

Dr Joanne Riordan BSc(Hons), PGCE, QTS, DecPsy, CPsychol  
Independent Educational and Child Psychologist  
Website: [www.DrJoanne.co.uk](http://www.DrJoanne.co.uk)

[10 Top Tips for Parents and Carers For Supporting Their Children in Conversations About Coronavirus](#)

13<sup>th</sup> March 2020

My name is Dr Joanne Riordan and I am an Educational and Child Psychologist. This means that I have additional expertise in child development, education and well-being, which I use to support schools and families. Below, I list my top tips for communicating with your child about Coronavirus.

1) [Manage your own feelings.](#)

Understandably, this is a worrying topic for a lot of adults too. Therefore, prior to discussing this with your child, discuss your worries with trusted adult family members or friends. This will enable you to discuss the topic more calmly with your child.

Coronavirus is a really hot topic of conversation at the moment. But try to avoid having adult discussions about Coronavirus in front of children. Too much exposure to a topic can lead to increased worry.

2) [Plan a time to discuss the topic with your child.](#)

To help give your child time to process the discussion, pick a time where you are not under time pressure. Raise the topic in a place where you are both relaxed, such as at home.

3) [Find out what your child knows already.](#)

If you wish to discuss Coronavirus with your child, start by asking them what they have heard already about the topic. This means you can gauge your child's existing level of awareness and any misconceptions you may need to address.

4) [Keep discussions centred on the present situation.](#)

When talking with children about Coronavirus, talk about what is happening now, as opposed to discussing things that may potentially happen in the future. This avoids leading to increased feelings of anxiety.

5) [Keep the discussion developmentally appropriate.](#)

Ensure that you consider your child's age and needs when deciding what to say. If you have children of different ages, you may prefer to discuss this

separately with each of them. Keep your explanation short, and then be led by their questions. For very young children, you might want to simply say that there are some nasty germs around and we need to be extra careful to wash our hands well.

6) Reassure your child that adults are keeping them safe.

Feeling that adults have responsibility for managing this issue can help children feel safer. Examples to share with your children might include how you are making sure there is soap at home to wash their hands properly with. Plus, explaining to them that we have doctors and nurses who know how to look after people, if they get poorly.

7) Focus on actions that your child can take.

Taking actions that increase our control over a situation help us and our children feel more relaxed. We are told that the most sensible action for children to focus on is hand washing. Perhaps they could make a poster to put up in the bathroom, to remind the family to wash their hands. Alternatively, they could make up a silly song to sing whilst hand washing, to ensure the family wash their hands for long enough.

8) Ensure that your child knows that they can come to you with their questions and feelings.

This is a topic that is both worrying and changing. Therefore, it is helpful to specifically let your child know that they can come to you at any time to talk about this topic further.

9) Have a safe end to the conversation.

To help your child feel relaxed again, direct their attention to a topic or activity that does not have negative feelings linked to it after the conversation (such as asking them what they would like for dinner or what game they would like to play with you now).

10) Consider your child's exposure to the media.

Older children may wish to research this topic further. Direct them to appropriate information aimed at children, such as CBBC Newsround. Try to encourage them not to research the topic too often.

Written by Dr Joanne Riordan  
Educational and Child Psychologist and Director of Dr Joanne Ltd.

[www.DrJoanne.co.uk](http://www.DrJoanne.co.uk)