



Supporting Children's Emotional, Social and Mental Health Needs During School Closures



If at any time, you or your child experiences a mental health crisis, please contact Valley Community Services Board's Emergency Services at 540-885-0866 or Toll Free at: 866-274-7475.

As our locality, Commonwealth, nation and global community responds to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), children may worry about themselves, their family, their friends and their teachers becoming ill. All of us play an important role in helping children make sense of what they are hearing and seeing. The CDC has created guidance to help adults speak with children about COVID-19 and how to keep everyone healthy. The complete guidance is linked below:

[Talking with children about Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

General Recommendations from the CDC:



Remain calm and reassuring

Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others.

Be honest. If you don't know the answer to their question, or how to answer, tell them you can find some information so you both can learn. (See links below).



Make time to be available to listen and to talk.

Make time to talk and to listen. Be sure children know they can come to you when they have questions.

Let children know it's okay to be worried and that talking about it will help.



Avoid language that might blame others and lead to [stigma](#).

Remember that viruses can make anyone sick, regardless of a person's race or ethnicity. Avoid making assumptions about who might have COVID-19.



Pay attention to what children see or hear on television, radio, or online.

Consider reducing the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety.



Provide information that is honest and accurate.

Give children information that is truthful and appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child.

Talk to children about how some stories on COVID-19 on the Internet and social media may be based on rumors and inaccurate information.



Teach children everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs.

Remind children to stay away from people who are coughing or sneezing or sick.

Remind them to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow, then throw the tissue into the trash.

Discuss any new actions that may be taken at school to help protect children and school staff. (e.g., increased handwashing, cancellation of events or activities)

Practice and model good handwashing habits.

- Teach them to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- If soap and water are not available, teach them to use hand sanitizer. Hand sanitizer should contain at least 60% alcohol. Supervise young children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent swallowing alcohol, especially in schools and childcare facilities.

More resources for talking with your children about COVID-19 are below:

[Talking to Children About COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#)

https://www.additudemag.com/explain-coronavirus-covid-19-anxiety-adhd-child/?utm_source=eletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=parent_march_2020&utm_content=031420&goal=0_d9446392d6-7898f27fbc-287674209

[Managing Stress](#)

[COVID-19 \(CORONAVIRUS\) INFORMATION AND RESOURCES](#)

<https://confidentparentsconfidentkids.org/2020/03/13/my-kids-school-is-closed-so-now-what/>

[How to talk to teens about the new coronavirus - Harvard Health Blog](#)

[https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)