

Why this is important

Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, is changing people’s lives dramatically, and that can be “bad news.” We often think about “bad news” in relation to serious illness and death, but really, it could be anything that makes your future look less bright than you had thought.

How bad news is experienced is affected by someone’s concept of future, their ability for abstract thinking, and the things that they had looked forward to. People who have difficulty coping with change may experience any kind of changes to their routine (even seemingly minor ones) as “bad news.”

Coronavirus is particularly difficult for people with intellectual disabilities, many of whom are particularly reliant on routines, on familiar activities, on seeing their families and friends.

Breaking bad news is really all about helping people to cope with change.



Hints & Tips

1. Talk about the Coronavirus

This is important. The coronavirus is all over the news and everybody is talking about it. Nobody should be excluded from these conversations. How you do this, and how much you explain about what coronavirus is, depends on how the person usually communicates and understands things. The important thing is to answer any questions openly, honestly, and factually. You can check what the person has understood, by asking them to explain it back to you.



Keep it simple: *"Coronavirus is making lots of people sick. We have to stop people catching it from each other. That's why we are not allowed to go to work/see a parent/go on vacation."*

2. Share the emotions

You do not need to make things better. It is OK (indeed it can be very helpful) to talk together about how upsetting this is, and how angry it makes you all feel. Remember it is **not you** who has caused the anger or the tears – it’s the Coronavirus! By allowing the expression of emotions, you are helping people cope with them.

3. Find the "bad news" part of Coronavirus

It is helpful to consider how, exactly, the coronavirus impacts on the life of the person you support. What is the worst of it, for this person? Talk about that.

4. Find ways of coping with the changes

We all have to find new ways of doing things. Your task is to help the person you support find new ways of managing their daily life. People on the autistic spectrum, in particular, will find it helpful to have a clear new script.



For example: *"We can't have dinner at your mom's house on Saturday, but instead, we will make dinner in your apartment and she will make dinner in her house. And then we will call her on Skype or FaceTime her so we can see her and talk to her."*

5. Find ways of sharing with colleagues

Why not organize a regular video meeting with your colleagues, and talk about the things you find hard? Working as a team is so important. We just have to find new ways of doing it.

Compiled by Suzanne Byers, Life Skills Supervisor
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With new initiatives to keep program participants safe, we continue to adjust with the ever-changing requirements. We are continuing social distancing, hand-washing, & shelter in place orders to the best of our ability. We also continue to **celebrate** through these uncertain times.