

## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### How to Talk to Your Children During Times of Uncertainty

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond.*

One of the most important duties we have as parents is to convey information to our children — during both good times and bad. During times of uncertainty we need to provide them with information that protects their brain health and helps fight brain illness. This allows them to face the present and the future with hope, resilience, and optimism, while at the same time realizing that what they are experiencing may be serious and uncertain.

Children take their cues from us. If we are calm and reassuring while discussing the situation with them, they will be able to understand and accept the facts that the changes in their lives are occurring to keep them safe.

Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers may not understand what is going on, but they definitely know if you are upset. Staying calm and maintaining a daily routine will help prevent anxiety for kids and adults.

Older children, especially adolescents, already understand what is going on. They are seeing the changes and hearing the conversations that are happening at home. If the uncertainty is global, they have access to information online or through social media and without the right context that information can lead to brain illness, including anxiety and even depression.

Remember that your attitude sets the tone for how your family responds. If you remain calm and resilient, your children will have the best opportunity to grow from this experience.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO *BOOST* YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Here are some tips for providing difficult information to your child in a brain healthy way:

- Pay attention to your child's emotions and explore their questions.
- For younger children, keep the explanation simple.
- Provide realistic assurance and find healthy ways to cope (exercise, rest, hugs, time with pets or with hobbies) with the uncertainty.
- Balance flexibility with maintaining routines.
- If the situation involves more than your family, manage media and internet exposure: Stay informed without getting overwhelmed.
- Explore how *your* child is responding to information and changes within your household or community.
- Help your child(ren) avoid blame and stereotyping.
- Take care of yourself so you can support your child.

### **About the Brain Health Initiative ([www.brainhealthinitiative.org](http://www.brainhealthinitiative.org))**

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is a collaborative effort with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, to build brain healthy communities through education, collaboration, research, innovation, and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention and optimization of performance*. The BHI is creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the brain health movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference***. To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).

