

Using Social Story to Help Children Ages 3-8 Cope with COVID-19

Dr. Shu-Chen Jenny Yen

Objectives: 1) Reassure the child about their safety, 2) Redirect the child's attention to the positive actions undertaken by medical doctors and others, 3) Empower and engage children in helping acts, 4) Understand the importance of social distancing.

Book: Something Strange Happened in My City. A social story about the coronavirus pandemic for children by Shu-Chen Jenny Yen. Free Download at <https://sandybabaeece.wixsite.com/covid19referencelist>

Procedures:

1. Tell the child you will read a storybook about the virus that is getting many people sick.
2. Choose appropriate questions from the Discussion Starters on #3.
3. Discussion Starters: Use the following prompts to encourage the child to talk about their COVID-19 experience before you read the story.

For 3- to 5-years-old

- Have you ever gotten sick? What happened when you got sick? Did you still go to school or play with your friends? Why or why not?
 - How do you feel when you get sick? What was the worse thing that has happened to you when you were sick?
 - Do you think our city is getting sick too? Why or why not? How do you know?
 - Are you afraid of getting the virus?
 - How can you protect yourself and others from the virus?
 - Do you know why you can't go to school or to the park, or play with your friends?
4. **Read the book with the child:** use *Dialogical Reading*- try having a conversation/dialogue with the child when reading the book instead of just reading the book directly to the child. Ask open questions, comment on the pictures, and ask if the child can relate their experiences with the pictures or text in the book (e.g., "Look, our street is empty as well").
 5. **After reading the book,** ask the following questions:
 - Are you still afraid of the virus?
 - Do you know what to do to protect yourself and others from the virus?
 - Do you feel safer now?
 - How do you feel about the heroes in this story, like the doctor, nurse, delivery people, etc.?
 - What can you do to help?
 6. **Follow-up activities:** After discussing with the child what they want to do to

help, you can do the activities below with the child or let the child complete the activities based on the child's age and developmental level.

7. Art Center

- Draw pictures of the virus.
- Draw pictures about how they can fight with the virus.
- Create cards and drawings to heroes, like doctors or nurses or the people who deliver food or mail. Post them on social media, hang them on their doors or mailboxes, place them on signs in their front yard, draw them on the sidewalk with chalk, or send them to local hospitals.

Writing Center

- Create the child's personal COVID-19 storybook or journal.
- Write a letter to the virus.
- Write a letter to children living in the hotspots (e.g., New York) and post it on social media (e.g., Instagram).
- Write a thank-you note to doctors and nurses and other people they want to thank (e.g., mailman).

Science project: Watch the video together and conduct the pepper and soap experiment with the child, <https://youtu.be/ho0o7H6dXSU>.

Practical Life Activities: Practice washing hands with soap and water.

Make a wish

Ask the child to complete the sentence: I wish _____.