# Speaking with learners Teacher Resource

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| **Note:** Caring communication is key to learner well-being during this time. Your learners may be worrying about the safety of their family, struggling with thoughts and feelings about the stories and images on the news, and the uncertainty of not knowing when life will return to normal. Learners might or might not be able to fully express how they are feeling and so we need to do more than just ask once. We need to create a safe space in our classrooms for learners to share their thoughts and feelings with each other. Well-being should now be part of the daily timetable. This will help give our learners some sense of routine which is essential for them at this time. These conversations are not easy to have, but they are essential. To help you prepare for them, we have put together some thoughts and language you can use while speaking to your learners about the situation surrounding Covid-19. |

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| Start the conversation | Correct Inaccurate Information |
| Many people worry that talking to young learners will lead to increased worries and anxieties. The opposite is the case. Bringing difficult topics into the conversation can help lessen worries in learners of all ages. Have all the learners sitting comfortably, set the context, take a breath and bring it up.  You can say something like this:  *“There has been a lot of coronavirus talk. Tell me what you know about it, or tell me what you’ve heard about it. If you have not heard anything, that’s okay too”*  For particularly young learners who might not be aware, you might not need to raise the issue. For older learners (teens), also consider, *“Tell me what your friends are saying about coronavirus. What have you seen about this on TV?”*  Starting the conversation allows you to listen to what your learners know and gives you a place to begin as the conversation continues. | If you hear inaccurate information or misunderstandings from your learners, take time to provide the correct information in simple language that your learners can understand. |
| Encourage questions |
| Your learners may have some difficult questions about the coronavirus. Do your best to answer the questions but if you can’t answer any of their questions, don’t guess. Use it as an opportunity to explore the answers together. |
| Show them how to protect themselves |
| One of the best ways to keep learners safe from the virus and other diseases is to simply encourage better hygiene and getting vaccinated. Talk about regular handwashing. For young learners show them videos or get them to sing their favorite song so they scrub for at least 20 seconds. Remind them to use their elbow to cover a sneeze or cough. Also, explain social distancing and masking to them and how they should behave in school to protect themselves. Talk to them about the importance of getting vaccinated and how it is the only way to truly protect ourselves and our loved ones. Speak to them about how vaccines are being developed as rapidly as possible, and how they must go through rigorous testing in clinical trials to prove that they meet internationally agreed benchmarks for safety and effectiveness. Only if they meet these standards can a vaccine receive validation from WHO and national regulatory agencies. |
| Validate Emotions | |
| As you have the conversation with learners, ask how they are feeling about this virus. Validate these emotions. While we might feel like saying, “you don’t need to worry” or “there is no need to be upset, we will be fine,” it is extremely unlikely this will change the emotion. Unintentionally, it may result in learners no longer sharing their emotions or believing that their emotions are not ok to have. It is important to acknowledge how they are feeling and to let learners know all feelings are OK. Acknowledge it’s okay to feel sad, angry, hurt, lonely, etc.  All learners benefit from adults listening to and validating their different feelings. Sometimes, our learners may have a lot of feelings but might not be able to identify them or understand why they have them. Our job then is to help them label their feelings with words and talk about what is happening. | |
| Offer Reassurance | |
| As you talk to your learners, remember to provide reassurance and a sense of hope that the actions all of us are taking make a difference. Scientists all over the world are working to create more vaccines that can reach everyone, in the fastest time ever!  If you are experiencing an outbreak in your area, remind your learners that if they continue practicing being safe, they are not likely to catch the disease, that most people who do have coronavirus also recover from it and come out fine, and that lots of adults are working hard to keep everyone safe.  Remind them that if they are not feeling well, they have to stay at home because it is safer for them and their friends. Reassure them that you know it is hard (maybe scary or even boring) at times, but that following the rules will help keep everyone safe and once everyone is vaccinated, we can return to our normal routines. | |
| Plan and Prepare | |
| It is best to go in prepared for this conversation. Think of things you need to say and the exact language you will use to explain things. If you are feeling unsure about having the conversation, consider practicing with an adult first. | |

**Note:** *If any of your learners are dealing with grief or trauma because of their loved one being affected by Covid-19, please go to ‘Resource 3.2’, to get guidance on what you can say to them in such situations.*