member/take a deep breath and look after yourself. Then come back to your child/teen and provide some answers.
4. Remember (as you will see below) if children/young people continue asking lots of questions which you have gone over with them before, **it’s okay to put some limits on the time you spend talking about it.** If it is appropriate, you might say something like: “That’s a problem for adults to solve and there are lots of clever adults working on that right now. You don’t need to spend much time thinking about that”. You might also say something like: “We’ve spent enough time talking about this for now, it’s good for our brains and bodies to have a break from thinking about worrying things and problems, let’s go and do something else”.

“I’m worried that school will close”

Possible extra questions to ask:

What would be the worst thing about that? Is there anything you are worried will happen if the school closes?

Possible things to say (all of these need to be adjusted to fit the current facts/the age of the child/situation they are in):

I understand you being worried about that, everyone is having times when they feel a bit worried at the moment. For now, it looks like schools will stay open

If your school does close, then you will be able to do some learning with us at home
It won't be forever, just for a little while

“I’m upset that I can’t have my party/play sport/go on my excursion”

Possible extra questions to ask:

What would be the worst thing about that? What are you most upset/disappointed about?

Possible things to say (all of these need to be adjusted to fit the current facts/the age of the child/situation they are in):

I understand you feeling upset about that. I’m really sorry you are going to miss that. It’s very disappointing for you.

The government/schools/ourselves cancelling these things for now means that doctors have more time to help people who get sick instead of them all getting sick together – and scientists have a bit more time to make medicines for Coronavirus. You not having this event is a bit like you doing something *very kind and important for the world*.

“I’m worried we won’t be able to get enough food”

Possible extra questions to ask:

How did you hear that we might not be able to get enough food? Is there any particular foods you are worried about?

Possible things to say (all of these need to be adjusted to fit the current facts/the age of the child/situation they are in):

The world has plenty of food for everyone. It’s just that when people are worried, they sometimes buy more than they need. Soon the shops may be allowed to open for longer hours which will help everyone to take it in turns to buy the food they need.

“I’m worried I will get sick with Coronavirus”

Possible extra questions to ask:

What makes you worried about that? Is there anything else you are worried about?

Are there any times of days/situations you are thinking about this?

Possible things to say (all of these need to be adjusted to fit the current facts/the age of the child/situation they are in):

This is what happens to most people who gets coronavirus: they feel a bit hot, they have a cough, they feel tired and sometimes they have a sore body. This lasts for a few days or a week and then they are completely better. It’s like a cold or a mild flu. It is very unlikely to hurt you too much, and you will just lie in bed and watch TV/read for a little while.

Young people are much less likely to get very sick from coronavirus than much older people. There are a small number of young people who do get a little more sick with it, and it takes them a bit longer to get better. We have excellent doctors and nurses who can help any kids or teens feel better if this happens to them.

“I’m worried I will get sick and infect other people and/or close my school”

Possible extra questions to ask:

How might that happen? What would be the worst thing about that?

Possible things to say (all of these need to be adjusted to fit the current facts/the age of the child/situation they are in):

If you get sick with Coronavirus, then it will not be your fault

No-one at your school has to know that you are a person with Coronavirus – the school will just tell people that “a student” at the school has been diagnosed with it. Then they will close the school so it can be cleaned well. If we stay home when we are feeling unwell and wash our hands, then we might be able to avoid passing it on to other people

“I’m upset that I can’t see my grandparents/other adults for now”

Possible extra questions to ask:

What would be the worst thing about that? Is there something about this which is especially upsetting?

Possible things to say (all of these need to be adjusted to fit the current facts/the age of the child/situation they are in):

I understand you feeling upset about this, it’s a bit upsetting for everyone

Let’s see how we can talk with them in other ways (phone, technology, letters)

“Who will look after me and where will I go if you get sick with coronavirus?”

Possible extra questions to ask:

What makes you worried about this?

Is there anything else you are worried will happen if this happens?

Are there any times of days/situations you are thinking about this?

Possible things to say (all of these need to be adjusted to fit the current facts/the age of the child/situation they are in):

You will not ever be left on your own.

If I/we get very sick and need some doctors to help, we will get the help we need.

Remember, when talking to young people:

- Check out what their concerns are first
- Sympathise but use a confident and calm face and voice
- Provide a small amount of information
- Do short periods of talking and then distract and refocus