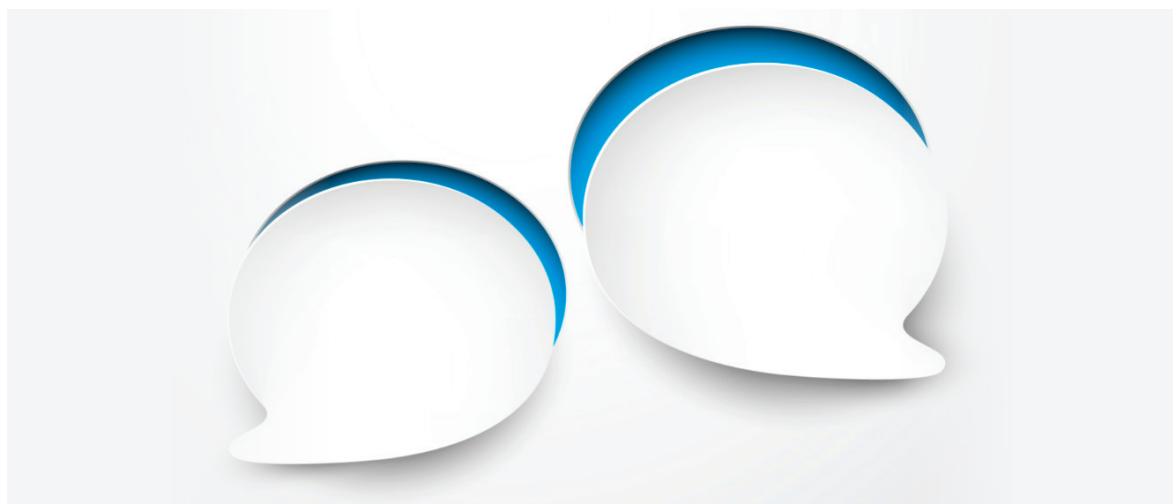


## Speak, Understand, Be Calm - Explaining the Corona Pandemic Period to Children

The second wave of the corona pandemic is in progress, with no foreseeable end. Children are exposed to information about patients they know, isolation, cancelling of events and activities, and places that they're accustomed to going now being closed. The information is overwhelming and confusing to us as well. So how can it be properly explained?



### How Does the Corona "Routine" Affect Us and Our Children?

Routines provide us with a sense of security and control. We know what to expect, and can prepare for it. It caters to our basic needs, like sleep and nourishment, along with studies and a social life. The importance of a routine is greater for children, and it can provide them with a sense of control and certainty in the uncertainty that accompanies their lives.

Currently, we are living in irregular times. The corona virus is a "game changer" and causes constant change to our routine and way of life, sometimes without giving us a heads-up.

According to the information that has been accumulated so far, the corona virus causes severe sickness mostly among populations that are older and at risk. For young, healthy people and for children, the difficulty will mostly be the change to their routine: worrying about Grandma and Grandpa and at-risk family members, changing their habits and dealing with uncertainty.

It's likely that we'll need to enter isolation every so-often, as a result of being exposed to a confirmed case or a rise in the infection rate. Plans will change, some of the activities and educational frameworks will be cancelled, and more.

### How Can We Make Dealing with the Constant Changes to Routine Easier for Children?

#### Explaining the reality with age-appropriate explanations

When you speak to your children, you can compare life with corona to something familiar from their own lives. A good example is the dangers of travelling in a car. Sometimes travelling in a car can result in an accident, but we don't avoid travelling by car. We learn the safety rules, learn to wear a helmet, a seatbelt, use cross walks and follow traffic lights and signs. Together with the kids we learn the safest way to get to kindergarten or school and we practice walking this way together. The police enforce the traffic laws, which provide us with another layer of security. The same goes for life with corona: there's a chance that we'll be infected, but we keep ourselves safe to minimize it. We maintain our hygiene and follow the rules, that change from time to time, according to the extent of infection.

Another comparison can be to making changes in our lives due to the security situation in Israel. We understand that the IDF and the Iron Dome protect us. We know what we need to do in case of a siren and that there is a designated safe zone with everything we need. During periods when we know missiles are fired more frequently, we don't go out unnecessarily, schools are closed etc. The same goes for living with corona: our home contains everything we'll need; we know what to do in case we'll need to stay home and the house keeps us safe.

#### Exposure to media

The media, naturally, tends to highlight the problematic issues we face during these times. An adult will usually know how to filter out the relevant content and to put the information he/she receives into perspective. This ability isn't developed enough in young children, and they might develop anxiety and fears as a result of increased and unfiltered exposure to the content presented in the media. It's important during these times to limit exposure to the media, and to explain the information the children are exposed to, according to their age. If they were exposed to information that isn't age-appropriate, explain it to them simply and add the explanation that as long as we follow the rules, the risk of us getting sick is very low.

#### Early planning

Preparing yourself and your family for the corona routine can decrease stress, and allow more flexibility and an easier time adapting to the period.

Think together about situations you might have to deal with: another widespread lockdown, the schools shutting down, one of the parents needing to be isolated, one of the children or the entire family needing to be isolated.

Prepare a plan together with the kids, according to their ages, relevant for each situation.

The plan should include who will be isolated and where, remote studying options, age appropriate activities, ways to maintain family and social connections (for example, through games, video calls, etc.). Just having a plan decreases the anxiety of the unknown, for both you and your children.

This period causes a lot of challenges and difficulties. An open and honest discussion, age-appropriate and according to the child's level of understanding, is key to maintaining a positive atmosphere and creating a safe space for discussing difficulties and distress.