

Coronavirus & Your Child's Anxiety



Simple, practical tips to help you manage your child's anxiety during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Understanding your 'Circle of Control'

Picture a circle around your child or yourself or your family. This is your 'Circle of Control'.

Outside of that circle, there will be things that create anxiety. But these things are out of your control. And they're out of your child's control. The coronavirus pandemic is an extreme example.

But the good news is, that inside your circle, you and your child have some control over what happens. You can't put an end to the coronavirus restrictions, but you can take steps to help your child understand and manage his or her anxiety. And while this won't necessarily change what's happening outside of your family's Circle of Control... it will help you and your child to cope better with life inside it.

Allow your child to express his or her feelings

You might be worried about letting your child think about the coronavirus and how it makes them feel. You don't have to be.

When children talk about whatever is making them feel anxious, it's easy to think that focusing on it will make them feel worse – particularly when mum or dad doesn't have the answers. But, in fact, the opposite is usually true.

The intensity of a strong feeling - like anxiety - is lowered when children have an opportunity to express how they are feeling. Some children will be able to use their words. For others they may find it easier to express their feelings through drawing, or play, or physical activity.

Listen to your child

You know what it's like to pour out your heart to a friend and really be heard. Well, it's the same for your child. Good listening gives children 'a safe harbour' to unload all that's on their heart and mind.

So, when your child begins to talk to you, give them your full attention so they know you are listening. Try not to ask too many questions, as this tends to shut children down. Instead, use phrases like, "Tell me more about that" which can encourage your child to talk more.

Good listening is very effective in lowering the intensity of anxious feelings your child might be experiencing... which can help him or her to manage these feelings better in the long run.

Give your child age appropriate answers and limit their exposure to news and social media

It's helpful not to assume you always know what's going on inside your child's mind. So, allow your child to ask their questions about the coronavirus and then give them clear, age appropriate answers.

For example, the answer you give to your 13-year-old would sound very different what you'd say to your 5-year-old when asked the same question.

Giving clear information that your child can understand, can be a helpful antidote for their anxious thoughts and behaviour. However, too much information, especially when it's complicated or difficult for children to comprehend, will only increase their anxiety. So, be sure to limit their exposure to news and social media.

Try to maintain your family routines and family fun

This is a hard ask when you're under so much stress. Especially with Australia's current social distancing and coronavirus restrictions. So, your creativity and patience will be needed... but it will be worth it in the long run! Because the benefit is, that family routine and regular family fun will both have a calming effect on an anxious family atmosphere.

A calmer mum, dad or carer = a calmer child

Again, this can seem like a tall order when you have so much to be worried about... but take time to remind yourself that your child will follow your lead. The better you manage your own anxiety, the easier it will be for your child to cope with theirs.

For help managing your own anxiety, take a look at Anglicare's simple and practical [tip sheet](#).

There is a wonderful promise from the Bible for God's peace when you and your children are anxious. It comes from Philippians 4:6-7.

⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

This is Anglicare's prayer for you and your family during this uncertain time.

Having the peace of God dwell inside you won't change the anxious circumstances outside your Circle of Control. But God's peace, given through Christ Jesus, can calm the anxiety deep in you and your child... so you can cope better as you live through this coronavirus crisis.

Anglicare Assistance

Anglicare counselling

<https://www.anglicare.org.au/what-we-offer/counselling/>

1300 651 728

Other Counselling & Helplines

Kids Helpline

1800 55 1800

kidshelpline.com.au

Lifeline

13 11 14

lifeline.org.au

Beyond Blue

1800 512 348

coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au

Video Resources

Compassion

[Kids' Talks with Colin](#)

Video series including short talks, Bible readings, prayers and music by Colin Buchanan.

Conscious Discipline

[Dr Becky Bailey](#)

Videos on how to coach your children to handle strong emotions.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[Communicating with your child](#)

This useful clip includes a section on practising active listening with your child.

Raising Children Network

[Play and learning](#)

Play ideas for younger children.

Other Resources

[Play ideas for school-aged children](#)

[Comic strip explaining the coronavirus](#)

[Australian government information on the coronavirus](#)