



Anxiety Management



The spread of coronavirus is a new and challenging event. Some people may find it more worrying than others. Try to remember that medical, scientific and public health experts are working hard to contain the virus. During these unprecedented times, your child / teenager may be experiencing anxiety, extreme worrying or stress. They may also be feeling helpless, insecure or unsettled. It is important to give your child / teen factual, age appropriate information about the virus and concrete instructions about how to avoid the spreading of the virus.

Remember to allow your child's questions and their age guide how much information you provide. Here are some guidelines to help you to talk to your child about the coronavirus outbreak:

- For visual learners; it may be best to **use social stories or informational posters** that have pictures included. Please find example social stories on this page. Remember, you can always edit social stories to make them applicable to you and your child's own situation.
- **For younger children:** basic reassurance that they and their loved ones are safe is important. Illustrate the coronavirus outbreak using simple facts, keep any information you give simple, short and concrete. Reassure them that at this moment in time, very few people in Ireland are sick with the virus. Not everyone will get the virus, and the vast majority of people who do get it recover fully.
- **For older children / teens:** they may need help separating reality from rumour and fantasy. Help them find sources of accurate, factual information. Having such knowledge can help them feel a sense of control.

If your child / teenager wants to speak about their worries / anxiety with you, remember:

- **Listen actively.** Respect their feelings, worries, fears and questions about the coronavirus outbreak. Knowing your child's feelings and where these feelings come from can help you guide them in reframing their thoughts. It can also help them find solutions, or more helpful ways of thinking.
- **Validate their feelings.** Be careful not to dismiss, invalidate, make fun of, or reject their feelings. You can inform them that their feelings are common; it's okay to feel upset but reassure them that they are safe.
- If they are old enough, it may be useful to explain what anxiety is, and the physical effect it can have on our bodies.
- It may be helpful to create a **"worry box"** with your child, where they can draw/write/type their worries, place them in a worry box and discuss them with someone later, for example a parent or friend.
- If your child seems to be worrying constantly, it may be helpful to **schedule worry time** and plan your day so to ensure that activities distract you and your child for most of the day outside of 'worry time.'

