# **Speaking with learners Teacher Resource**

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| **Note:** The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in thousands of children being separated from loved ones who require isolation and/ or hospitalization due to a loved one testing positive for COVID-19 or because of potential exposure for essential workers. For some children, the separation may result in distress or a traumatic reaction. If a loved one dies from the virus, a child may experience traumatic grief due to the sudden nature of the death and being unable to say goodbye or observe cultural or religious mourning rituals. Use this resource to help you understand how to respond to the different feelings and emotions your learners might be experiencing. Especially in stressful times, in addition to the suggestions here, all children benefit from adults listening to and validating their different feelings. |

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| **What the child is feeling:** | **How you (the adult) can help them:** |
| Unable to identify feelings or understand why they are feeling a certain way. | Be understanding if the child gets upset out of the blue about things that do not seem related.  Acknowledge that it is ok to feel sad, angry, hurt, lonely, etc. Help them label their feelings with words and talk about what is happening. |
| Afraid when their loved one who is sick must be isolated from them at home or away from home. | Explain that isolating a loved one protects them from getting sick and helps the sick person to recover.    Tell them that the isolated person cares about them very much and does not want them to get sick. Remind them how there are helpers who taking care of our sick loved ones.  Help them to find ways to stay in contact with their sick loved one (call, text, make a card). |
| Afraid that their loved one, who is a health worker or emergency responder, will get sick or die. | Explain that health professionals and emergency responders get special training on how to stay safe at work to care for people.    Tell them ways they can stay in touch with their loved ones if they can’t see them all the time or if they have to stay close to work for a while.    Explain the important work they are doing to care for people. |
| Sad that they can’t see their sick loved one in the hospital and worried that they are alone. | Assure them that their loved one wants them to stay safe, so they do not want them near sick people in the hospital.    Explain how people in the hospital make sure that their loved one is not alone.  Help them communicate with their loved ones, through calls, cards, pictures, songs, prayers, texts, and virtual communication when possible. |
| Scared that their sick loved one is in the hospital and that they might die. | Along with a family member, share accurate information about how their loved one is doing in words they can understand for their age.    Help them understand that most people get better and come home.    Tell them the truth if their loved one won’t recover and help them find a way to say goodbye. Try to ensure a family member is present when you have the conversation. |
| Scared, sad, and mad that they can’t say goodbye in person if their loved one is going to die in the hospital, and they can’t go. | Explain that health care workers are there with their loved ones, so they are not alone. Find out if they can send a message or say goodbye remotely. |
| Angry and sad that they did not get to say goodbye to their loved one and cannot have a funeral or gathering with family and friends. | Assure them that their loved ones knew how special they were to them or get family members to say this.    Talk about ways we can share our feelings and memories virtually with family and friends until we can meet in person.    Explore how they can have a memorial with people they live with now or later when it is safer.    Help them find an object or picture that connects them to their loved ones and reminds them of positive times.    Guide them to engage in any culturally appropriate spiritual practices. |
| Afraid of watching or hearing the news because they fear someone else will get sick or die. | Work with the family to limit media viewing and talk to them about what they are watching or seeing on the internet.    Share the facts, and correct misinformation and rumors.    Practice activities like social distancing, masking, and handwashing and talk to them about how this helps us to stay healthy. Point out what else the school is doing to keep everyone safe.  Request the family to limit their media viewing to a time and place where the child can’t see it. |
| Finding it difficult to stay at home where things remind them of their loved one who is still sick or who died. | Be understanding that things at home remind the child of their loved one who is sick and make them worry.    Recognize that it is upsetting to see things that remind me of their loved ones who died and are not coming back.    Find ways for them to do things that help them feel better, like doing activities, exercising, audio/video calls with friends, playing games, doing yoga, art, or reading. |
| Afraid that they will get sick too. | Tell them how they will be looked after if they get sick.  Remind them that most sick people recover, especially children. Comfort them to calm their worries. |
| Having upsetting thoughts or remembering scary scenes from when their loved one was taken to the hospital or remembering other upsetting events or losses they experienced in the past. | Be available for them to share their thoughts or memories with you.    Let them know that these types of thoughts and memories are normal after experiencing an upsetting event.    Provide comfort and remind them that they are currently safe.    Help them do relaxing or distracting activities when they have upsetting thoughts or memories. |
| Finding it difficult to get a break from upsetting thoughts or worries because of social distancing and not being able to do the things that normally help them cope with stress. | Work with the family to set up consistent routines for their usual bedtime, meals, school, and chores. Help them connect with friends and support figures by phone or video chat. Help them find new ways to stay involved in hobbies and physical activities they used to do. |

**Note:** *If any of these problems get in the way of the child engaging in daily activities, going to remote or in-person school when able, connecting with friends, or doing other activities to feel better, please seek out a mental health professional with expertise in treating traumatized children.*