

Something Strange Happened in My City

A social story about the coronavirus pandemic for children



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Introduction

This book is for parents, guardians, and educators to help children aged 3-8 understand the coronavirus pandemic.

This can be a scary time for children and they may not understand why they need to stay indoors, or what is going on in the world.

One of the best ways caretakers can help young children cope is by sharing age-appropriate information, reassuring their safety, and learning about the many people working to fight the virus.

Something very strange
happened in my city.

I can't go to school, the
park, or my friend's house to
play.

My parents can't go to
work. My grandma can't go
shopping.

The street looks empty.

I wonder where people are.



Everyone on TV is wearing a mask.

Doctors and nurses on TV are wearing strange clothes from head to toe.



Does our city have a fever,
Mama?

Is our city sick?

Why does everyone look so
sad?

Why do people look angry
and upset?

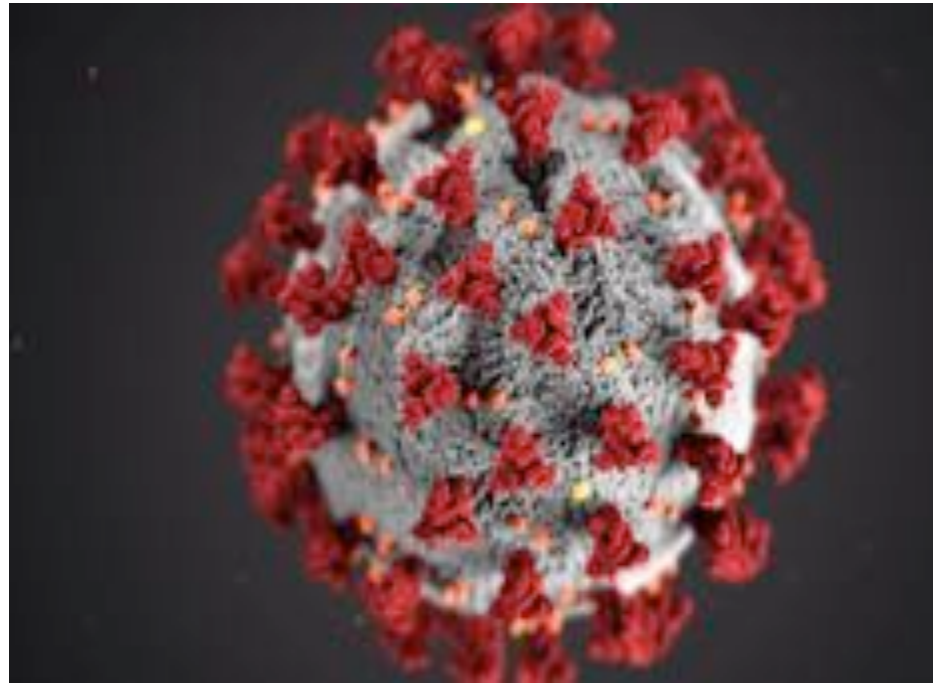
Why don't I see smiling
faces anymore?



Yes, my child, our city is sick.

A new virus called COVID-19 that makes humans sick is spreading very quickly around the world!

Unfortunately, our city got the virus too.



Mama, why can't
people just go to the
doctor and get a shot
and take some
medicine?



Well, lots of people are sick right now.

All the doctors and nurses are working all day and all night, but still can't help everyone who needs help.

Scientists are trying to make a shot that can stop the virus, but it takes time.



Will I get sick too,
Mama?



Well, it is possible that everyone could get sick.

But I know a way to keep you safe!

“Wow, what is it? Tell me, tell me...”

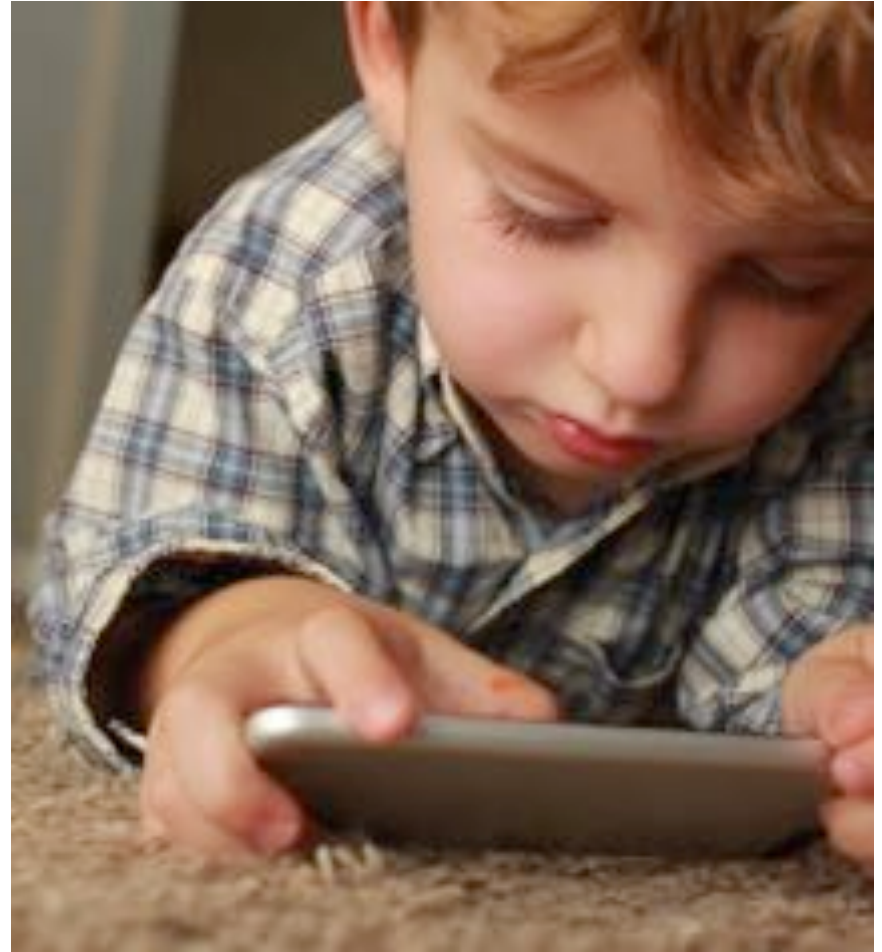


We will try something called
“Social Distancing.”

What does this mean?

It’s like how you stay home
from school when you don’t
feel good.

We will stay at home so we
won’t get the virus. For now,
we won’t see other people in
person so we don’t spread the
virus to other people.



If we need to go out, we will stay away from people who look sick.

We won't touch things and then touch our face, mouth, and eyes.

We will wash our hands with soap and warm water for more than 20 seconds to wash the virus off our hands.



“Wow, I will do that. Will that be enough? ”

“Well, my dear, don’t worry! If everyone of us keeps a distance from each other, then the virus won’t spread from person to person.

Also, Mama, Papa, Grandpa, and Grandma will try our best to protect you to make sure the virus can’t reach you!”



Plus, you know what?

The scientists also found that children's immune systems are stronger than adults' to defend against this new virus!

“Wow, so I can beat the virus! Yeah!”



But with social distancing, does this mean I can't play with my friends any more?



Yes, you can!

You can call, text, email,
and FaceTime your
friends.

You can watch movies
and videos together
online!



Mama, how long do I need to wait to go out to play with my friends?

When will the virus disappear?

Will many people die?

My dear child, I just do not know.

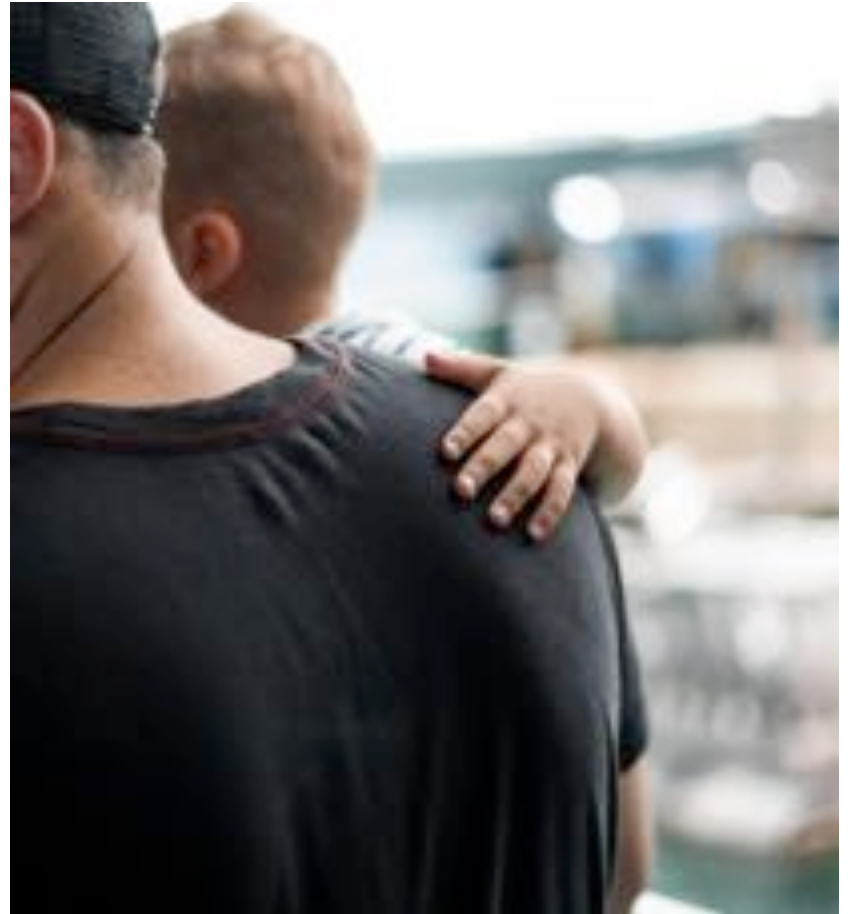


BUT every doctor and nurse is trying super hard. They don't want to give up on any sick person.

Some of them didn't go home for a couple of days and they can't see their own kids.



Do the doctors' kids feel sad because they can't see their parents?



Yes, they are very sad because they don't get to see their parents every day like you do.

But they would also be so proud of their parents for having the courage to fight the virus and save people's lives!



Wow, they are so great!

They are my **HEROES!**



There are a lot of heroes who are helping to fight the virus.

Scientists work hard to produce shots.

Delivery men and women deliver food to the people who can't go out to get food.



Journalists share good information with us on TV, in newspapers, and online.

There are many people working hard to keep everyone safe!



Wow, people are
AWESOME!



Mommy and daddy will donate money to buy masks, gloves, medical suits and more so the doctors and nurses can be safe and protected when they help patients.



What can I do to help?

What do you think?



I can draw pictures and write letters to adults who are helping.

I can share my toys and storybooks with kids who need them.



What a good idea! It is so nice of you, my child!

Let's lend a helping hand to kids who need help!



This is a battle where everyone in the world is fighting together!

“Keeping yourself healthy and not spreading the virus are the best ways to help fight this pandemic!”



“Okay, I will wash my hands, stay in the house, and do things online!

By staying in, we won’t need to go to the hospital, so all the doctors and nurses can take care of the people who are sick.”



Let's all help to fight the virus together by practicing "social distancing!"

"Okay, see you on FaceTime, Mama!"



Notes to Parents

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2019, young children around the world may have either experienced trauma (e.g., lockdown) from the coronavirus or have been exposed to scary images about the virus through media. It is extremely hard for children to understand why social distancing is happening, and why they can't play with their friends anymore.

This book seeks to 1) reassure the child about their safety, 2) redirect the child's attention to the positive actions undertaken by medical doctors and others, 3) empower and engage children in helping acts, 4) understand the importance of social distancing.

Notes to Parents

When a scary thing happens, children need their loved one to reassure them about their safety. Parents need to show more affection toward their children at this difficult time. We want to help children using social media to connect with their friends when they are doing “social distancing.”

Also, we want to empower children to look up to the many heroes and contribute to fighting this pandemic! After all, “taking good care of yourself and not spreading the virus” are heroic acts!

Note about the author

Dr. Shu-Chen “Jenny” Yen is an associate professor in the Department of Child and Adolescent Studies, California State University, Fullerton. She created and shared her first social story with the public for the 911 terrorist attacks by the al-Qaeda on the United States on September 11, 2001. To date, she has created several social stories for young victims who were impacted by typhoons, earthquakes, hurricanes in Taiwan, China, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and the USA. With trauma-informed care practice in mind, she hopes this social story can help children living in the impacted areas find love and courage. She was the 2018 P.E.A.C.E Award recipient from the Peace Educators Allied for Children Everywhere (P.E.A.C.E.) She is nominated by the Educators for Peaceful Classrooms and Communities (EPCC) for the 2020 Honor an Early Childhood Educator Award, California Association for the Education of Young Children (CAAEYC).

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