

Parenting in Focus: Your Children and the Pandemic
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This is a very confusing time for young children. It is also confusing for most people. The news is full of information on the coronavirus — most of it way beyond the ability of young children to understand.

Once again it is time for you, as your child's first teacher, to explain what this is all about. This is an opportunity to share something of significance with your child.

Children don't understand why they can't see their friends. They don't understand why the Fourth of July was different this year than last year. They don't understand why you keep making them wash their hands. They don't understand why you should take so long washing your hands. They don't understand why you stand so far away when you are talking with the lady at the store.

They also don't understand how far apart you need to stand when you talk about staying 6 feet away. They don't understand why you are home with them all day long and why you aren't going to work now. They don't understand why they can't play with their friends. You can certainly see how confusing this all would be for a young child.

It is very important that you talk with your children about this virus. They need to ask the questions they have and to be able to understand as much as possible when you give them answers.

The discussions you have with your young child develop a pattern of communication that will last for years to come. Listen carefully so you can answer all the questions or what they are asking about.

'Why We Stay Home'

Certainly there will be many questions and you may not know all of the answers. Few people totally understand this virus and know how to prevent it and even explain it. Many parents may not even take the time to help their children understand what is going on. Now there is some help.

Two medical students decided that they would write a book for children about the disease. Samantha Harris and Devon Scott wrote a book called "Why We Stay Home." The book is free and can be downloaded from a computer. Do a search for "Why we stay home children's book" and listen to the person read the book to other children.

The short book is written for young children and addresses most of the questions that may be concerning a child. Some of it gets a little too complicated for very young children, but these more complex parts can just be things you talk about when you are enjoying the illustrations together.

This same source has many other books being read to young children. This can be a valuable resource in talking with your children about other issues. Trying to find other children's book on the internet is well worth your time. Your children will gain from watching these videos.

The videos become most valuable if you watch them with your child and then talk about them afterwards. Your child gains knowledge and certainly develops increased closeness and love between you and your child. This helps lay the foundation for the next shared experience.

Cynthia Martin is the founder of the First Teacher program and former executive director of Parenting Matters Foundation, which publishes newsletters for parents, caregivers and grandparents.