Stinkerpants + Stuart ask...

What happens when the coronavirus changes EVERYTHING?

written + illustrated by SARA OLSHER
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Hi, my name is Stinkerpants!
And this is Stuart. Stuart feels better when he knows what’s going to happen every day.

(Actually, everybody feels better when they know what’s going to happen - even grown-ups!)
Most of the time we do the same things in the mornings. We wake up.

Wake up, Stuart...
We eat breakfast.
(I like apples. Stuart only eats bugs.)

Apples are no problem.

But sorry, Stuart. We're fresh out of bugs.
Usually nights are the same too. We brush our teeth.

Open your mouth, Stuart!
We put on jammies, and we go to bed. Every day ends with sleep.
But our days can be different.

Some days we go to school, and some days are the weekend!
When something big changes, what we do each day can change too. Stuart wants to know what happens to our days when we’re staying home because of the coronavirus. But he doesn’t really understand what the coronavirus is - do you?
The coronavirus is a type of germ. When germs get inside our bodies, they can make us sick, and the coronavirus can make people extra sick.

Germs are everywhere — in the air, on food, on plants and animals, in soil and water, and on pretty much everything we touch. They are suuuuper tiny, so you can’t actually see them with your eyes.

Most germs don’t make you sick. Our bodies are amazing and can kill them before they do. But if you’ve had a cold (which you probably have), you’ve had a virus.
Here's how it works.

Every living thing is made up of tiny little guys called cells.
Cells are like blocks, but they put *themselves* together. One really cool thing about cells is that one cell can *turn itself into two cells* anytime it wants. (Whoa, right?)
Every cell has a job. Together they build body parts, then tell them how to work. They make hearts pump, legs walk, and lungs breathe.
When a virus gets inside our bodies, it uses a special key to get inside some of our cells. Once inside, the virus turns the cell into a virus-making factory, pumping out lots of new viruses. These new viruses then get inside other cells and make even more viruses!

The coronavirus can get inside the cells in our noses and lungs and make them not work right.

When this happens, people cough and feel tired. They can also get a headache and a fever.
There are lots of things that people can do to keep from getting a virus. Most of these things you should do all the time even **without** the coronavirus.

- **Wash your hands** for 20 whole seconds with soap!
- **Don't sneeze** into the air or into your hands. This is how your germs get in other people. Sneezing into your elbow.
- **Don't pick your nose or touch your face or bite your nails**—that's how germs get in!
Many people who get sick from the coronavirus feel bad for about a week, and then it’s over. But some people, especially older people like grandmas and grandpas, can get very sick from it . . . so sick that they have to go to the hospital.

Other people don’t feel sick at all, and they might not even know that the virus is in their body.
But even if they don’t feel sick, **everyone who has the coronavirus can give it to someone else**. When someone with the virus sneezes, coughs, breathes, or touches their face, the virus can get on their hands or in the air. If you’re standing close to someone with the virus, the germs in the air from their sneezes and coughs can get on you. Yuck! We want people to keep their germs to themselves.

Imagine there’s a big bubble around you that’s six feet on all sides. The only people allowed in your bubble are the people in your own family, and everyone else has to stay outside the bubble.

This helps keep other people’s germs from getting on you, and keeps your germs from getting on them.
The coronavirus is a little different than most viruses, because it can make people very sick, very easily. Because of that, we are doing even **more** to keep people from getting sick. The Number One way is staying at home instead of going out and being with other people.

Some people, like doctors, nurses, grocery store workers and delivery drivers can’t do their jobs at home. By staying home, we protect ourselves from the virus, and we make it less likely that they’ll get it, too.

Here’s how.
Imagine all the people Stuart sees on a normal day. He sees like, 400 kids at school, plus all the teachers. He sees all the kids he plays basketball with after school, and all the people at the restaurants he eats at with his family. And since Stuart might have the virus and not even feel sick at all, he would keep doing all the stuff he does every day — and he could give the virus to all those people, who could give it to all the people they see every day.
But if Stuart stays home, he only sees his family, and the virus never gets a chance to make anyone else sick. All of the kids at school, the kids at basketball, and the people at the restaurant don’t get sick.

That’s why Stuart, and you, and your friends, and your parents, are all staying home in our bubbles and not getting close to people outside of our families. We’re trying to make sure that less people get sick.
All this makes Stuart a little nervous. He wants to know - what about me? What’s going to happen?
Being at home for a long time can be hard.

Usually, our days are filled with math and recess and friends and working in groups and lunch and monkey bars and bouncing balls and reading.

We know what to expect out of each day.

But when we’re home and there’s no teacher telling us when to go to recess and when to pull out our math books, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed.
Lots of kids are also trying to do school work at home with their parents. Most parents aren’t teachers, and trying to learn from a parent can be frustrating for both kids and parents. Remember, parents are learning how to do your schoolwork at the same time you are!

You might feel angry or sad, and be confused about why. The reason is because everything is changing right now, and it takes awhile to get used to it. It’s important to be patient with each other!

We are all doing the best we can.
One of the ways to handle big feelings like anger, frustration, and sadness is to have quiet time. Find a quiet place in your house that’s just for you. This space doesn’t have to be big, but it does have to be yours. It can be your cozy bed with lots of pillows, a spot in your closet, or a fort in a special place. You can use quiet time to look at books, cuddle a pet, practice paying attention to your breathing, or take a little nap.
Not having recess and moving our bodies every day can make our feelings even bigger, so it’s important that we do something active every day. Have a dance party! Do an exercise video online! Ride your bike in the driveway! Play soccer in the backyard with a family member! Move your body every day.

The most important thing for everyone — even grown-ups — to remember right now is that having a plan for each day will make everyone feel better. You and your family can set up a plan just for you.

Your plan should include things like learning math and reading. But it also needs to include fun!

Not seeing our friends every day can be hard, but we can help make it easier by making sure we see their faces through video chats or Facetime.

We can’t have play dates, but video chats are fun too!
Even though life is different right now, there are a lot of good things about staying home. First off, there’s lots of time with your family to do things together that you might not usually have time for, including games, crafts, and lots of snuggles.

There’s also time to be creative by yourself. You can learn all sorts of things! Teach yourself to knit, sculpt with clay, make up songs, or help cook dinner.

This is also a good time to think of creative ways to show love to your neighborhood or city, especially because a lot of people feel lonely right now. Leave special messages on the ground with chalk, put drawings in your windows, or make paintings on rocks to leave outside for others to find.
Unfortunately, there’s nothing you can do to make the coronavirus go away all by yourself. But you can work with everyone else in the world and do your part not to spread it. And once you understand what to expect each day, it gets way less scary.

The good news is, this won’t last forever. We will get back to our old plans — seeing our friends, going outside, and doing what we always have — it just might take awhile.

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Stuart feels a lot better now that he knows what to expect. Even though our days can be different, it helps to plan out our week together so we know what’s going to happen next. And if you ever feel sad, worried, or angry, it’s always okay to ask for help. **We can do hard things, together!**

And don’t forget, Stuart... even the biggest feelings don’t last forever!
More Help
Making COVID-19 Easier on Kids

Magnetic Charts Based on Decades of Science . . . and featured in POPSUGAR, Reader’s Digest, and more.

Changes to your family’s routines are hard on kids. They want to know what the coronavirus is, but they mostly need to know how their life will be affected by it.

Our charts help kids understand what’s happening, and when — which is proven to decrease their anxiety levels.

Each set comes with five buttons for online school and fifteen activities (plus more available separately!) to help plan your days together.

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