

MY CHILD IS WORRIED

MY CHILD SEEMS OVERLY UPSET ABOUT THE COVID-19/CORONAVIRUS NEWS. IS THIS NORMAL?

It is a stressful time for all families in the midst of this worldwide crisis. Children are experiencing disrupted daily routines, the uncertainty of what the next day might bring, scary-sounding news updates, and an underlying mood of tension or concern in the adults around them. All of this understandably brings up feelings of worry, anxiety or fear in children. If your child has also experienced the death of a loved one on top of the current crisis, they could easily be feeling this stress even more than most.



WHY MIGHT THIS BE IMPACTING MY CHILD?

There may be a number of things about these uncertain times that cause your child to feel distressed or upset. Children communicate through their behaviors, so even if they aren't using words to share their feelings, you may notice changes in their behavior or mood that point to feelings under the surface.

- Many children who have experienced the death of a loved one have fears of others dying. The news, social media, and daily conversation is focused on a worldwide health crisis and the concern that people may die. This could be causing your child's fears to resurface or become more extreme.
- In the days, weeks, and months surrounding the death of your loved one, your child likely had their daily routine disrupted, felt nervous or anxious, and experienced uncertainty. This current crisis may remind your child of the stress that they felt in your family when your loved one died. It may also trigger or intensify the grief they experience connected to losing their loved one.
- Children who have experienced the death of a loved one depend on positive connection and peer support. With the change in daily routine your child is likely missing out on positive outlets and supportive people that help them to get through each day. This can also magnify feelings of distress, and show up in your child exhibiting negative behaviors or having difficulty in coping.



HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD?

There are some simple things you can do to help your child through this stressful time.

- Set up new routines as much as possible. The predictability and structure of routines can help children to feel safe.
- Be creative about engaging the supportive people or positive outlets that they may be missing right now. *For example, they might e-mail their school counselor or take a virtual art class.*
- Offer brief, honest and age- or developmentally-appropriate information. Your child may actually need less information than you think. Answer their questions honestly and correct any misinformation that they may have heard.
- Sometimes, even more important than providing facts is exploring what your child is thinking, wondering, or imagining about what is going on. An easy way to do this is to ask the question back to them with curiosity. *For example, if your child asks, “Are we all going to die from the coronavirus?” you might say, “I’m so glad you asked me that question, what do you think?”*
- Communicate to your child that their feelings are normal and to be expected in times like this. They may also be feeling multiple feelings at once, and that’s okay too. *For example, it’s okay to feel happy that you don’t have to take tests, but sad that people are sick.*

Remember too to do what you can to take care of yourself as you care for your child. Try to limit your own exposure to news and media if it’s not helpful to you. In this current crisis, there are many questions that we don’t have answers to, and that can cause adults to feel anxious and nervous as well. You also experienced the death of a loved one and may be feeling the stress of this more than others around you. Reach out to your own supports and know that staff at the Highmark Caring Place are always here to help.

