



Language for Parents During Times of Worry

During an unprecedented and worrisome time, your children may be struggling to keep their emotions under control. You may notice that your child from time to time becomes particularly stressed, anxious or sad. If you are concerned about anything you are observing, you may want to use this simple language which is a great tool to start any tough conversation, especially if your child is exhibiting behavior of concern.

Take into account that this conversation could elicit a personal disclosure and find a protected time and location that is appropriate. Also, remember to include your child if you have plans to share information about them with someone else, who that person is and why it is important to do so.

1 | I notice. "Is everything okay? I've noticed you have been...." State the changes you have noticed – you may want to journal any behavioral or emotional changes you have observed.

2 | I care. "I'm concerned. This isn't typical for you. You deserve to feel better." This is a reminder that although routine has changed, we are all in this together.

3 | How can I help? "What can I do to help? Let's come up with a plan together." This is the action step. Give kids choices but be firm that action will be taken to help them feel better. Affirm that help is available, effective and that they deserve to feel better. Try out what you normally do to support and nurture your child - it might be as simple as baking cookies, reading a book or going for a walk.

Quick Tips

- Ask questions and LISTEN – kids want your attention, not your advice.
- Be prepared for the truth and remain calm, it's okay not to know what to do.
- Validate your child's feelings – it can be hurtful when their feelings are minimized or not taken seriously.
- Listen to your gut – it's the best tool you already have.
- Take action – help can be simple but if more action is needed be sure to talk to a doctor and rule out anything physical. We have a fantastic [Parent Handbook](#) filled with tips for talking to your children if you are worried about their mental health.
- Let your kid drive the ship – let them come up with what they would like to do to feel better (within reason), give them options. This is important developmentally and teaches advocacy skills.
- Take care of yourself – we all may be feeling stress, fear or anxiety. We have a chance to practice and model coping skills.

If you need to speak with someone immediately, please text LISTEN to 741-741 or call 1-800-273-8255.
If this is an emergency, please call 911.