

Supporting Your Children During COVID-19 Restrictions

Here are some helpful tips and information for parents to help you support your child and their siblings through being separated and the uncertainty of having a sibling with cancer during COVID-19 restrictions.

*Provided by the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
Just For Sibs Program*

Encourage Connections

Using virtual platforms like Zoom, video chatting, text messaging or email can help you and your children feel connected to one another and to their loved ones from afar. Even simpler -handwriting letters, driving by to wave to friends and family, and talking on the phone are great ways to encourage connections.

Talk Openly About Feelings

Children may pick up on the feelings of those around them, especially adults! If you are experiencing feelings of unease or nervousness you can express these to your children. Have family discussions about what your family is wondering about, within your comfort level. Encourage your children to ask questions and express their emotions.

Guide the Conversation

You can help to guide the conversation by using prompting statements such as, "I'm sad that we can't spend time together as a family right now, but I'm happy that your brother is being taken care of at the hospital."

Provide Outlets for Coping

Encourage your children to continue participating in activities that they enjoy. Creating activities to keep them busy using their hobbies and interests such as arts and crafts, singing, dancing, imaginary play, games, and when the weather is nice - outdoor play can help to keep them busy and content.

Maintain Routine

Routines are important for helping children manage feelings of anxiety and stress. Some times that you can maintain a routine include:

- Mealtimes
- Bedtime
- Activity times
- Phone calls/video chats with loved ones while social distancing

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Be Honest About Timeline

While none of us truly know how long this may last, it is helpful to give your children a direct answer. You can say something like, "We don't know how long it will be before we can all be together again, but until then we can continue to..."

Be Honest About Why We Can't Be Together

In developmentally and age-appropriate terms, explaining to your children why we need to stay apart for a while can help reduce their feelings of unknowing and unrest and encourage them to adapt to the current state of what is normal.

Reassure Them That They Are Safe

Let them know that it is okay to be upset, that it is okay to express their feelings, and that they are safe while being home and practicing social distancing and proper hygiene, including wearing PPE in public.

Additional Information About Just for Sibs

Visit our webpage for more information: [Dana-Farber.org/Sibling-Program](https://www.dana-farber.org/sibling-program)
On our webpage you'll find:

- Our "Sibling Voices" video which features testimonials from Dana-Farber Cancer Institute Jimmy Fund Clinic siblings which can be helpful and educational for siblings of all ages.
- Information about other sibling programming available including events, Sibling "BEADS" program, Teen Sibling Programming, and more.



For additional information, please contact us as siblingprogram@dfci.harvard.edu
Deborah Berk, LICSW
Morgan Walker, MS, CCLS