ANXIETY IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Here are some practices you could consider in conversations with your child of they are feeling anxious:

- Help them to reflect on how they’re feeling and encourage them to think about the things they can do to make them feel safer and less worried.
- Reassure them that this will pass, you’re there for them, and you will get through this together.
- Provide age-appropriate information.
- Be prepared to listen. There’s information everywhere. Your children have access to the knowledge and opinions of the rest of the world via the internet. It can be difficult to distinguish truth from misinformation. Listen to what your children have picked up.
- Try to remain calm and positive when talking to your child.
- Offer information using language and examples they will understand.
- It’s okay if you can’t answer everything – and to say you’re not sure. Use this as an opportunity to find out information together. Being available to your child is what matters.
- Be careful not to share too much information all at once, as this may be overwhelming.
- Avoid talking in a way that could make your child feel more worried.
- Ask your child to tell you anything they may have heard about coronavirus, and how they feel about this situation.
- Be guided by your child. Talk about the things they want to talk about. Work to their agenda.
- Be reassuring. Tell children that the changes in their life have been introduced to make us all safer. Tell them, that eventually, things will go back to normal.
- Reassure them that children are much less affected by the virus than older people. They may be worried about people they know - grandparents, or people with underlying conditions. They may have asthma or other complicating conditions themselves. Make sure you know what the advice is, so you can promise them that everything is being done. Reassure them that everything will be done to protect and look after children.
• Be aware of the language you use with your child while you are around them. Remember that children will be listening to adult conversations more than usual.

• Don’t dismiss your child’s fears. It is understandable for them to be concerned because they have probably never experienced anything like this before.

• Ask questions that don’t have yes or no answers.

• If your child asks you something and you don’t know the answer, say so. Use the question as a chance to find out together. And then have a conversation about what you found. Honesty is often the best policy.

• It’s important not to leave children feeling worried after a conversation.

• Close conversations with care. When you wrap up your conversations, look for signs they are feeling anxious. This might be a change in their tone of voice, their breathing or body language. Comfort them if they feel this way.

• Remember to check in with your child regularly. Give them opportunities to ask you questions over the coming weeks and months.

• What children mainly want to hear from their parents is that they’re on their side. Make sure they know that you and all the people who care about them are doing what they came to protect them and look after each other.

• Some children will worry more about others than themselves. Find ways for them to connect with family and friends as much as possible using technology.