

JULIA COOK

Tips for Parents on Talking to Kids About **The Yucky Bug**



Here are a few tips you might find helpful:

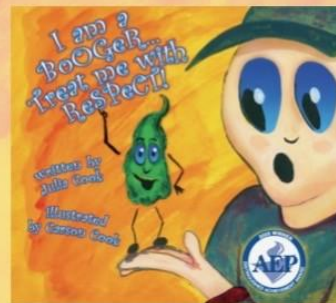
- Remain calm and reassuring. It is very important to create an environment where children feel comfortable asking questions.
- Always answer a child's questions truthfully with developmentally appropriate, simple answers. You don't need to go into more detail than necessary, but lying to children, or making up facts will ultimately confuse them. Eventually, when they find out the truth about what happened, they may struggle with trusting you in the future if you lie in an attempt to protect them.
- Focus on what you and your child are doing to stay safe. Remind children they can be part of the solution, by washing hands, using tissues when coughing or sneezing, using fist or elbow bumps instead of handshakes, and not sharing food or drinks.
- Stick to a predictable routine as much as possible. If schools and/or daycares close, re-establish a functional routine that your child can count on.
- You may be asked to repeat your answers several times. Be consistent in your reply and realize that your repetitive answers are your child's "need to know," and you are building upon his/her sense of security.
- Children often feel out of control when disasters occur. Keeping with a familiar routine is very important when trying to re-establish the security of predictability and feeling of being in control.
- If your child asks you a question that you do not know the answer to, it's ok to say, "I don't know."
- Acknowledge and normalize your child's thoughts, feelings and reactions. Help children understand why they feel the way they do. "I can only imagine how scared you must be feeling. I'm scared too."

- Encourage kids to talk about disaster-related events on their terms. Never force a child to answer a question or talk about an incident until they are ready.
- Reassure your child that many people are helping those who are hurting. You may want to let your child make a card or a gift for someone who is suffering. Giving to those in need of support allows a child to feel like they can make a difference in helping with a terrible situation.
- Keep your child away from watching news stations and listening to the radio where the disaster is being discussed and replayed. Sensationalizing the events that have occurred will only upset and confuse your child further.
- Promote positive coping and problem-solving skills. Remember – YOU are your child’s coping instructor. Your children take note of how you respond to local and national events. They may also be listening to every word you say when you discuss these events with other adults.
- Emphasize children’s resiliency. Fortunately, most children, even those who are exposed to trauma, are quite resilient.
- Strengthen friendship and peer support, and foster supportive relationships. There is strength in numbers!
- If your child is preoccupied with questions and concerns about safety, or suffers from sleep disturbances, anxiety, recurring fears about death or severe separation anxiety, contact your pediatrician or counselor.
- Take care of your own needs. In order to be there for others, you have to take care of yourself.

A fun resource to help calm and educate kids!



Julia Cook, M.S. is a national award-winning children’s author, counselor, and parenting expert. She has presented in thousands of schools nationally and internationally, regularly speaks at education and counseling conferences, and has published children’s books on a wide range of character and social development topics. The goal behind Cook’s work is to actively involve young people in fun, memorable stories and teach them to become lifelong problem solvers. Inspiration for her books comes from working with children and carefully listening to counselors, parents, and teachers, in order to stay on top of needs in the classroom and at home. Cook has the innate ability to enter the worldview of a child through storybooks, giving children both the “what to say” and the “how to say it.”



THE MAGIC FIVE

- Stay at home when you get the chance.
- Use your elbow when you sneeze or cough.
- If your hands touch things that others have touched, use soap and water to wash them off.
- Keep a distance from others when you go outside or travel from place to place.
- And most important of all, keep your hands away from your face.

