

Children's Anxiety

In its elements, anxiety is the same for most of us; catastrophic thoughts that run amok in our minds; thoughts that go to the edges of reality and beyond. Most of the time we don't share our thoughts and therefore, they don't get challenged. Within our minds they seem real and logical, but when we share them out loud, we may realise that they are not as sensible. When we get feedback from others, we may keep them in check. Sometimes we need to do that regularly, otherwise they just squeeze themselves in our mind's corner once again.

Children are no different, and perhaps they are more prone to anxiety because they may hear a narrow or limited part of an adult conversation and build an idea from that. Ideas that may be based on a part truth and a part fabrication. Some children are more prone to anxiety, many of them are bright kids with vivid fantasy.

In the present situation of a Coronavirus pandemic, many children are worried about the virus and its impact on their lives. What will happen if they get it. Will they infect their loved ones? Will they be responsible if grandpa get this dreaded disease? Will grandma die? Will they die themselves?

I believe all of us can relate to these thoughts. This is the last thing we want to be responsible for. The disease is not yet fully understood, and many tales are travelling the internet at the speed of light. Not all of them are true. Some of them are picked up by mainstream media and worried parents discuss them in whispering tones. Children pick up on these things. It is important that we seek information from sound sources, like the WHO and the Health authorities in our home countries and, at the same time, limit the information from dubious sources or unhinged social media discussions.

It is immensely important to talk openly to children. They may not share their worries openly. Often anxiety presents with physical symptoms in children, like stomach-ache or other physical manifestations. Ask them how they're doing. Ask them directly about COVID-19 and whether they or their friends are worried about it. Share with them the facts that children seem to get the illness much less than grownups and are therefore less likely to spread it to others. They are also less likely to get severely ill or die. We should talk openly about the reason why we don't visit grandparents at the moment, as we just want to keep them safe. Going outside is actually a good thing to do. There we get a lot of fresh air that keeps our bodies healthy and vibrant and the walks and exercises keep us healthy and make us less anxious. We just need to be sure of keeping a distance of at least 2-3 metres to the people we meet on our walks. And if we wash our hands properly and regularly, we diminish the chances of spreading the virus.

We should talk more to our children these days, and COVID-19 should only be a little part of our conversations each day. There should be room for it, we should never stop our children in talking about the things that worry them, but then we should fill the conversation with better things. We should talk about fun things, hopeful things and the future. We should also materialise our conversations in fun and meaningful activities. And there is a future after COVID-19. We might even have a better future, because we are realising the importance of relationships and compassion.

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