



5 Tips - How to talk to your child and teenager about physical distancing and the "circuit breaker"

Brought to you by the PTSS team (KKH) · APRIL 2020

1. Find time to talk openly about the coronavirus, physical distancing, and the purpose of the "Circuit Breaker"

Find a time to talk to your child or teenager. When they are ready and able to pay attention to the conversation, set aside time to listen to their thoughts, feelings and questions that they may have about the topics above.

Use age-appropriate language that your child or teenager can understand. Assure your child, that no question is "silly" or "not good".

What is important is that you hear them out. For young children, you may consider having shorter talks about one topic. This can be done together as a family or when you have one-on-one time with them.

2. Speak in a calm and assuring manner

You might be feeling stressed about the situation yourself. Know that this is normal and understandable – this is a challenging period for everyone! Give yourself a few moments to help yourself feel calmer before talking to your child or teenager.

Try taking a few slow, deep, relaxing breaths...making your exhales longer than your inhales.

Being calm and assuring when talking about the situation can help your child or teenager feel safe and secure.

3. Find out what they know and clarify misunderstandings

It is always helpful to first find out what they know and understand about the coronavirus and the reasons for physical distancing and the one-month "circuit breaker". You may follow up by asking them if they have any questions about these measures and new restrictions.

4. Acknowledge your child's or teenager's feelings about physical distancing and the "circuit breaker"

Some children or teenagers may be okay with staying home all day while others may feel distressed, anxious, and frustrated. They may be moodier or more irritable than usual and that is understandable.

Ask them about how they are feeling about the situation. Help them with naming their feelings if needed.

With your child, you may ask them what can help them feel better. Guide them along with some suggestions if needed.

Give them your attention and listen to what they share.

With your teenager, you may like invite them to brainstorm with you on what are some things they can do that will help them feel better.

Let them know that it is okay to be feeling what they're feeling.

It might also be assuring for your child or teenager to hear you share about your feelings and what you're doing to cope with them.

5. Explain the reasons and importance of physical distancing and the "circuit breaker"

Explain these measures in a way your child can understand:

- Keep to only the facts about the coronavirus
 - Focus on the positives
 - Reassure them that this situation will not last forever
 - Offer alternatives to staying in touch with friends and extended family (i.e., scheduling video calls, sending out surprise e-cards, short voice or video-clip messages)
 - Explain what the family can do to get through this challenging period together
- Look out for other articles that are part of this COVID-19 series for tips and suggestions on what children, teenagers, and families can do together**

Additional Resources

For younger children, consider using a child-friendly resources to help you talk about the coronavirus and the current situation. Here are a couple of child-friendly resources that may be helpful as you talk to your children about these topics:

- Coronavirus – A book for children
https://nosycrow.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus_INS.pdf
- COVIBOOK by Manuela Molina (downloadable in pdf, available in many different languages including English, Chinese, and Bahasa Indonesia)
<https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>
- The Together Story by Roxana Oroian
<https://rockosanna.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/the-together-story.pdf> (pdf in English)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHFzH0SpL8> (animated version on YouTube, English)

References:

- https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a_8
- https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff_2
- <https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/coronavirus-covid-19-guide>

