

How to Talk to Your Kids About the Coronavirus

by Samantha Lowe

Schools are closed, birthday parties are canceled, church is online, and spring break vacations have turned into *extended* staycations—meaning your kids probably have a lot of questions right now. Here are some tips on how to talk to your kids about the coronavirus.

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The first step for how to talk to your kids about the coronavirus—let *your kids* talk.

Your kids are hearing conversations on the news and between adults about the “pandemic,” “quarantine,” “virus,” the lack of a “vaccine,” and “the danger to the elderly and immunocompromised.” Our kids don't understand most of the vocabulary surrounding the coronavirus. They need a safe place to talk about what's going on. Ask your kids what they've heard and what questions they have about the coronavirus.

Pro tip: Your kids may have heard some wild stuff, and they will be a lot more open with you if you leave your shocked “OMG that is so insanely insane I can't even” response at the front door.

Offer your kids real information to fight “fake news.”

Give your kids real facts to combat the rumors they may have heard. They don't need to know all the details (because too much info can be worrisome, too!), but here are a few tips to guide you on how to talk to your kids about the coronavirus:

- Coronavirus is sometimes called COVID-19. It's a germ that can make people sick. If a person is sick with the germ, they are contagious—they can pass it to another person.
- There are things you can do to make it harder for the coronavirus to make you sick: Wash your hands well and often, cover your mouth with your elbow when you cough or sneeze, keep from touching your eyes, nose, mouth, and face, and stay away from people who are feeling sick.
- Most people who get the coronavirus germs will only get a little bit sick. They need to check with a doctor, stay home, rest, drink plenty of water, and they will get better.
- Some people are already sick with something else, or their bodies are weak. If they get sick from the coronavirus germs too, it is more serious and they have to go to the hospital or emergency room. We protect them when we don't go to school, church, on vacation, or to any parties, because that makes it harder for people to pass the germs to each other.
- A quarantine is when you stay home and do not go out at all. No one comes over to visit. Usually, you do this if you find out you have the coronavirus germs, or you find out that you spent time with someone else who has the coronavirus germs. It's okay if we have to be quarantined, because we can take care of each other, we can still talk to our friends and family on the phone, they can leave us the things we need at our door, and we can call the doctor or hospital if we are feeling too sick.
- Grocery stores are out of some things like food, toilet paper, and hand sanitizer. A lot of people were worried they wouldn't have enough, so they bought too much. The stores might be out of some things for a little while, but it will get back to normal again, and we will have what we need.
- We don't know how long schools, churches, and other places will be closed, but it will not last forever, and the doctors will stay open for us in case we get sick and need help.

Dig deeper to see how your kids are feeling.

Maybe your kids are disappointed or angry because the things they look forward to are canceled. Maybe they are reeling because their entire routine is upended. Maybe they're worried, anxious, or afraid that they will be sick, that they'll make other people sick, that *you'll* be sick—or that this crisis will last forever. Give your kids a chance to share their feelings, and process them by talking, writing, or creating art. You'll also want to give them chances for fun physical activity, quiet rest, deep breathing, or even playing their favorite music or letting them have a *little* screen time to help them deal.

Come up with simple, actionable plans for the big “what ifs” your kids are most concerned about.

Have a family plan your kids can get on board with.

Another tip on how to talk to your kids about the coronavirus: Have a *healthy* conversation about the “what ifs.” Come up with simple, actionable plans for the big “what ifs” your kids are most concerned about.

Here are a few “what ifs” your kids may need a plan for:

- What if I feel sick?
- Who will take care of me if you get sick?
- What if we can't leave our house?
- What if school stays closed for a long time?
- What if we run out of toilet paper?
- What if we run out of food?
- What if someone we know gets sick?
- What if I have to go to the doctor?

The coronavirus may seem big to your kids (and even to you), but it has nothing on our powerful, eternal, Creator of the universe.

And what if the “what ifs” uncover more anxiety?

Accurate information, a safe place to process feelings, and action plans are important to your kids' mental health during a crisis, but they don't give the lasting hope or supernatural peace that comes from trusting in Jesus. The coronavirus may seem big to your kids (and even to you), but it has nothing on our powerful, eternal, Creator of the universe (Colossians 1:16). He never leaves us, nor forsakes us (Hebrews 13:5). He is an ever-present help in times of trouble (Psalm 46:1). And He leaves us with a gift—not the type of gift the world gives, but a gift of unshakable peace of mind and heart (John 14:27).

Help your child connect with God and internalize the truth of who He is and how much He loves them (Romans 8:37-39) by memorizing a few Scriptures, leading them in prayer, reading the Bible together, listening to or watching worship music videos together, and spending time talking about ways God can use this situation for good.

Here are some resources to help you lead your kids through this time:

- To help your preschoolers memorize Scripture, check out this playlist of [early childhood verse motions](#) you can do together.
- To help your older children memorize Scripture, try [this playlist of verse motions](#) from their friends at Konnect HQ.
- Here are some [worship music videos](#) you can watch together as a family.
- Looking for a Bible Plan to read with your kids? Here are some Plans for every age and stage:
- [Early Childhood Bible Plans](#) (ages 2-5)
- [Konnect Bible Plans](#) (ages 1st-3rd grade)
- [Loop Bible Plans](#) (ages 4th-6th grade)
- [Switch Bible Plans](#) (ages 6th-12th grade)

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Turn your kids' focus outward.

Avoiding others, missing out, being worried—these all mean we're focused inward. God created us to reach out—kids included. Being stuck at home doesn't mean you have to stop connecting with others and serving them. Ask your kids how they want to help others from home: Video chats? Phone calls? Written (or drawn!) notes? Pray together as a family for those outside your household, for others who are anxious, for those who are most vulnerable and at risk from the coronavirus, and for those who don't have what they need or who can't take off work even if they are sick.

If you have a stockpile of something, brainstorm with your kids about what you can do to share it with others. Make a donation to a local food pantry of cleaning supplies, toilet paper, or shelf stable foods, or, if you're free to get out, do a grocery pick-up for an immunocompromised friend or neighbor. Love God well by loving others well—with your kids!

The Holy Spirit is working in you, in your kids, and in our communities through this trial.

As you're thinking about how to talk to your kids about the coronavirus, take time to care for yourself too. The extra time with your kids is a blessing, but it can wear your patience, make you tired, and stretch you too thin if you don't carve out moments to refuel in God's Word, prayer, or in conversation with other grown-ups. The best way to lead your kids is to lead them by example—they are much more likely to follow what you do than what you say. Face each day as a fresh adventure and look for the newness and blessing in it. The Holy Spirit is working in you, in your kids, and in our communities through this trial (Romans 5:3-5).