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# How to talk to your child about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

8 tips to help comfort and protect children

**UNICEF** 

## Available in: Türkçe English 13 March 2020 It's easy to feel overwhelmed by everything you're hearing about coronavirus disease 2019

(COVID-19) right now. It's also understandable if your children are feeling anxious, too.

Children might find it difficult to understand what they are seeing online or on TV - or

hearing from other people - so they can be particularly vulnerable to feelings of anxiety,

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stress and sadness. But having an open, supportive discussion with your children can help them understand, cope and even make a positive contribution for others. 1. Ask open questions and listen Start by inviting your child to talk about the issue. Find out how much they already know and follow their lead. If they are particularly young and haven't already heard about the

#### and other activities may help to open up a discussion. Most importantly, don't minimize or avoid their concerns. Be sure to acknowledge their

feelings and assure them that it's natural to feel scared about these things. Demonstrate

Make sure you are in a safe environment and allow your child to talk freely. Drawing, stories

outbreak, you may not need to raise the issue – just take the chance to remind them about

good hygiene practices without introducing new fears.

watch their reactions, and be sensitive to their level of anxiety.

that you're listening by giving them your full attention, and make sure they understand that they can talk to you and their teachers whenever they like. 2. Be honest: explain the truth in a child-friendly way

Children have a right to truthful information about what's going on in the world, but adults

also have a responsibility to keep them safe from distress. Use age-appropriate language,

If you can't answer their questions, don't guess. Use it as an opportunity to explore the

answers together. Websites of international organizations like **UNICEF** and the **World Health** Organization are great sources of information. Explain that some information online isn't accurate, and that it's best to trust the experts.

#### along with The Wiggles or follow this dance to make learning fun. You can also show children how to <u>cover a cough or a sneeze with their elbow</u>, explain that

go to sleep, or help create new ones in a new environment.

lots of adults are working hard to keep your family safe.

should feel comfortable telling an adult whom they trust.

3. Show them how to protect themselves and their friends

it's best not to get too close to people who have those symptoms, and ask them to tell you if they start to feel like they have a fever, cough or are having difficulty breathing. 4. Offer reassurance

One of the best ways to keep children safe from coronavirus and other diseases is to

simply encourage regular handwashing. It doesn't need to be a scary conversation. Sing

crisis is all around us. Children may not distinguish between images on screen and their own personal reality, and they may believe they're in imminent danger. You can help your children cope with the stress by making opportunities for them to play and relax, when possible. Keep regular routines and schedules as much as possible, especially before they

If you are experiencing an outbreak in your area, remind your children that they are not likely

to catch the disease, that most people who do have coronavirus don't get very sick, and that

If your child does feel unwell, explain that they have to stay at home/at the hospital

because it is safer for them and their friends. Reassure them that you know it is hard

When we're seeing lots of troubling images on TV or online, it can sometimes feel like the

(maybe scary or even boring) at times, but that following the rules will help keep everyone safe. 5. Check if they are experiencing or spreading stigma

#### 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. If they have been called names or bullied at school, they

Remind your children that everyone deserves to be safe at school. Bullying is always wrong

and we should each do our part to spread kindness and support each other.

The outbreak of coronavirus has brought with it numerous reports of racial discrimination

6. Look for the helpers

It's important for children to know that people are helping each other with acts of kindness

Share stories of health workers, scientists and young people, among others, who are working to stop the outbreak and keep the community safe. It can be a big comfort to know that compassionate people are taking action.

### You'll be able to help your kids better if you're coping, too. Children will pick up on your own response to the news, so it helps them to know you're calm and in control.

8. Close conversations with care

7. Take care of yourself

and generosity.

feeling worried.

friends and trusted people in your community. Make some time to do things that help you relax and recuperate.

If you're feeling anxious or upset, take time for yourself and reach out to other family,

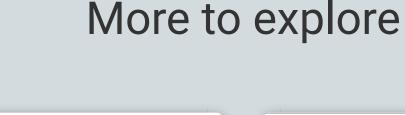
conversation wraps up, try to gauge their level of anxiety by watching their body language, considering whether they're using their usual tone of voice and watching their breathing. Remind your children that they can have other difficult conversations with you at any time. Remind them that you care, you're listening and that you're available whenever they're

It's important to know that we're not leaving children in a state of distress. As your

Information compiled by Jacob Hunt, UNICEF communications specialist

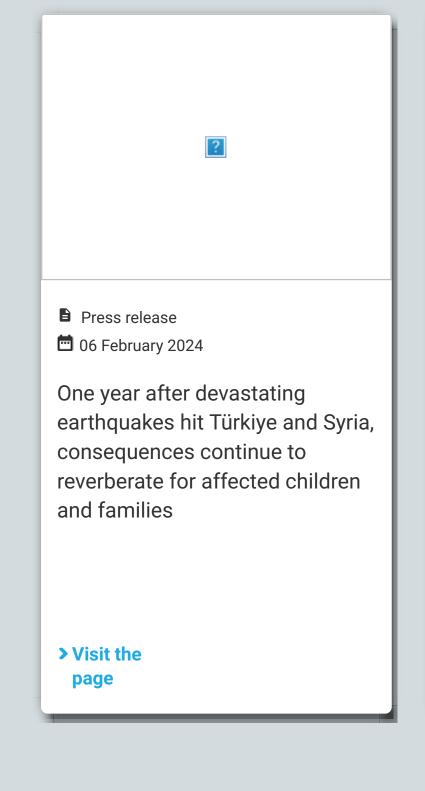
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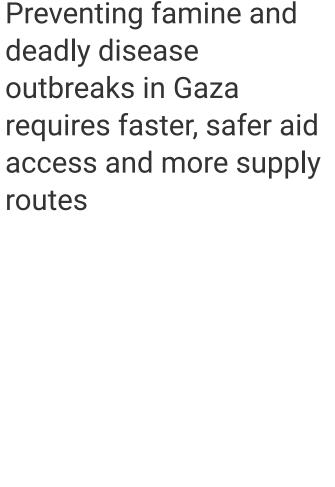
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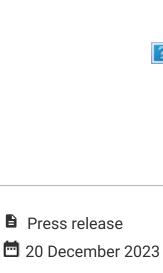


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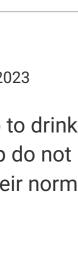
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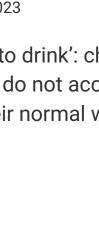


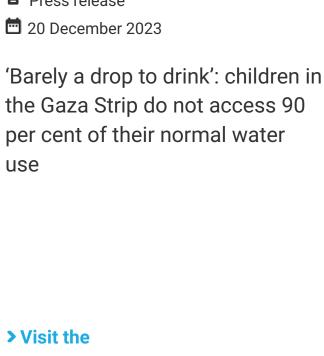














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