

# Tell Me About Coronavirus:

Helping Kids Understand  
Coronavirus and Cope with  
Their Worries

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Mr. Roosevelt, Therapy Beagle Extraordinaire



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This packet is a collaboration between Meg Hamilton, LCMHC, ATR  
and Dr. Lina RoHo, MD.

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# Hi! It's wonderful to meet you.

My name is Meg and I'm a therapist. I help kids, teens, families, and young adults when their feelings feel too big or when they go through hard or very scary things. I help kids learn that their big feelings are ok, that it can be safe to talk about them, and that you can be in control of those big feelings. Many of the kids I talk to have a lot of worries and questions about the Coronavirus. If you have worries and questions, you are not alone. I hope these worksheets help with those questions and worries.



I live in Durham, NC with my partner, our twin kiddos, and 3 very hairy dogs.



My name is Dr. Lina RoHo. I'm a friend of Meg's and Mr. Roosevelt's. I'm also an infectious diseases doctor and epidemiologist. My job is to help people who have Covid-19, and to help prevent its spread throughout our community. I study infectious diseases and how to prevent them, and work with patients and members of our community to help them stay healthy. My specialty is HIV, and we can learn a lot about the Covid-19 pandemic by looking at the history of the HIV epidemic. Your most important action right now is to wash your hands. Do it well and do it often! It will help us all stay healthy.

I live in Durham with my partner and our two year-old son, and one crazy rescue dog named Bjorn.

I'm Mr. Roosevelt. My human is Meg, and she's training me to be a therapy dog. Our training is on pause right now because of the Coronavirus, but I still want to help. I know a lot about helping and going through hard things. I lived on my own in a scary place for a long time until Meg found me. Because of one scary thing that happened to me, I only have 3 working legs. Don't worry- I'm not in pain and the 4th leg still serves an important function: I use it to let my humans know I'd like a treat. I love kids... and I really don't mind it if they give me treats too.



# A Note to Parents

Dear Parents and Caregivers:

What a challenging time it is to be a parent. If you are like many parents right now, you are navigating the unexpected realities of homeschooling, stress and uncertainty, and working from home or possibly being unable to work. If you are a healthcare provider, you may be in the midst of the incredibly difficult experience of quarantining from your family. We are in unprecedented circumstances, and I have profound admiration for the work and commitment of parents during this time.

You may also fear for your health, the health of your children, or the health of other family members. In addition to this fear, you may be experiencing fear for financial stability and emotional well being. As a parent to 6-month-old twins, I certainly understand these fears. The task of parenting during this time is overwhelmingly demanding. Many families are finding that their goals and expectations for their work, children's homework, schedules, sleep, exercise, and much, much more are impossible to achieve. Parents are getting all sorts of messages about how to handle these circumstances- Use this resource! Set this schedule! Self-Care! Right now, it all falls short. The reality is that all of our nervous systems- parents and children alike- are in the thick of an ongoing stress and trauma response.

I feel this is very important to acknowledge as I offer yet another resource. I believe many of the difficulties children are exhibiting now stem from their own stress response to the pandemic and social upheaval. My most sincere hope is that this packet provides families with resource to cope, and not another expectation or should-do item for a neverending list.

I am a mental health therapist, and specialize in treating trauma. Most of my work is with children and families. As I meet with clients and their families during this time, I see the need for a resource that helps children understand Coronavirus. Many of the children I meet with (now via telehealth) are terribly afraid for their families and loved ones. Many have thoughts and beliefs about the virus that stem from fear and imagination rather than factual information. This is how children try to understand their world. This led me to create these worksheets with the help of Dr. RoHo.

## How to Use the Worksheets

This packet is designed for parents and caregivers to go through with their children. Most of the information is appropriate for young children (ages 5-9), although some is appropriate for older children (ages 10-12). Use your judgement and what you know about your child. The activities are meant to be done with an adult. In situations like these, children are looking to the safe adults in their life to communicate and re-assure safety. This might mean that before doing these activities you need to spend some time setting aside your own anxieties. For all of the reasons I referenced above, this is understandably very difficult, and simultaneously deeply important to your child.

As you go through this packet, here are a few suggestions for how to approach information about Coronavirus with children:

1. Allow space for your child to ask questions and voice worries.
2. When talking about solutions like washing hands, wearing a face mask, social distancing, etc. use empowering language rather than fear-based language with your child. For example, say "We are not going to your soccer games because this is part of how we are helpers," rather than "We are not going to your soccer games because we don't want to get sick/it's dangerous/etc."
3. When making decisions about what to share about the virus, or risk factors any family or friends may have, consider the lens through which your child will see or hear this information. For example, saying "Grandma is in a high-risk category because she is older" can create a level of fear for a young child that may be disproportionate to the actual risk. The child may hear this information and interpret, "Grandma is not safe" or even "Grandma may die." This does not mean you do not share information about risk or age appropriate information about the realities of the dangers of the virus. Rather, be prepared to address a fear or worry that may be disproportionate to the reality.

In the example above, you might re-assure that Grandma is doing a lot to stay safe, that she is healthy now, and make sure your child connects with Grandma frequently on video chat. This is more challenging if you have a family member who is ill. Point to the helpers and care the person is receiving. If you have them, give your child the names of doctors and nurses helping the person. Re-assure your child you will get through this together.

4. Remember children naturally personalize information. This is part of how they understand and make meaning of things that happen in their lives. Because of this, a child may interpret not seeing Grandma because of social distancing as "I am dangerous to Grandma" or "I am bad." They may respond to your stress by working harder to take care of you and the family, or by acting out. Reassure your child of the reasons we are social distancing and that their job as a child is to ask questions, learn, play, and grow.

5. Create stress-free family time that happens daily. This is time that is set aside for play and enjoyment. This can be done by having a daily dance party, watching a favorite show together, playing a game, etc. Whatever you decide to do, Coronavirus stress is not allowed into this time.

A colleague, Catherine Lidov, reflected the challenge of parenting during this time well: It is our task to create safe spaces for our children- and to spend our time with our children within the safety of those spaces, leaving when we need to do the adult work of worrying, planning, and managing the difficult realities of this crisis. I hope this packet is helpful for you and your family as you create these safe spaces. Be gentle with yourselves, and be safe.

Meg Hamilton, LCMHC, ATR  
Therapist and Owner at Birch Counseling, PLLC  
Durham, NC

# What is Coronavirus?

You might have a lot of questions about Coronavirus. It might be hard to ask these questions. You might feel confused and not sure what questions you have. Here's a few facts about the virus.

## WHAT IS IT?

Coronavirus is a virus. This means it's a type of germ that makes people sick. Have you ever had a cold before? That's also a virus. Everyone gets a virus at some point in their lives. Most of the time we get over viruses quickly, even if they make us feel icky.

## WHY ARE ADULTS WORRIED ABOUT IT?

The new Coronavirus is a new virus that is making a lot of people sick. Because it is new, we don't know very much about it. We do know it spreads from person to person very quickly, and makes some people very sick. Many people who get the virus only feel a little sick, and most people get better. This is especially true for kids. The people who get very sick may need to go to the hospital, and some may even die. Most people who get Coronavirus do not die, but we want to keep everyone safe and healthy. That is why doctors are working to find a cure and people are being told to stay at home. It is very important that we all do our part to help keep everyone safe and healthy.

## WILL EVERYONE GET SICK?

No. A lot of people will not get sick. There are lots of things you and your family can do to help stay safe. Keep reading to learn more!

## WHAT DOES IT DO?

For most people who get Coronavirus, it makes them feel like they have a cold, or they may not feel sick at all. Coronavirus makes our lungs feel bad. If someone has it, they might cough or have a harder time breathing. They also might have a fever and other sick feelings.

## HOW LONG DO YOU STAY SICK?

People with the virus who feel sick might feel sick for a week or more. Remember, not everyone with the virus feels sick. If you have the virus, you can spread it to other people for two weeks or more while it is in your body.

Coronavirus is actually a name for a lot of different viruses. Some of these Coronaviruses are very common and not dangerous. It's kind of like how the word "dog" can mean all kinds of dogs- Golden Retrievers, Puggles, Beagles (clearly the best breed), and more! The Coronavirus everyone is talking about now is a *new* Coronavirus. It causes a sickness we call COVID-19. In these worksheets, we are just going to call it Coronavirus to keep things simple.



### **ARE THE GERMS BIG?**

The germs are very, very small. You can only see them with a microscope!

### **WILL THE GERMS FOLLOW ME?**

Nope. They only move in the bodies of the people who have the virus. This is why doctors and scientists are telling us to stay 6 feet away from people.

Most definitely not. You did not do anything wrong that is causing you to stay home or not visit friends and family.

### **WHERE DID THE GERMS COME FROM?**

Doctors and scientists are still learning about where Coronavirus germs come from. They think they came from a type of bat that lives in China. It is not very common for virus germs to move from an animal to a human, but some germs can make both animals and humans sick.

What other questions do you have about Coronavirus germs? Write them below and ask an adult to help you find answers.

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# How Do You Get Coronavirus?

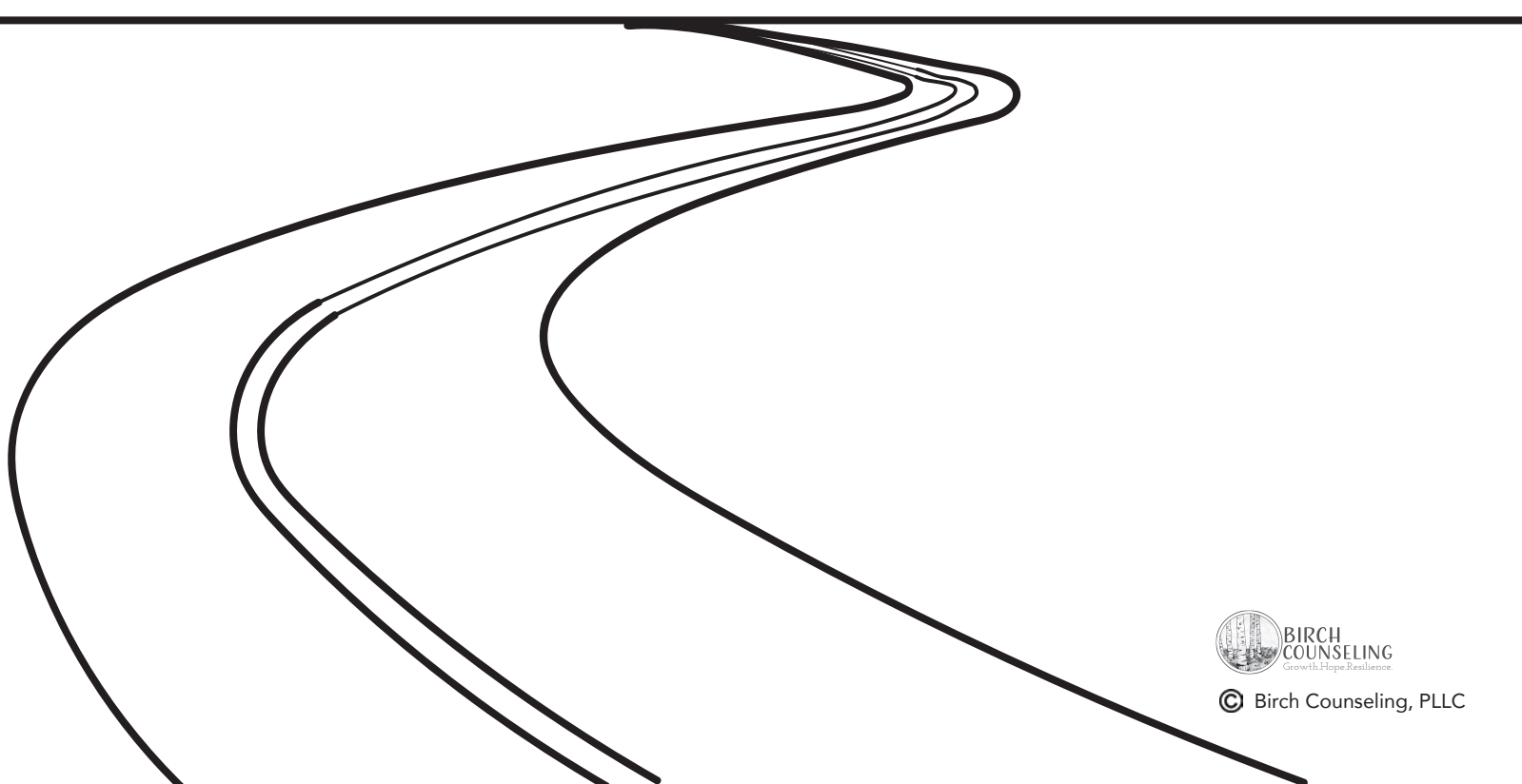
Doctors are still learning a lot about how Coronavirus makes people sick. In many ways, it spreads like other colds and viruses spread. Has there ever been a time where one person in your house was sick, and then someone else got sick too? That happens because of how we pass germs to one another.

Viruses need a way to get from one person to another. One way to think about it is that germs are kind of like a car, and they need a highway to get somewhere. Our bodies are kind of like the garage the germs park in.

Sneezing and coughing are like the superhighway of germ transportation. Scientists think this is the way Coronavirus germs spread the most. This is why it is so important to cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze. Coughing and sneezing into your bent elbow is best.

Sometimes the germs that leave our body when we cough or sneeze land on something- like our hands or a countertop. If we touch something and the germs park there, someone else might touch the same thing and pick the germs up accidentally. Germs can't live without a garage forever. Coronavirus germs live outside a body for a few days.

Draw and color helper cars on  
the highway- any kind of  
helper you want!





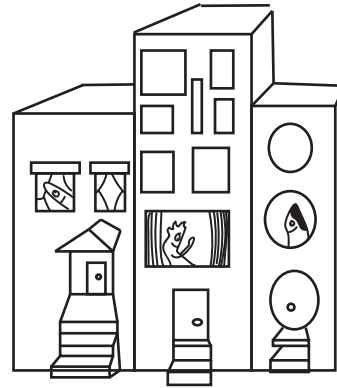
# What Can I Do?

There are a lot of important things everyone can do to keep you and others safe and healthy. All of the things you can do help us stop building highways the virus can travel on. This way, fewer and fewer people catch the virus.



## Wash Your Hands- A Lot!

Wash your hands with soap and warm water several times a day. You should wash your hands for 20 seconds. Think of a fun way to count to 20- like singing a short song!



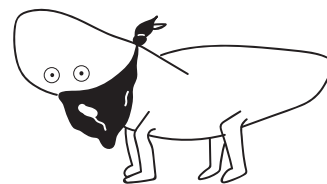
## Stay at Home

Staying at home is one of the best ways to help slow the spread of Coronavirus. Depending on where you live, you may still be able to go outside and play, but stay home instead of going to public places. When people are not around each other, we build fewer highways for the germs to travel on.



## Cover Your Mouth and Nose When You Sneeze or Cough

If you cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough, it helps keep any germs that might be in your body from spreading.

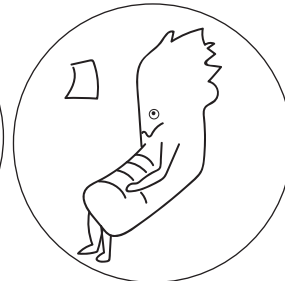
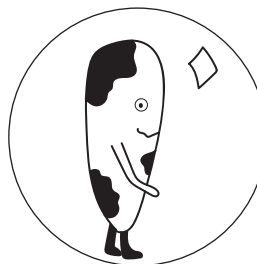


## Wear a Nose and Mouth Covering if You Have to Go Out in Public

It can feel scary to see people wearing masks. Remember, these people are wearing masks to stop building virus highways. It's kind of like being Good Guy Bandits!

## Give People Space

If you have to go into public, scientists want people to stay about six feet away from each other. Imagine it like giving everyone their own personal bubble. Six feet is about as long as two GIANT steps... or the size of a llama!

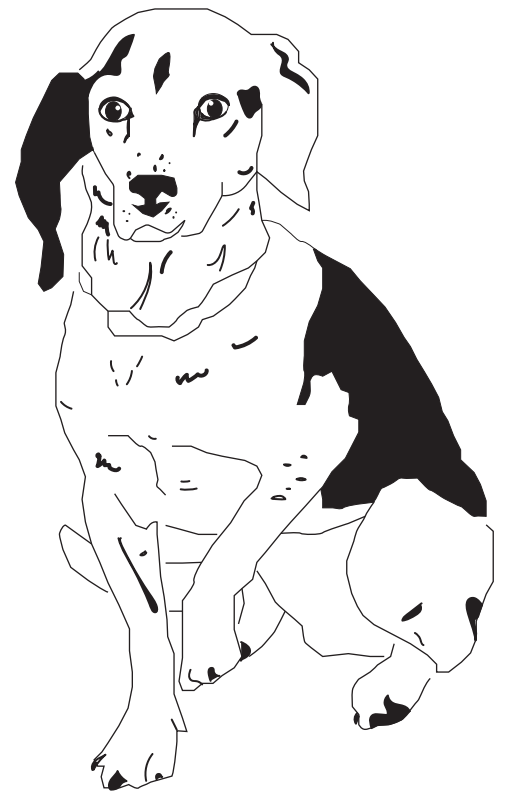


# Your Worried Feelings

When we are worried, we might notice worried thoughts and worried feelings. Our bodies tell us we are feeling worried even when we don't have worried thoughts. We have to get to know the clues our body gives us about feeling worried to be able to help the worries. The next two pages will help you get to know your worries.

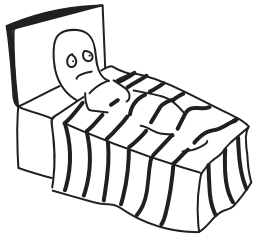
When I first came to live with my moms, I had a lot of worries. Before I came to live with them, I did not have a place to live and I had to sneak food to eat. When I came to live with my moms, I had big worried feelings about eating my food. When it was time to eat, my body would shake, and I would make myself as small as I could. Sometimes I felt frozen and like I could not move. Over time, and with help, I felt safer and safer and my worries got smaller. My moms will tell you- I definitely don't have any problems with eating anymore!

Use the space below to draw some of your favorite foods for Mr. Roosevelt!



# Worry Clues: My Body Feels....

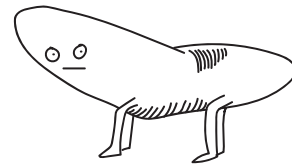
Think about a time you felt big worried feelings. Circle the things your body feels when you felt worried.



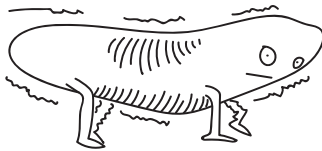
I can't sleep.



My tummy hurts.



I feel frozen.



My body feels tingly.



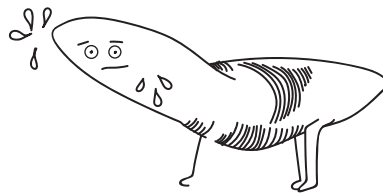
I have a headache.



My body hurts.



I bite my nails or pick at my skin.



I sweat and feel hot.



My heart beats very fast.



My breathing is very fast.

# THE WORRY METER

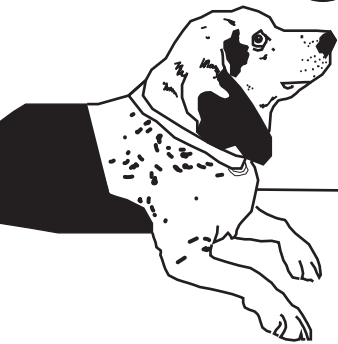
Now that you know what clues your body gives you that tell you about your worried feelings, you can use those clues to better understand your feelings. Feelings are like waves. They come and go, and sometimes they feel really big and uncomfortable before they get small or go away. Use the Worry Meter below to help track where your worried feelings are in their wave. Color the Worry Meter with a color that matches how comfortable or uncomfortable each section of the worry meter feels to you. For example, maybe you like the color blue so you use that to color the comfortable section. Maybe big uncomfortable feelings feel like fire to you, so you might use red for that section.

You can add other feelings (like mad, sad, frustrated, etc) or worried thoughts to describe how each part of the Worry Meter feels to you.



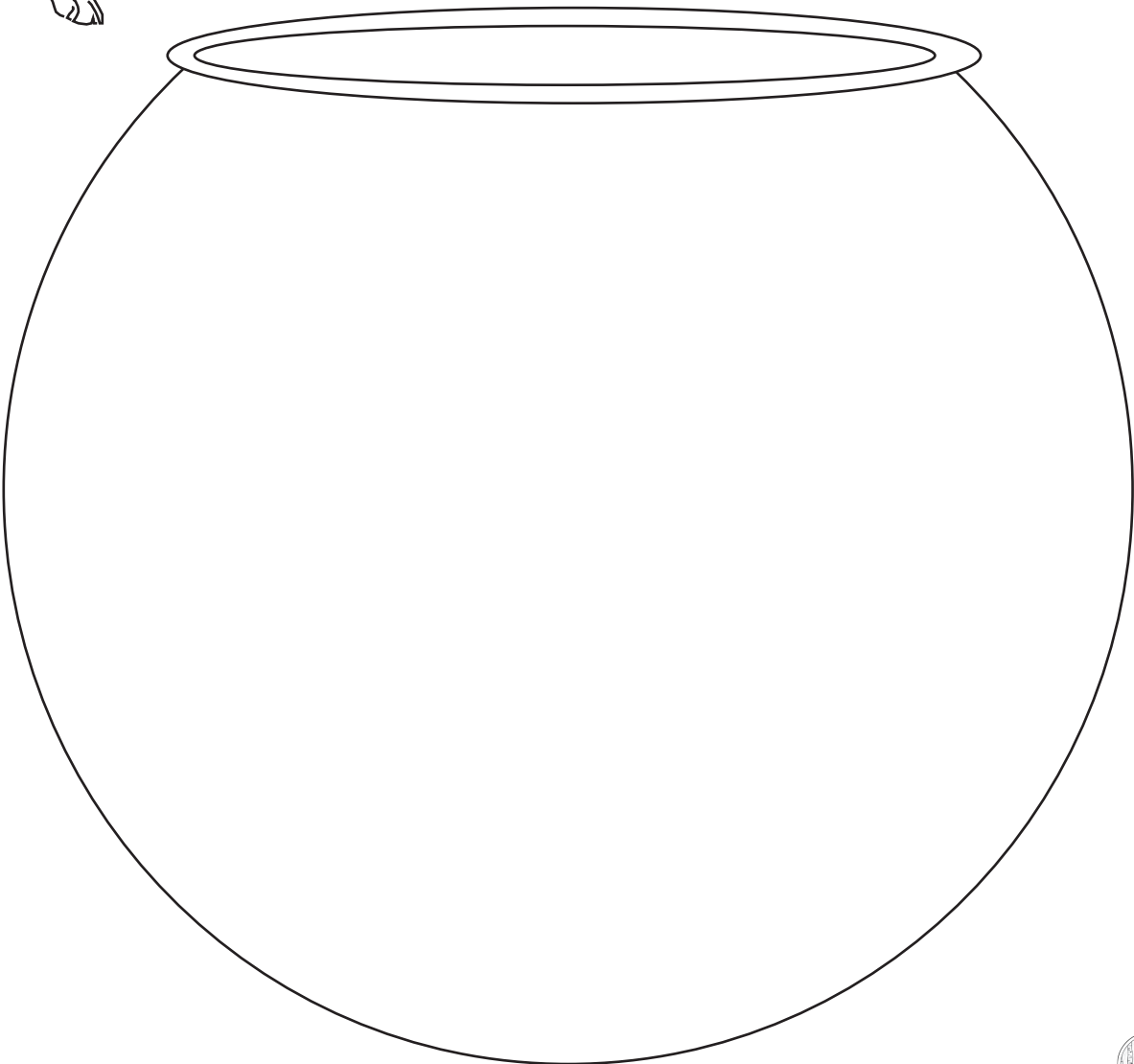
# Worry Fishbowl

Sometimes I worry about  
being alone again.  
Sometimes I worry about  
my moms getting sick.



Imagine all of your worries about Coronavirus can fit into a fishbowl. What would they look like? Would they be weird-looking worry fish? Would they look like the people you care about or things you are afraid will happen? Draw them in the fishbowl below.

After you draw them, create helpers for your worries and draw those too. Maybe some of your worries need a hug. Maybe some need to be gobbled up by a giant helper fish. Maybe they need a favorite stuffie or a friend. Use your imagination and think about things that feel comforting to you when you are worried.

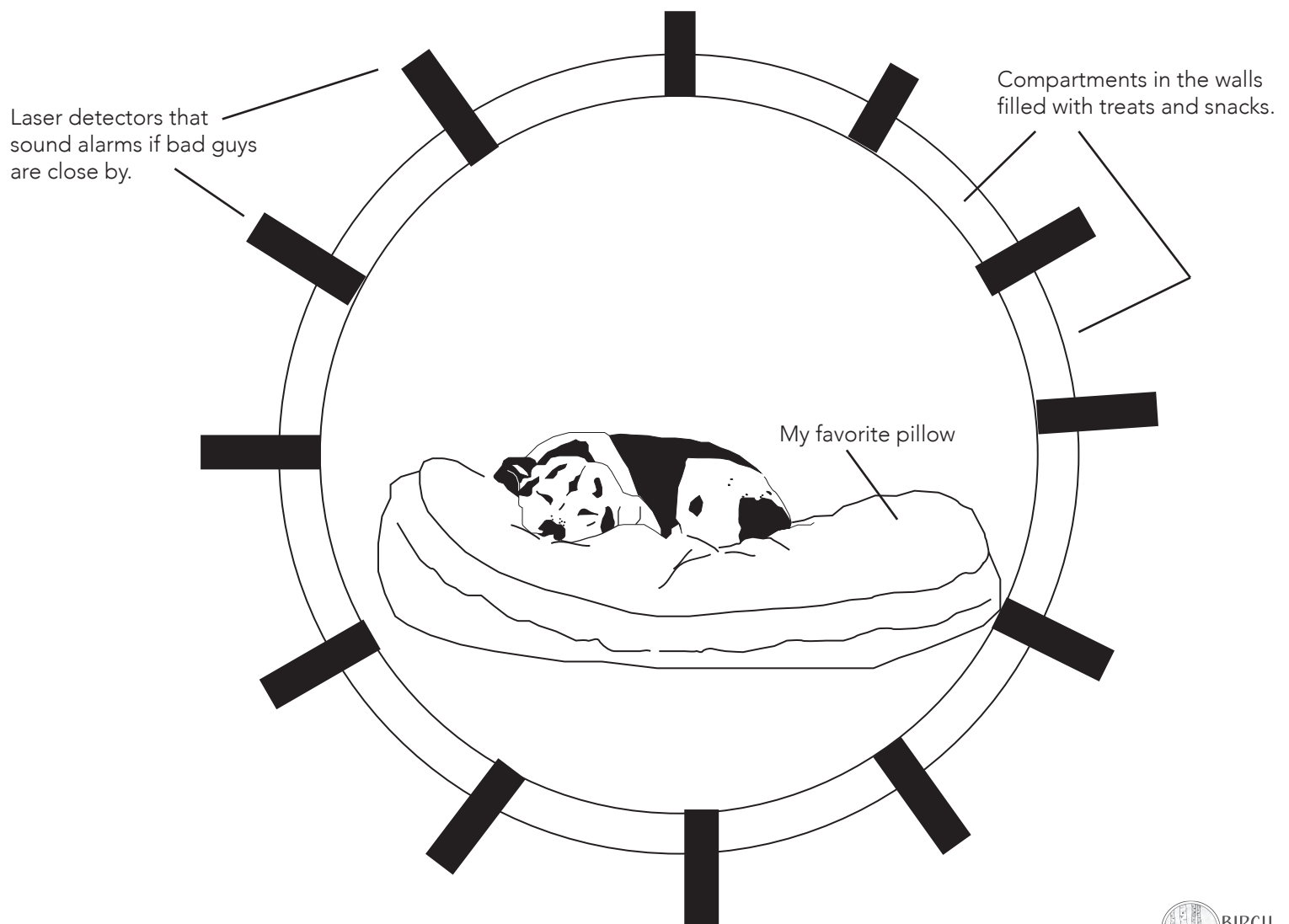


# Wall of Safety

Imagine a wall of safety around you and the people you care about most. What would it be made out of? How big would it be? What color would it be? How would it stay protected? On the blank page, draw your own Wall of Safety and the people you want to include inside it.

Parents or Caregivers: Fill the Wall of Safety with messages of comfort for your child. These can be notes about the things you are doing to be safe, the helpers like doctors and scientists who are learning about Coronavirus, or how your child is loved. Spend some time reviewing these messages with your child.

If your child has a friend or family member who is sick with Coronavirus, help your child include supports and helpers in their Wall of Safety. These can be both for them and for the person who is sick.





# Things That Help

On this page, you will see a list of things that help us when we feel worried. Every person is different. What helps you might be different from what helps someone else. Circle the things that you would like to try to help you with your worried feelings.

Talk to an adult.

Snuggle a pet.

Build a Safe Place Fort out of pillows and blankets. Notice any good, safe feelings you have.

Listen to calming music.

Use a weighted blanket or several heavy blankets.

Use a guided imagination. Ask an adult to google Guided Meditations for Kids to find one that you like.

Move your body- try jumping jacks or big movements.

Breathe in and out slowly and deeply.

Use your 5 senses. Pick one activity for sight, smell, taste, touch, and sound. Focus on just that activity until you've worked through all 5 senses.

Make a list of things that help you know you are safe and cared for. Ask an adult to help if you need.

Draw or make art.

Write about your feelings.

Say kind, calming thing to yourself. Ask an adult if you need help. For example, "My family and I are safe right now."



# Resources

## Resources for Children

Online Books:

My Hero Is You:

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-04/My%20Hero%20is%20You%20Storybook%20for%20Children%20on%20COVID-19.pdf>

Coronavirus: A Book for Children:

[https://nosycrow.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus\\_INSwith-cover.pdf](https://nosycrow.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus_INSwith-cover.pdf)

Luna Stays Home:

<https://coronaviruschildrensbook.com/>

## Resources for Parents

Centers for Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Healthy Children

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/2019-November-Coronavirus.aspx>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

[https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak\\_factsheet\\_1.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak_factsheet_1.pdf)

Stanford Children's Health

<https://healthier.stanfordchildrens.org/en/how-to-talk-with-kids-about-covid-19/>

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Resource Library

[https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Resource\\_Libraries/Coronavirus.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Resource_Libraries/Coronavirus.aspx)