There has been a lot of information in the news about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). This can lead to concern and anxiousness. Students look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. Being prepared and promoting protective measures help make any stressors more predictable and manageable. Here are some tips to help you have important conversations with your student. Let their questions be your guide.

**Elementary School**
- They need brief, simple information.
- Listen to their observations and questions.
- Reinforce protective measures, including proper hand washing and coughing into a tissue/elbow. This helps them feel empowered and have a sense of control over getting sick.
- Engage in regular exercise and play time.
- Remind them that adults are working hard to keep them safe.
- Limit media exposure.

**Middle School**
- They may ask about what will happen if COVID-19 is found in our community. Help them separate reality from rumor or fantasy.
- Discuss the outbreak using factual information.
- Share with them what health and school officials are doing to ensure everyone stays healthy.
- Reinforce protective measures, including proper hand washing and coughing into a tissue/elbow.
- Ask about what they have seen/heard on TV, on social media, etc.
- Monitor television viewing and social media use.

**High School**
- They need honest, accurate, factual information. Having a sense of knowledge can help them feel a sense of control.
- Encourage them to ask you any questions they have.
- If they would like more information, refer them to appropriate sources of facts, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the North Dakota Department of Health, and Grand Forks Public Health.
- Ask about what they have seen/heard on TV, on social media, etc.
- Monitor television viewing and social media use.
In many cases, more people will experience some level of mental health reaction (ex: anxiety, stress, depression) than those who are affected physically.

Recommendations during outbreaks include social distancing, limiting contact with potentially infected individuals, and other measures of self-isolation. This can contribute to feelings of distress.

What can you do?

- Monitor your own physical and mental health.
- Know the signs of stress:
  - Increase / Decrease in energy and activity levels.
  - Increase in irritability, with outbursts of anger and frequent arguing.
  - Having trouble sleeping or relaxing.
  - Worrying excessively.
  - Feeling anxious, fearful, depressed, guilty, angry, overwhelmed by sadness.
  - Having trouble remembering things, thinking clearly, or making decisions.
- Keep yourself healthy: eat healthy foods, drink water, avoid excessive amounts of caffeine and alcohol, get plenty of physical exercise as well as sleep and rest.
- Keep your family's schedule consistent when it comes to bedtime, meals, and exercise.
- Make time to do things at home that make you feel better in stressful situations (reading, watching movies, playing games, etc.).
- Identify a few trusted sources for accurate health information.
- Limit exposure to media outlets or social media that promote fear or panic. Be aware of how much time you/your student are exposed to information.
- Seek support and continued connections from family and friends.
- Maintain virtual contact with any loved one who is infected - use phone calls, texting, video calls, etc.
- Practice mindfulness - think about what is happening in the present moment.
- Contact your primary care provider or insurance company with any health-related questions, or to seek mental health support.

Visit our COVID-19 webpage, [https://www.gfschools.org/Page/8977](https://www.gfschools.org/Page/8977), for links to additional resources. There is also a link to this page on your school's website.