

# KIDS + COVID-19: STARTING THE CONVERSATION

*With the continued changes and precautions regarding COVID-19, it is to be expected that kids may have strong emotions during this time of uncertainty. Each child may cope with the increased precautions and changes in different ways. You may see a sudden increase in emotional displays or change in behavior in your child, or they may have a more delayed response. There are many ways we can help children process and cope through continued stress and unpredictability.*

## TIPS + TRICKS

- Be honest with your child to maintain a trusting relationship. If you don't know an answer to a question or are unsure how to answer, it is okay to say, "I don't know."
- Establish a routine. You do not need to stick to a strict schedule but maintaining a general routine for each day can give your child a sense of control and stability.
- Ask your child how they feel to foster communication and an opportunity to answer any questions they have. Encouraging your child to ask questions gives them a sense of empowerment and control.
- Children often feel secure when you feel secure. Provide information in a calm and reassuring manner.
- Validate your child's feelings and help redirect them to productive outlets for release (drawing, coloring, crafts, journal, etc.) Ensure them that this virus is not their fault but that they can do their part to help prevent the spread of germs.

## COMMON RESPONSES: AGE-BY-AGE

- **Toddlers/Preschool:** Displays of negative emotions (tantrums or meltdowns). May be crankier and may not understand why rules and routines are different than normal. They may return or regress to outgrown behaviors.
- **School Age:** May show more signs of fear surrounding health & safety of themselves, friends, and family. Might state or believe false information and have more difficulty focusing.
- **Teens:** Some teens may respond to sudden changes "recklessly." There may be an increase in defiance due to a loss of independence. They may be easily overwhelmed with their emotions.

## RESOURCES

- **Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**
  - Resources for supporting children through natural disaster and health pandemics such as COVID-19. Age appropriate information, coping techniques and activity pages to get the conversation started.
- **When Sharing Isn't Caring - Rooster & Hen**
  - [www.whensharingisntcaring.com](http://www.whensharingisntcaring.com) - Resources for teaching the importance of social distancing and good hand hygiene at a level that children can understand.
- **Local School Districts**
  - Many local school districts have released information and resources from their school counselors in helping kids cope through school cancellations and online learning.