

## Tips on Explaining Coronavirus Concerns to People you Work with.

- **Don't be afraid to discuss the coronavirus.** Most people will have already heard about the virus or seen people wearing face masks, so don't avoid talking about it. Not talking about something can actually make people worry *more*. Look at the conversation as an opportunity to convey the facts and set the emotional tone.
- **Take your cues from your Individuals.** You might ask people to tell you anything they may have heard about the coronavirus, and how they feel. Give them ample opportunity to ask questions. You want to be prepared to answer (but not prompt) questions. Your goal is to avoid encouraging frightening fantasies
- **Be developmentally appropriate.** Don't volunteer too much information, as this may be overwhelming. Instead, try to answer any questions asked. Do your best to answer honestly and clearly. It's okay if you can't answer everything; being available to listen is what matters.
- **Be careful with the news media.** You take on the news and you're the person who filters the news to your clients. Your goal is to help people feel informed and get fact-based information that is likely more reassuring than whatever they're hearing from their friends or on the news. It might be best to limit having the news on or at least be available to explain what was said to minimize anxiety and misinformation.
- **If you are asked about face masks:** Explain that the experts (at the CDC) say they aren't necessary for most people. If you are out and see people wearing face masks, explain that those people are being extra cautious.
- **Deal with your own anxiety.** When you're feeling most anxious or panicked, that isn't the time to talk about what's happening with the coronavirus. Model calmness when discussing coronavirus. Avoid discussion about coronavirus to colleagues in the presence of the people you work with.
- **Be reassuring.** Often the folks we work with may be very egocentric, so hearing about the coronavirus on the news may be enough to make them seriously worry that they'll catch it. It's may be helpful to give reassurance about how rare the coronavirus actually is (the flu is much more common).
- **Focus on what you're doing to stay safe.** An important way to reassure people is to emphasize the safety precautions that you can take. People feel more in control and empowered when they know what to do to keep themselves safe." We know that the coronavirus is transmitted mostly by coughing and touching surfaces. The CDC recommends thoroughly washing your hands as the primary means of staying healthy. So remind people that they are taking care of themselves by washing their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds (or the length of two "Happy Birthday" songs) when they come in from outside, before they eat, and after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the bathroom.
- **Stick to routine as much as possible.** "We don't like uncertainty, so staying rooted in routines and predictability is going to be helpful right now," This is particularly important if a

day program shuts down or community access is restricted. Make sure you are taking care of the basics just like you would during a day off or a vacation. Structured days with regular mealtimes, chores , leisure activities and bedtime routines are essential in keeping things as normal as possible.

**Attached is a picture story of some things you may be able to discuss with people you work with that have questions. Use all or only what you need.**