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Dear parents/caregivers,

The following tips offer helpful advice for talking to children about the coronavirus pandemic:

- **Don't be afraid to discuss the coronavirus.** Start by inviting your child to talk about the issue. Find out how much they already know and follow their lead. Look at the conversation as an opportunity to convey **facts** and set the emotional tone. Your goal is to help your children feel informed and get fact-based information. Make sure you are in a safe environment and allow your child to talk freely. Drawing, coloring, and other activities may help to open up a discussion.
- **Be developmentally appropriate.** Don't volunteer too much information, as this may be overwhelming. Instead, try to answer your child's questions. Do your best to answer honestly and clearly. Use age-appropriate language, watch their reactions, and be sensitive to their level of anxiety. It's OK if you can't answer everything; being available to your child is what matters.
- **Take your cues from your child.** Invite your child to tell you anything they may have heard about the coronavirus, and how they feel. Give them ample opportunity to ask questions. Your goal is to avoid encouraging frightening fantasies.
- **Deal with your own anxiety.** It's OK to feel worried. Talking about your feelings of stress can help you work through them. If you try to push down feelings of stress this can have a negative impact on your health.
- **Focus on what you're doing to stay safe.** An important way to reassure kids is to emphasize the safety precautions that you are taking. Kids feel empowered when they know what to do to keep themselves safe. Encourage your children to wash their hands with soap and water frequently - particularly after going to the toilet, coming from a public place, and before and after eating.
- **Stick to a routine.** You can help your children cope with stress by making opportunities for them to play and relax, when possible. This is particularly important if your child's school or daycare shuts down. Structured days with regular mealtimes and bedtimes are an essential part of keeping kids happy and healthy. Keep regular routines and schedules as much as possible, especially before they go to sleep, or help create new ones in a new environment.
- **Check if they are experiencing or spreading stigma.** The outbreak of coronavirus has brought with it numerous reports of racial discrimination around the world, so it's important to check that your children are neither experiencing nor contributing to bullying. Explain that coronavirus has nothing to do with what someone looks like, where they are from, or what language they speak. Remind your children that everyone deserves to be and feel safe at school. Bullying is always wrong and we should each do our part to spread kindness and support each other. Always choose kind.

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