



February 13, 2020

The coronavirus (now officially named COVID-19) has been declared a public health emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO) and uncertainty around this can bring about fear and worry with our students. It is important to remember our children are looking towards us for reassurance and cues on how to react and respond.

Five strategies to build resilience, and have reassuring conversations with kids are:

1. **Stay Positive** : Remember to keep calm. If you show anxiety or fear, your child will pick up on this and also feel nervous and afraid. Changes to the environment and routines can create unease. Having calm, panic-free discussions can ease emotions around these changes. Check-in on how your child is feeling and acknowledge and address their worries rather than ignore them.
2. **Stick to the facts**: It is important to have thoughtful conversations regarding the coronavirus to distil anxiety, worry or fear. Look at the facts. Consider your child's age, processing, and emotions to determine how to frame these conversations to ensure your child understands. Let them know that Singapore is doing everything they can and you are up to date on current information. If they have additional questions you can look to find the answers. Check-in on what your child is thinking and address their worries. Discuss that not everything they hear or see is real. It can also be comforting to be reminded that doctors around the world are looking for ways to address the coronavirus and highlight positive news as well (eg. 15 people have recovered and been discharged in Singapore).
3. **Consider Media Consumption**: When looking online, consider the source and fact-check to prevent fake news, and think before you share. Be mindful of how much media you are checking and minimize how often you are reading stories. Try to keep a healthy balance (both online and offline) in your daily routines and lifestyle.
4. **Eliminate stigma**  
It is important to be aware of how the coronavirus is explained to your children to avoid any person/group being blamed. Also to communicate that if someone has a fever or cough does not mean this person has the coronavirus.



## 5. Boost Your Coping Strategies

When anyone has change or uncertainty this can create some levels of worry or anxiety. When this occurs, it is important to use positive coping strategies to manage those emotions. As every person is different, so too are our coping strategies. Regardless, it is important to practice positive strategies to calm down or modify our thinking to improve our outlook and overall well-being. Coping strategies can include: positive self-talk, singing, dancing, reading, drawing, music, Netflix/movies, create a gratitude list, meditation, yoga, coloring, exercise, cooking/baking, talking to a friend or family member, or doing other activities that are fun or give you joy and make you feel good.

If you notice your child is still worried or anxious, be assured that this is a normal reaction, and continue conversations and providing care for your child. If you find that additional support is needed, please reach out to one of our counselors who can refer you to outside counseling or to schedule time with you or your child to make a plan on how to support them during this time.

Warm regards,  
The counseling team (names omitted)

*Singapore based resources:*

*Local 24-hour Emergency Resources (if outside normal school hours):*

*Samaritans of Singapore: 1800-221 4444 (24-hour hotline)*

*Institute of Mental Health Helpline: 6389 2222 (24-hour hotline)*

*Emergency Ambulance: 995*