

Suffolk Region

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Special Education Report
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Happy March! With everything going on in the world, it is correct that we touch upon the topic of the COVID-19 pandemic that is happening around us. Every day, all day that is what is on the news, how many confirmed cases, how many suspected cases, and how many have died. This can be extremely stressful for not just the parents, but for the children as well. With schools closing for extended periods of time, children with special needs will have their schedules disrupted and this can be a very difficult time. Do not hesitate to talk to your child, know their limitations as to how to make them understand what is going on. According to the National Association of School Psychologists article titled "Talking to Children About COVID-19 (Coronavirus): A Parent's Resource"; it states some very good key points.

- Children will react to and follow your verbal and nonverbal reactions
- What is said and done (current prevention efforts) can and will increase or decrease your child's anxiety
- Always reinforce the fact that they (the child) and your family are fine
- Let them know that you (the parent) and the adults at school are there to keep them safe and healthy
- Allow your child to talk about their feelings, what they have heard and keep them as focused as to what is true.

Continue to monitor the television news and social media. There may be many truths to what we are hearing, as well as many false reports. Discussing factual information can and will decrease the anxiety. Keeping your child engaged with different activities, will be a great outlet. Have them help with dinner, play music and encourage them to sing along. Some may find this silly, but that's ok.

Try to maintain as normal a routine as possible. Some children do not do well with change and especially the younger children will have a hard time understanding why there is no school, why you can't go to the park, or to some other extracurricular activities. Be honest and accurate. Not talking to your child, will have their minds imagining situations that are far worse than the reality.

Continue to review and enforce basic hygiene practices and healthy lifestyles. Review handwashing (singing Happy Birthday, will ensure that your child is washing their hands for at least 20 seconds as recommended by the CDC (Center for Disease Control) * you must sing both verses). Encourage your child to sneeze or cough into a tissue or bended elbow and to clean their hands as soon as possible.

As always, keep all explanations age appropriate. Younger children need more brief, simple and concise information. Reassure them that home and schools are safe places and that they can do their part by staying healthy. Older children may ask more complex questions, they have more access to social media and television news. Arming our children with factual information, explaining what they can do to help keep themselves and their families healthy and safe, will not only reduce the anxiety, but give them a sense of control.

Be safe, healthy and well.

