

HOW TO EXPLAIN TO A CHILD

THAT THEIR LOVED ONE IS HOSPITALIZED

GIVE YOUR CHILD A TRUTHFUL EXPLANATION OF WHAT IS HAPPENING.

"Grandma is very sick now, so she has to stay in the hospital where the doctors and nurses are taking care of her."

ADJUST THE AMOUNT OF INFORMATION TO THE CHILD'S AGE AND THEIR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS.

"You know that many people have this new illness, the coronavirus. We don't know why this is happening, but it isn't the same for everyone. Many people, and especially children, don't have any problems; they may only cough and stay at home, but some older people need doctors' help and have to stay in the hospital. That's why we have to protect especially our Grandmas and Grandpas so that they don't visit places with lots of people but rather stay home."

CORRECT ANY FALSE INFORMATION THAT THE CHILD MAY HAVE GOT. EXPLAIN THAT ANY COUGH, COMMON COLD OR FEVER ISN'T NECESSARILY THE CORONAVIRUS.

"The fact that you coughed doesn't mean that you are very sick. People often have a cold or cough and it doesn't have to be anything serious. What is more, if a child does get the coronavirus, they usually just cough, and nothing else. But I will definitely take care of you and call the doctor if that's what we need."

Has a loved one of yours come down with a serious case of the coronavirus and/or have they been hospitalized? Are you thinking about how to explain this situation to your child and how to behave towards the child? Here, we offer some basic recommendations and examples of specific statements that can help you start speaking about this with your child.

ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS HONESTLY. IT IS BETTER TO ADMIT THAT YOU DON'T KNOW SOMETHING THAN TO MAKE THINGS UP.

"I don't know if Grandma gets better, but I believe that the doctors are doing their best."

EVERY CHILD MAY REACT DIFFERENTLY – SOME EXPRESS STRONG EMOTIONS, SOME ASK FOR DETAILS, OTHERS BECOME MORE WITHDRAWN. ALL OF THESE REACTIONS ARE VALID, RESPECT THEM.

"I understand that you don't want to talk about it with me right now and you want to be alone. If you want to talk later or ask me about anything, you can come to me, I'll be in the kitchen."

ESPECIALLY YOUNG CHILDREN MAY START SEEKING ATTENTION AND WETTING THEMSELVES, MAY HAVE ISSUES WITH SLEEPING AND MAY TEMPORARILY FORGET THE SKILLS THEY HAVE ALREADY LEARNED. THIS IS A COMMON REACTION TO STRESS, DON'T SCOLD YOUR CHILD AND BE PATIENT.

"Did you have a bad dream? I also have trouble sleeping now. Would you like to sleep in my bed tonight?"

EXPLAIN TO THE CHILD THAT IT IS NORMAL TO FEEL AFRAID OR SAD IN THIS SITUATION. IF YOU FEEL THE SAME WAY, ADMIT THIS TO YOUR CHILD AND ASSURE THEM THAT THEY CAN COME TO YOU WITH QUESTIONS OR WHEN THEY FEEL SAD ANYTIME.

"It is normal that we are worried about Grandma right now and that we are sad. I also think about her all day. If you feel sad or you want to ask something, you can come to me for sure."

THE CHILD MAY START ASKING ABOUT DYING AND DEATH. DON'T AVOID TALKING ABOUT THIS AND ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS HONESTLY, EVEN THOUGH YOU MAY FIND THEM MORBID OR WEIRD.

"You want to know whether people can play or eat when they die? No, when a person dies, they are not hungry anymore; they don't move and don't feel anything. Their body is then put into a grave."

A CLEAR ROUTINE WILL HELP YOUR CHILD FEEL SECURE. KEEP THE HABITS OF YOUR FAMILY SUCH AS COMMON MEALS AND BEDTIME.

DON'T TRY TO PRETEND THAT NOTHING IS HAPPENING. INSTEAD, YOU CAN SHOW YOUR CHILD THAT EXPERIENCING SORROW AND FEARS IS A NORMAL PART OF LIFE. HOWEVER, IF YOU ARE TOO DISTURBED TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO YOUR CHILD, TURN TO AN ADULT CLOSE TO YOU. DON'T LET THE CHILD TAKE CARE OF YOU MORE THAN YOU TAKE CARE OF THEM.

THE CHILDREN MAY THINK THAT THEY CAUSED THE ILLNESS OF THEIR LOVED ONE. EXPRESS YOUR UNDERSTANDING FOR SUCH THOUGHTS BUT ASSURE THEM THAT THEY HAD NO INFLUENCE ON IT.

"I understand that you are worried if you could have done something differently. I also think about whether I should have told Grandma not to go to the shop. But maybe she would have caught the illness elsewhere, I don't know if we could have protected her. When you have such thoughts, you can cuddle with me."

IF YOUR CHILD HAS SELF-BLAME THOUGHTS SEVERAL TIMES A DAY, AGREE THAT YOU WILL TALK ABOUT IT FOR EXAMPLE JUST THREE TIMES A DAY AND DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT MEANWHILE.

"I see that you worry a lot about it and you want to talk it through. I want us to agree that we will speak about it but meanwhile also do other things. We don't have to be cheerful but we also don't have to be blaming ourselves all day. What if we take a look at the photos from Grandma's youth or take care of her herbs?"

MONITOR HOW MUCH TIME YOUR CHILD SPENDS WATCHING THE MEDIA SO THAT THEY ARE NOT DISTRESSED BY THE NEWS.

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR CHILD AND COME UP WITH PLEASANT WAYS TO SPEND YOUR TIME TOGETHER – GAMES, READING, WATCHING FAIRYTALES.