



HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ANXIETY ABOUT FRONTLINE WORKING

COLLATED BY ISLINGTON CAMHS

As you work on the frontline it is very understandable for your child to be worried about you catching the virus. They are also likely to be proud of you, and so will have very conflicted feelings. You may notice that they become more tearful or clingy with you, or that they are angry with you or seem to not care. These are all normal and natural responses.

Here are some things that you can do to support your child with their anxiety about you being a frontline worker:

1. Do what you know works

Think about what normally helps your child when they have been worried in the past and use these techniques. You can also help them to reflect on how they're feeling and encourage them to think about the things they can do to make them feel safer and less worried.

2. Talk it out

Talk to them about what's going on. Find out how they're feeling and what they're thinking about, let them know it's okay to feel scared or unsure, and try to answer their questions and reassure them in an age appropriate manner that this will pass, that you are there for them and you will get through this together. Remember, **you do not need to know** all the answers, but talking things through can help them feel calmer.

3. News and media

Discourage them from spending a lot of time reading the news or checking media reports. If they are at a younger age limit this intake and make sure that the things you are discussing around them are age appropriate. Encourage your children to seek out positive and uplifting news reports.

4. Routine

Help your child keep as many regular routines as possible so that your child feels safe and that things are stable. Timetable how they will plan their day until you return and help them figure out who they can talk to when you are not there.

5. Special Time

We know you are really busy but setting aside 10 minutes a day of special uninterrupted child-led hanging out or playing time with your child will help reassure them that you still have time for them. All activities count – let your child choose and let them take the lead – just be attentive so that they know they are the most important focus of your attention at that time. Think about when this would be best for you – you will need space to yourself at the end of your shift, but this may also be the time when your child is delighted to see you. Make sure you have enough time to unwind beforehand and schedule this in with them so that they know what to expect. This is also a great way of providing a space for them to talk about their concerns, without having a big chat.

6. Worry Time

Creating a 'worry time' slot can help your child to compartmentalise the worries and help them not be preoccupied with worrying thoughts throughout the day. Ask your child to notice their worries and write them down, putting them into a box throughout the day. With your child agree a 'time for worrying' (length, time and place). During 'worry time' help them sort the worries: some might no longer be a worry and some will still be a concern and can be talked about. They may even choose to 'postpone' the less urgent worries to next time; giving them a bit more control over managing worries.

7. What would you say?

Ask your child what they would say to other (perhaps younger) children in the same situation, what advice would they have if another child was worried about their mum or dad working at the hospital during a pandemic?

More support : <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/supporting-your-child-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>