**A Quick Tip for Perseverative Questioning**

In times of crisis, the big worries can get even bigger. The unknowns can become almost unbearable, let alone for a child who is still trying to figure out the basics of why people do what they do, or why they make the decisions they make. Most of you will agree that we are living in a very surreal and scary time. Assume this is going to weigh heavy on your child.

If you are stressed, you can safely assume your child is 10 times more so. One behavior that can actually make anxiety worse is rumination. Rumination is when you think about a disturbing incident or situation over and over. The thought can get “stuck” in your brain. Research suggests that the more you ruminate, the more the cortisol (stress hormone) is released into your body. A constant release of cortisol can make you or your child physically sick (the classic example is feeling sick to your stomach).

One sign of rumination is repetitive questioning about a particular topic. If your child is asking a question over and over, assume the issue is causing significant stress and consider developing a consistent routine regarding ***how*** you deliver your answer. Simply ignoring the repeated questioning is not a good idea, and probably won’t solve the problem. I recommend you give simple, honest and clear answers, avoiding elusive analogies. I also suggest you write the question and the answer in a notebook. You can even name the notebook, something like *The Book of Good Questions and Answers*. When your child asks you the same question again, direct him to the book (check the book of answers) rather than repeating yourself. Teach him where to go to find the answer.

If there is not a good answer to your child’s question, you can write down that the answer is being studied by the smartest people in the world. You can assure your child that you will read the news and let her know the answer as soon as the experts know. Consider having a Q&A time on the daily schedule. Consider naming those worldly perseverative questions, “Big Questions” (as opposed to every day ‘where is the remote’ questions). Then, when your child asks you a ‘big’ question, write it down and show your child where on the schedule you will answer big questions.

The basis of this strategy is that repetitive routines can help to calm anxiety. The system also allows you some time to think through the answer.

Good luck and be safe.

Kari