



How to deal with the confinement situation as parent

Our children are frightened like we are but may be in a different way. They hear everything, without understanding for some of them, and they can feel our tension and our emotions. They never lived situations like this (as we do). Yes they like the idea of several weeks without going to school, they probably have the idea of great holidays but they will realize that they are locked at home without the possibility to meet their friends.

With the announcement of the extension of the lockdown, more and more behavioural problems could appear: fear, anger, rebellion because they can't do anything « normally ». They will show more anger crisis or opposition behaviour in the next weeks. This is normal and needs to be prevented in this moment.

So the most important will be to take care of them, of you before work and school. A good mental health is the most important for everybody.

1. What can you say to children about Coronavirus (Covid-19) ?

Recommendations from American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
(<http://www.aacap.org>)

Parents and teachers are faced with the challenge of discussing the evolving coronavirus outbreak with young children. Although these may be difficult conversations, they are also important. There are no “right” or “wrong” ways to talk with children about such public health emergencies. However, here are some suggestions you may find helpful:

1. Create an open and supportive environment where children know they can ask questions. At the same time, it's best not to force children to talk about things unless and until they're ready.
2. Answer questions honestly. Children will usually know, or eventually find out, if you're “making things up”. It may affect their ability to trust you or your reassurances in the future.
3. Use words and concepts children can understand. Gear your explanations to the child's age, language, and developmental level.
4. Help children find accurate and up to date information. Print out Fact Sheets from the CDC or WHO.
5. Be prepared to repeat information and explanations several times. Some information may be hard to accept or understand. Asking the same question over and over may also be a way for a child to ask for reassurance.
6. Acknowledge and validate the child's thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Let them know that you think their questions and concerns are important and appropriate.



7. Remember that children tend to personalize situations. For example, they may worry about their own safety and the safety of immediate family members. They may also worry about friends or relatives who travel or who live far away.
8. Be reassuring, but don't make unrealistic promises. It's fine to let children know that they are safe in their house or in their school. But you can't promise that there will be no cases of coronavirus in your state or community.
9. Let children know that there are lots of people helping the people affected by the coronavirus outbreak. It's a good opportunity to show children that when something scary or bad happens, there are people to help.
10. Children learn from watching their parents and teachers. They will be very interested in how you respond to news about the coronavirus outbreak. They also learn from listening to your conversations with other adults.
11. Don't let children watch too much television with frightening images. The repetition of such scenes can be disturbing and confusing.
12. Children who have experienced serious illness or losses in the past are particularly vulnerable to prolonged or intense reactions to graphic news reports or images of illness or death. These children may need extra support and attention.
13. Children who are preoccupied with questions or concerns about the coronavirus outbreak should be evaluated by a trained and qualified mental health professional. Other signs that a child may need additional help include: ongoing sleep disturbances, intrusive thoughts or worries, recurring fears about illness or death, reluctance to leave parents or go to school. If such behaviours persist, ask your child's paediatrician, family physician or school counsellor to help arrange an appropriate referral.
14. Although parents and teachers may follow the news and the daily updates with interest and attention, most children just want to be children. They may not want to think about what's happening across the country or elsewhere in the world. They'd rather play ball, go sledding, climb trees or ride bikes.

Public health emergencies are not easy for anyone to comprehend or accept. Understandably, many young children feel frightened and confused. As parents, teachers, and caring adults, we can best help by listening and responding in an honest, consistent, and supportive manner.

Fortunately, most children, even those exposed to loss or illness, are quite resilient. However, by creating an open environment where they feel free to ask questions, we can help them cope with stressful events and experiences and reduce the risk of lasting emotional difficulties.

(David Fassler, MD, member of the Consumer Issues Committee at AACAP).

Interesting internet links:

- <https://tip-berlin.de/kinder-und-das-corona-virus-tipps-zum-umgang-mit-der-angst/>
- <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables> available in 17 languages



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- <https://kannerklinik.chl.lu/fr/dossier/brochure-lusage-des-parents-confrontes-la-pandemie-covid-19?fbclid=IwAR3RwfKFYtkovjAQJKTDyibbvy26nvCt6XgEycEITpl-xGy1rQJtEdkxIls>

2. The everyday life

It's important to keep a daily routine for them. Define some clear timetable with them, make a difference between week and weekend.

You don't have to find occupation for every moment, children can also develop their creativity with boring time.

Keep limits with the use of screen and keep an eye on the game with which they play. Indeed, some of this games, like the « shoot them all » category, can develop children's aggressiveness and in this period it's not really welcome.

If you have more than one child, organize moments in which they can be alone, play together or just be alone with you. Everybody needs his privacy for one moment. It's more easy to find in the « normal life » but in this situation, it must be planned.

The children are probably going to ask you more attention than usual. Don't hesitate to answer positively to this demand, it could be a stress signal. If you feel that you lose your energy, your patience, don't hesitate to have a break, to go in another room for a moment to decrease the pressure.

The more you will be angry or stressed, the more the children will be also

You can plan a moment in the daily organization in which the family is together around the same activity (except eating). This time can give you the opportunity to discover your children in another way and to reinforce the bound.

Use the time given by the authority to go out and move particularly if you don't have a garden. Try to change paths you take around your place

Use the sense of humor....it helps

Have a look at the article below, it's full of tips and links for keeping children occupied:

- <https://www.lecho.be/dossiers/coronavirus/confinement-voici-comment-occuper-intelligemment-vos-enfants/10215774.html>

Interesting internet links:

- <https://aidersonenfant.com/dossier/covid-19-en-famille-a-la-maison>
- <https://apprendreaeducer.fr/>
- <https://www.thelocal.fr/20200318/ten-top-tips-for-keeping-kids-entertained-during-frances-lockdown>
- <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/ideasroom/2020/03/25/1098877/surviving-lockdown-with-young-children>