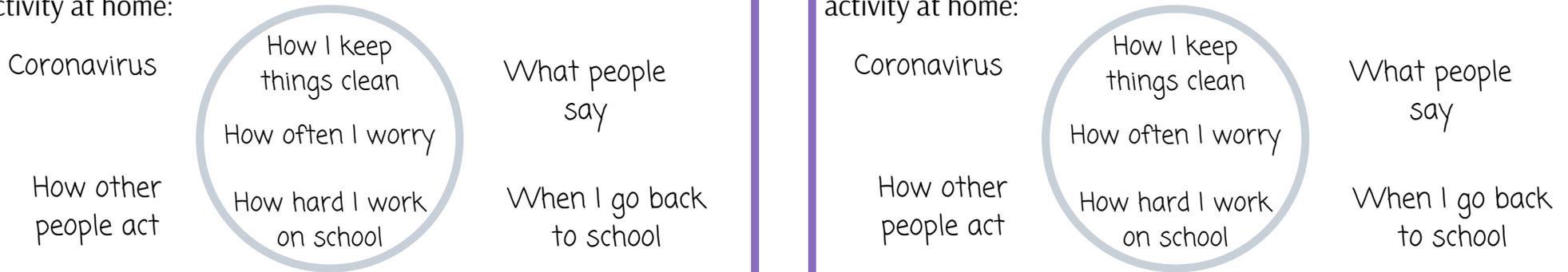# Kid Talk: Coronavirus

How to talk with your kids in the midst of unknown

Use developmentally appropriate language.

Coronavirus is a sickness (also called a virus) that acts like the cold or the flu. For kids, the virus isn't even as strong as the flu, and most people get better. You can catch Coronavirus from other people, so it is very contagious. Doctors and scientists are working very hard to find ways to stop Coronavirus from spreading.

Focus on what is in your control.

There is a lot we don't know. Things seem ever changing which can cause understandable worry. Talk with your kids about what is in their circle of control to empower them and offer assurance in what we DO know TODAY. For example, you can try this visual activity at home:

Coronavirus

How I keep things clean

How often I worry

How hard I work on school

What people say

How other people act

When I go back to school

Hand Washing Activity:

Using a laminated outline of a child's hand, draw pictures of germs on the hand with a whiteboard marker. Take a syringe of plain water and shoot it at the germs. Then, fill a syringe with soapy water or hand sanitizer to shoot at the germs. Which cleans the hand of the germs better? Just water or hand sanitizer/soap?

Attempt as much routine as possible.

One of the ways to help ease children's anxiety and help them know what to expect even in uncertain times is to create as much structure and routine as possible. Build space in the day for free play (an important way children communicate and process through their experiences), as well as committed time to learn and work on chores or school.

Model good behavior.

Children carefully watch and absorb how you respond to situations. If you are calm, they will follow your lead. Be mindful of how often you are checking the news, what sort of conversations you are having in front of them, how you are modeling good hand hygiene and limiting the spread of germs.

Initiate Social Interaction via Social Distancing.

Social distancing can have great negative emotional impacts for children and adults. Children rely on their peers as part of their development. Though you must keep a safe distance, encourage social interactions. Write a letter to a friend each day, schedule FaceTime calls, get a pair or radios/walkie talkie's to talk to a neighbor friend, play interactive online games, etc.

Create a safe space to share and validate feelings.

Allow space for children to ask questions and share how they are feeling. And it is perfectly okay to say, "I don't know" when you don't! Though the Coronavirus pandemic certainly stirs feelings of fear, what are the other ways this experience can be an opportunity to express emotions in a healthy way and care for the needs of others?