

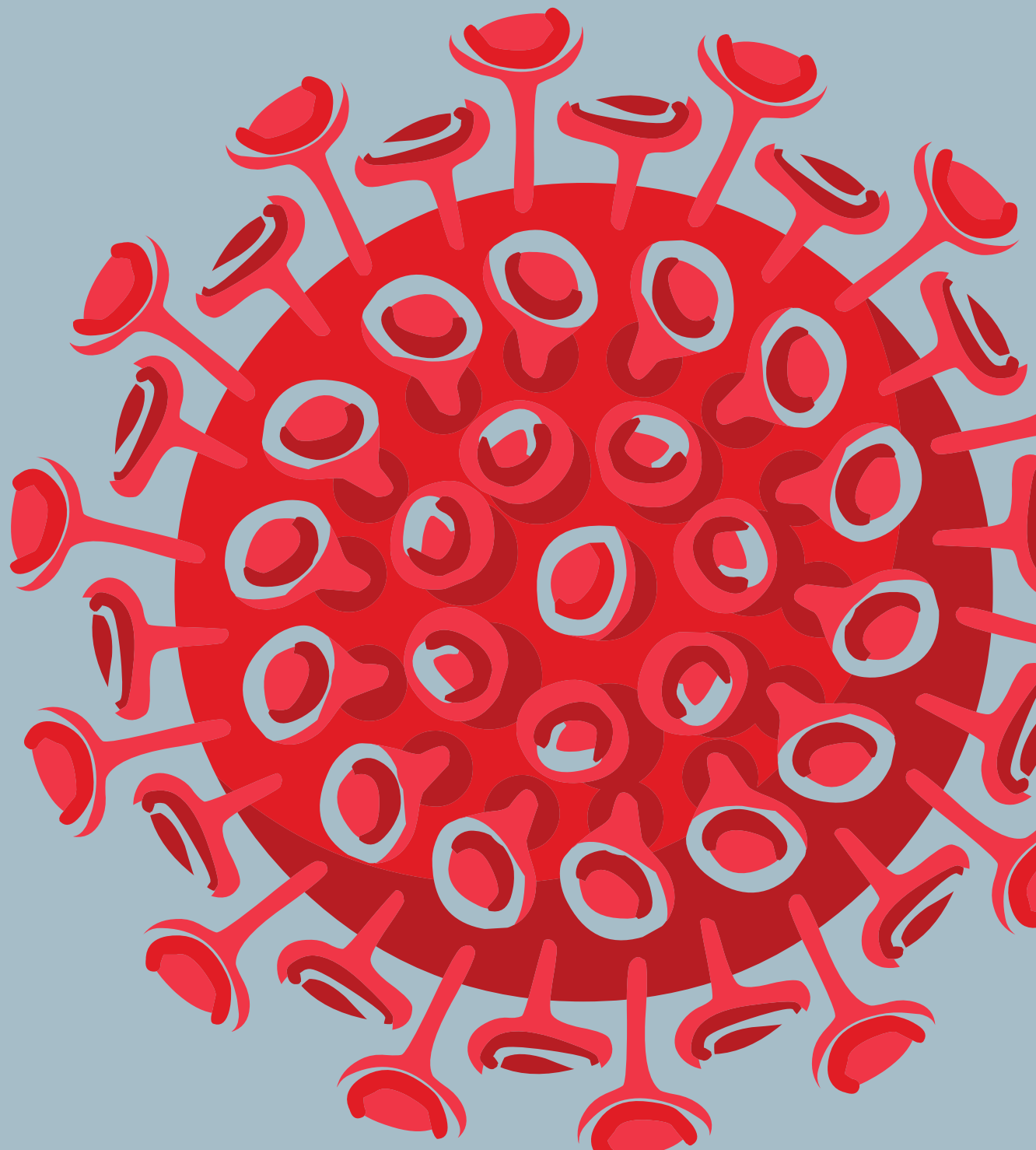
OUTCOMES THERAPY

TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT COVID-19

AUGUST 16TH, 2020



Outcomes Therapy
Back to School Guide for
Families

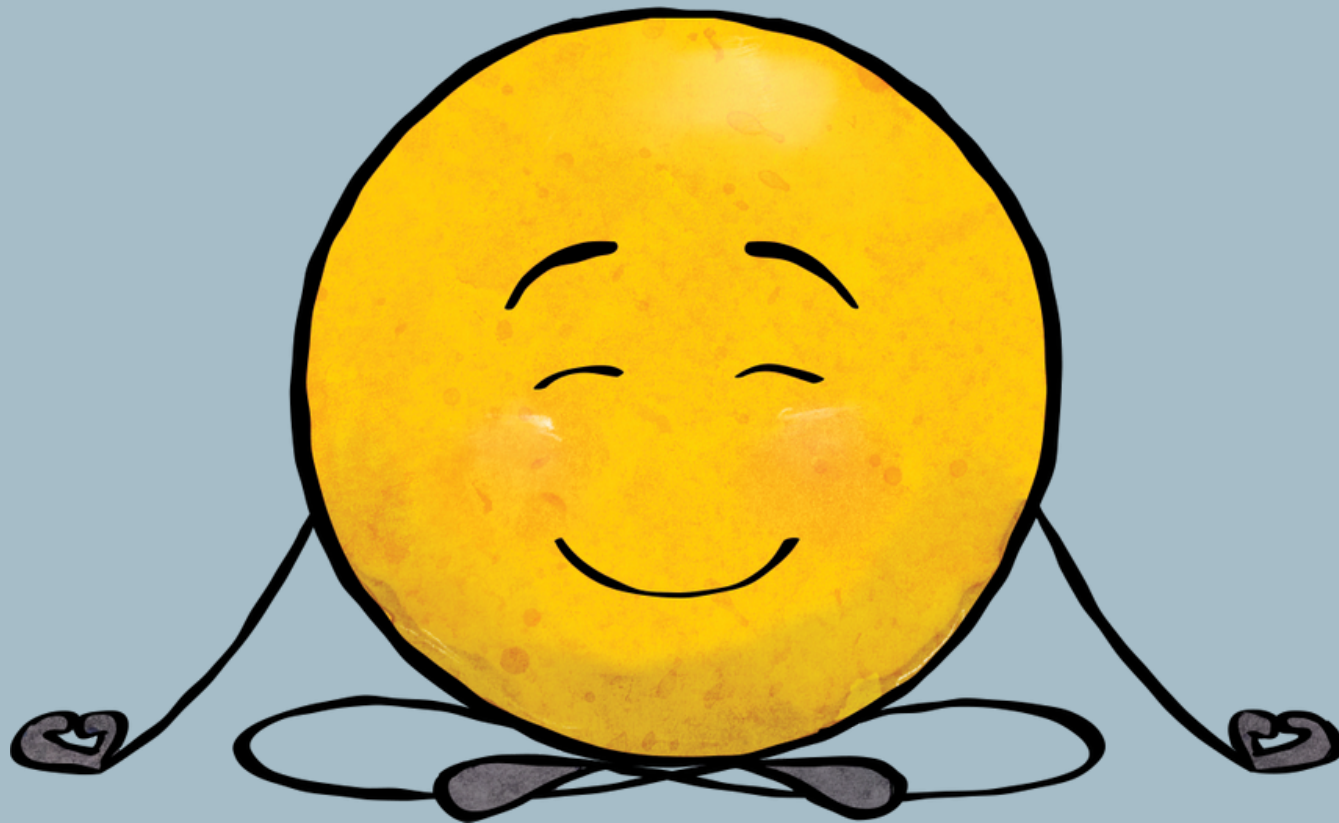




TIP #1

MANAGE YOUR OWN ANXIETY & REMAIN CALM

It will be challenging to address your child's anxiety if your own anxiety feels out of control. Children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others. Strive to reassure children that they are safe. Share with them how you deal with your stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.





TIP #2

START THE CONVERSATION

Despite the constant news feeds and information overload, your child may be confused or unsure of what is going on – especially as it relates to returning to school. Ask them what they know, what their worries are, and what they want to know. Follow their lead. Some children may want to spend time talking. But, if your child doesn't seem interested, don't ask a lot of questions, it is okay. Simply let them know that you are looking out for them.

Don't be afraid to tell your child that you are anxious too – normalize their worries by helping them know it is okay and healthy to worry a little (it keeps us safe!) but that we never want to let worry take over and become unhelpful.

"Right now, on the news, there is a lot of talk about COVID-19, what have you heard? Is there anything you want to know about?"

"Mom & Dad don't have all of the answers right now, but let's talk about what we do know."



TIP #3

PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT CHILDREN SEE OR HEAR ON TV, RADIO, OR ONLINE

Consider reducing the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety. It is also important to watch the news with your child so you can filter what they hear.

With older children, "Let's not watch the news too much as it will just feed your worries about the virus, maybe 1-2 times a day is all you need to know what's going on."

With younger children, "Let's learn about the progress scientists are making on the vaccine."





TIP #4

EXPLAIN IT IN THEIR TERMS

So many phrases are tossed around that are confusing – cohorts, virus, social distancing, droplets, ventilation, etc. It can be easy to overestimate a child's verbal ability, so ensure that when you are explaining concept, you provide information in a manner that is truthful and appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child. Children (& adults) can easily misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.

- If your child asks about something and you don't know the answer, say so.
- Speak calmly and reassuringly.
- Give children space to share their fears.
- Know when they need guidance.

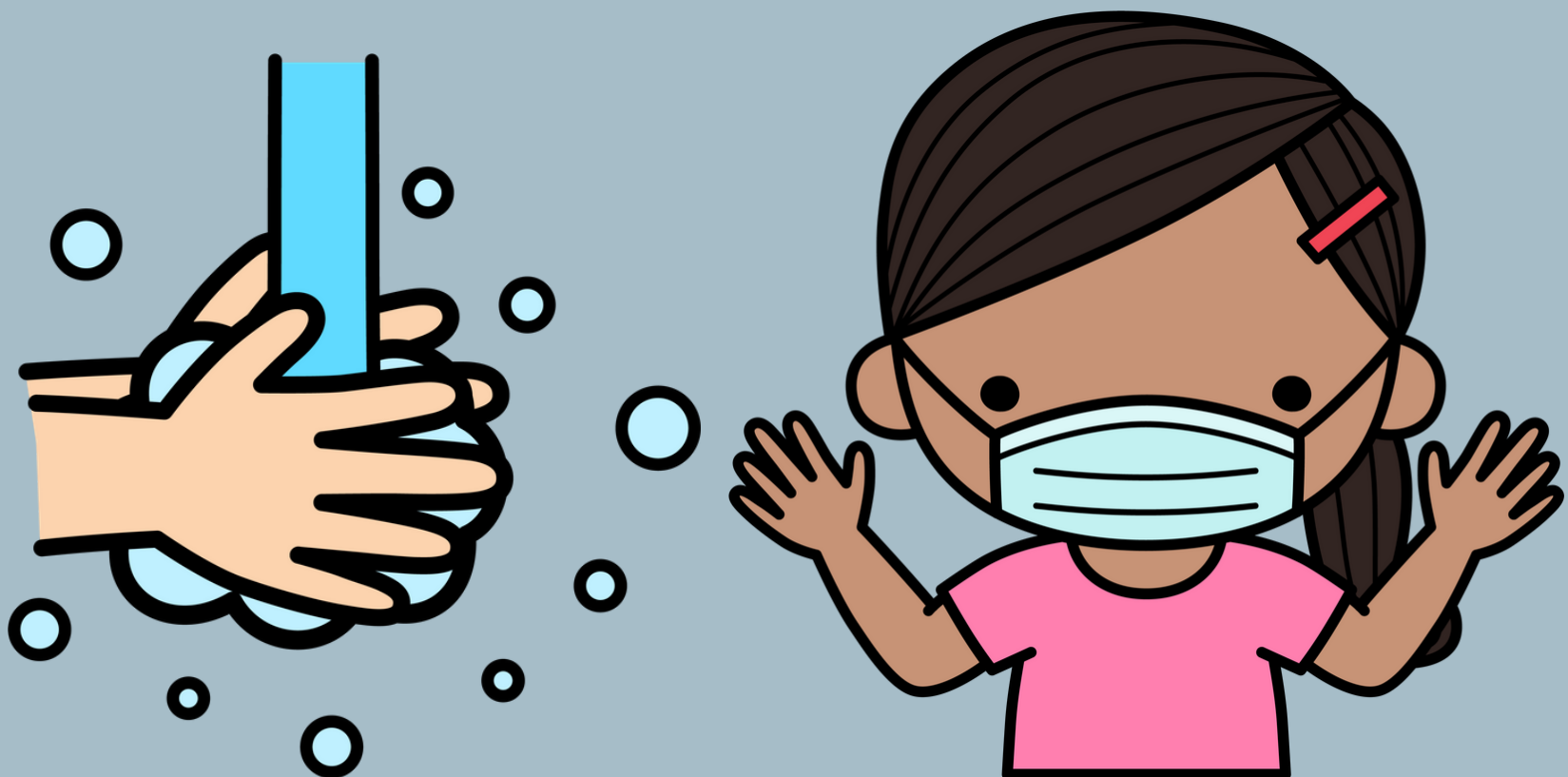




TIP #5

HELP CHILDREN FEEL IN CONTROL BY GIVING THEM SPECIFIC THINGS TO DO

Give your child specific things to do to feel in control. Teach children that nourishing their body, playing & moving their body, getting lots of sleep, washing their hands, and wearing their mask can help them stay strong and well. Be a good role model and let your kids see you doing each of these activities, as well.





TIP #6

TALK ABOUT STEPS LEADERS ARE TAKING TO KEEP PEOPLE HEALTHY & SAFE

Young children might be reassured to know that hospitals, doctors and nurses are prepared to treat people who get sick. Older children might be comforted to know about the progress scientists are making towards developing a vaccine. Children of all ages are reassured to know the steps that schools are taking to help children learn and stay healthy.





TIP #7

USE WHAT WORKS

If your child is worried, remind them that strategies that work for other worries and anxiety work now, too. Help children remember activities that they have used in the past to overcome their worries. Consider creating a calming kit full of items and strategies that they have found helpful when they have been worried before. Your kit might include breathing exercises, body challenges, jokes, funny pictures, affirmation cards, toys, books, games – whatever works for your child.





TIP #8

PREPARE CHILDREN FOR UPCOMING CHANGES AT SCHOOL

Pay attention to your specific school division plans and information from your child's school. Start talking about changes and embed them into your routines. If a mask is required on the bus, start practicing mask wear when your child is in the car, create and use new greeting (e.g. Air High Fives), practice using hand sanitizer or washing one's hands copiously and especially before meals, and remind them to listen to their teacher so that he/she can keep them healthy and safe.





TIP #9

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Keep checking in with your child. Parents can say,

- “Right now, on the news and all around us, there is lots of talk about COVID-19 and people getting sick. What has been on your mind lately?”
- “Principals and teachers are getting ready to school to start, what are your thoughts about returning to school?”

It is also important to continue to monitor your child’s mental health for signs of distress. If you are worried about your child, talk to your primary health provider or child’s school.

