How to talk to your child about Corona

We are all overwhelmed by the wealth of information and news about the spread of the coronavirus that reaches us every day. For children, too, what they see on television, the Internet or social media, or hear about the coronavirus from other people, can be disturbing and confusing. This can cause anxiety, stress or sadness in them. It is therefore important to talk openly to children about this. This helps them to understand the situation better and to deal with it.

1. talk to your child about the corona virus and listen to him or her

Address the subject openly: Find out how much your child already knows and take it up. In order for your child to be able to talk to you openly and honestly, make sure that you are in a comfortable environment. Painting, storytelling and other playful activities can help to address the serious topic.
It is important that you do not trivialize your child's worries and fears. Show that you take them seriously and that it is quite normal to be afraid of things. Listen and give your child your full attention. Make it clear that your child can talk to you whenever he or she has questions about corona viruses or wants to talk to you.

2. be honest – explain in a child-friendly way

Explain in a child-friendly manner what is happening right

now. Children have a right to know what is going on in the world. Adults have the responsibility to protect them from danger, but also to tell you honestly about it. It is important to find a language appropriate to your child's age – observe your child's reactions and be sensitive.

If you can't answer some of his questions, that's not too bad! Do not speculate or cheat your children. Instead, try to find the answers around Corona together with your children.

Websites such as those of the Robert Koch Institute or international organisations such as UNICEF or the World Health Organisation publish serious information about the corona virus. Explain that some information on the Internet is not correct and that it is best to trust the experts.

3. show your child how to protect itself

The best way to protect children from the corona virus is to wash their hands regularly! You can also show children how to cover their face with their elbows when coughing or sneezing. Ask your child to tell you if he or she feels sick and feverish or if he or she has coughing or breathing difficulties. This will tell you directly whether your child is experiencing symptoms that may be related to the corona virus.

4. calm your child

We are currently encountering disturbing images and news almost everywhere. This may give the impression that the crisis is omnipresent. Children do not always distinguish between the images on the screen and their own personal reality. They may believe that they themselves are in danger. You can help your child to deal with the stress and anxiety by taking time, playing with him, giving him space to relax.

Stick to routines and well-established daily routines as much as possible, for example before going to bed. If your child feels sick, explain that it is better for him to stay at home because it is safer for him and his friends. Show understanding that this may be boring or even disturbing and make it clear that these rules must be followed at the moment so that everyone is protected. We have compiled possible learning and crafting offers for you in another blog post.

5. find out if your child experiences stigma or prejudice

The coronavirus has increased fears and prejudices in many countries. For example, there are reports that Asian-looking people are excluded because they are associated with the pathogen. Since the beginning of the pandemic there have been numerous reports of discrimination. If children are bullied at school, they must be encouraged to talk about it with adults they trust.

Explain that the coronavirus has nothing to do with what someone looks like, where they come from or what language they speak. Remind your children that every person – every child – has the right to feel safe at all times. Bullying is always wrong and we should all be friendly and supportive of each other.

6. tell hero stories

Explain to your children how important it is that people help each other. Tell them about nurses or doctors, scientists or pharmacists who are working to help others, who are helping to stop the outbreak, and who are developing a vaccine. It gives your children hope and takes away their fears when they know that there are many people willing to help.

7. Take care of yourself

You can only help your children well if you are well and do not seem worried or frightened! Because children are very attentive. They notice immediately if you do not tell the truth. If you feel anxious or insecure, take time for yourself and contact other family members, friends and confidants in your environment. Take time to do things that will help you relax and recuperate.

8. pay attention to how the conversation has affected your child

Pay attention to what all this information does to your child. We cannot leave children frightened or unsettled. Try to get a sense of how scared your child is. To do this, you should pay attention to his physical reactions (pitch, body language, breathing). Remind your child that he can talk to you about other difficult topics at any time.