



## Helping Children with Questions/Anxieties About Wearing Masks During the COVID-19 Crisis

Some children might be feeling worried or scared seeing so many people wearing masks during the current COVID-19 crisis.

While we want to help children understand that it is important to take precautions, we also do not want them to feel scared or alarmed. It is important that children know that wearing masks is not just for their own protection, it is also important for protecting others. By focusing on how children can protect others, we help them feel empowered and helpful to others, rather than feeling afraid and victimized by others.

**Children need concrete answers to their questions that convey safety:**

***“Why is everyone wearing a mask?”***

*“All of us have germs in our bodies that can sometimes get out, sometimes we have to be extra careful because some germs can make other people sick. So, the mask helps keep our germs out of the air and away from other people. When we wear our masks, we are helping keep ourselves and other people safe and healthy.”*

***“Do we have to wear the masks forever?”***

*“Not forever, but we might have to wear them for a little while longer. We will have to wear them until we know it is safe and we have better medicine to take care of the yucky germs that make people sick and doctors and scientists are working on that medicine right now.”*

***“I don’t like how the mask feels on my face and I don’t like how it looks on other people.”***

*“Everyone who is wearing a mask is feeling the same. The masks are hot and itchy. But everyone who is wearing a mask is doing it because they care about each other, they care about you, and they do not want to get their germs on anyone else. Everyone is being a good helper when they are wearing their mask.”*

For children, for most of us, not being able to see facial expressions can be uncomfortable and wearing a mask can be a trigger for some children with anxieties. As adults, we can help children by explaining to them that if someone is wearing a mask, they are doing it to be helpful and kind. As adults, we can also make kind and patient choices when we communicate and interact with each other out in the world while wearing our masks to convey that the person behind the mask is a kind helper who cares about their community.