

## How to Help Our Students During the Coronavirus Pandemic



Concerns over COVID-19 and all the events stemming from this virus, like school closings, can make students and families anxious.

During this uncertain time, it is important to remember that students look to trusted adults for guidance on how to react to this unique, stressful event. If parents appear overly worried, student's anxiety may rise.

The National Association of School Psychologists offers parents and guardians the following guidelines for talking with your student about COVID-19:

### **Remain calm and reassuring:**

- If true, emphasize to your student that they and your family are fine.
- Let your student talk about their feelings and help reframe their concerns into the appropriate perspective.
- Students will react to and follow your verbal and nonverbal reactions.

### **Make yourself available:**

- Students may need extra attention from you and many want to talk about their concerns, fears and questions.
- It is important that they know they have someone who will listen to them; make time for them.
- Provide them with positive ways/outlets to cope with their emotions.

### **Avoid excessive blaming:**

- It is important to avoid stereotyping any one group of people as responsible for the virus.
- Be aware of any comments that others are having around your family. You may have to explain what comments mean if they are different from the values that you have at home.

**Monitor television viewing and social media:**

- Encourage students to limit television viewing or access to information on the internet and through social media. Try to avoid watching and listening to information that might be upsetting when your student is present.
- Speak to your student about how many stories about COVID-19 on the internet may be based on rumors and inaccurate information.

**Maintain a normal routine to the extent possible:**

- Keep a regular schedule, as this can be reassuring and promotes physical health.
- Be honest and accurate.
- Don't ignore their concerns, but rather explain that at the present moment very few people in this country are sick with COVID-19.

**Review and model basic hygiene and healthy lifestyle practices:**

- Encourage your student to practice every day good hygiene-simple steps to prevent spread of illness:
- Wash hands multiple times a day for at least 20 seconds (singing Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star slowly)
- Cover their mouths with a tissue when they sneeze or cough and do not share food or drinks.
- Encourage your student to eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, and exercise regularly; this will help them develop a strong immune system to fight off illness.

***For more full guidelines from the National Association of School Psychologist, please go to: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking>***



***If students are distraught or need to talk with someone, please encourage them to reach out to Mrs. Henderson (815-838-0737 Ext.1132 or [khenderson@d91.net](mailto:khenderson@d91.net)), Mrs. Burnette (815-838-0737 Ext. 1176 or [lburnette@d91.net](mailto:lburnette@d91.net)), Mrs. Reynolds (at MG-815-838-0542, Ext 2103 or [mreynolds@d91.net](mailto:mreynolds@d91.net)), or another adult they trust. We are available by phone, email, and Zoom***

## Understanding How Elementary Students May React to Crisis and Strategies to Respond

### ***Reactions may include:***

- Seeking additional attention from parents or caregivers
- Using visual images in words and play
- Demonstrating regressive behaviors
- Repeating the same questions
- Needing reassurance about the future
- Asking about the health of family members
- Showing a lack of interest in school

### ***Common Stress Symptoms may include:***

- Irritability
- Aggressiveness
- Clinginess
- Poor concentration
- Sleep disturbance
- Loss of appetite
- Physical complaints (headaches, stomachaches)

### ***Strategies to Respond & Coping Skills:***

- Reassure them that you always care for them and will continue to take care of them so they feel safe
- Give examples of steps people take every day to stop germs and stay healthy, such as washing hands
- Be open, honest, and sensitive. They want and need to know what is happening
- Get down to their eye level and speak in a calm, gentle voice using words they can understand
- Encourage quiet time & positive activities



### ***Resources and Activities for Elementary Students***

- Center for Disease Control-Ready Wrigley Books (English and Spanish activities available):
- <https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/readywrigley/books.htm>
- YouTube-Julia Cook-The Yucky Bug:
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZD9KNhmOCV4>
- Sesame Street-Here for Each Other
- [https://www.sesamestreet.org/sites/default/files/media\\_folders/Images/SupportAfterEmergency\\_Printable\\_FamilyGuide.pdf](https://www.sesamestreet.org/sites/default/files/media_folders/Images/SupportAfterEmergency_Printable_FamilyGuide.pdf)
- BrainPop-Coronavirus
- <https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/>

### **Understanding How Intermediate Students May React to Crisis and Strategies to Respond**

#### ***Reactions may include:***

- Being withdrawn, self-focusing
- Pessimistic worldview
- Denial of emotions to themselves or parents; respond with “I’m Ok” or even silence when they are upset
- Complaining about physical aches or pains because they cannot identify what is really bothering them.
- Engaging in risky behaviors

#### ***Strategies to Respond & Coping Skills:***

- Allow them to express their thoughts, feelings, and reactions without judgement
- Allow time to communicate with peers
- Normalize their reactions
- Ask about what worries them and what might help them cope
- Offer comfort with gentle words or just be present with them
- Encourage quiet time & encourage positive activities



***Common Stress Symptoms may include:***

- Sleep disturbances
- Loss of appetite
- Physical complaints (headaches, stomachaches)
- Withdrawal from friends
- Resumption of outgrown behaviors or habits

***Resources and Activities for Intermediate Students***

- BrainPop-Coronavirus
- <https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/>
- CharacterStrong-
- [https://youtu.be/oHv6vTKD6Ig?list=PLzvRx\\_johoA\\_QznIVHjbByQdHZAhWRQzr](https://youtu.be/oHv6vTKD6Ig?list=PLzvRx_johoA_QznIVHjbByQdHZAhWRQzr)
- A to Z Coping Strategies
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5EXpkVw3fh0>
- Center for Disease Control
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>

