



CENTER FOR PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

College of Arts & Sciences

CHILDREN'S BIG QUESTIONS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

During this time, many children are grappling with large and difficult questions about such topics as fear and worry, loneliness and isolation, boredom, and illness and death. Our natural inclination might be to try to provide an explanation that resolves the issue temporarily and is somewhat comforting to a child who is feeling bewildered by the world. But providing comfort or a mollifying explanation may not be what the child needs or wants. They might simply want to talk about their questions, thoughts, and feelings.

The Center for Philosophy for Children is a resource for parents navigating conversations about children's deeper philosophical questions. Philosophical discussions afford an opportunity for different kinds of interactions with children because, unlike many of the topics about which we talk with children, philosophical questions don't have settled and definite answers.

Make time to listen to your children's questions and to think aloud together. Don't worry about getting to the right answers – the point is to explore the questions.

We hope that the following resources – children's books and short videos – help you to have these conversations.



Our [website](#) has many more resources for talking with your children about a wide range of big questions. And if you have specific questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at info@philosophyforchildren.org.

Fear and Worry

Some Possible Questions

Are fear, anxiety, or worry ever useful?

Do we only worry about the future and not the past?

Why do people fear losing things that they don't even have yet?

Do we have control over our fears?

What is the relationship between hope and fear?

Books



The Red Tree by Shaun Tan

With few words, this book explores feelings of sadness and fear, and hope.



Black Dog by Levi Pinfold

Everyone in the house is afraid when a huge black dog appears, except the youngest member of the family.



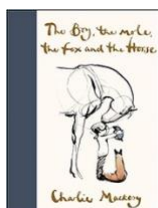
Under the Love Umbrella by Davina Bell

Even in the midst of fear and worry, we can remember that we are loved.



Ruby's Worry by Tom Percival

When Ruby tries to ignore her worries, they take over. Then she meets another child with worries.



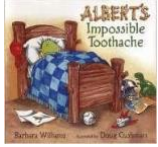
The Boy, the Mole, the Fox, and the Horse by Charlie Mackesy

The boy, mole, fox, and horse are four friends, and together they explore such issues as friendship, fear and worry, freedom, kindness, and courage.



I'm Worried by Michael Ian Black

A potato tells his friends that he worries about everything, and they explore together how to deal with worries about the future.



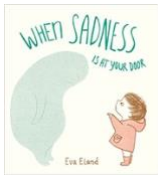
Albert's Impossible Toothache by Barbara Williams

Albert, a turtle, complains that he has a toothache. His family points out that he has no teeth, and so he cannot have a toothache. "You never believe me," Albert protests, and he takes to his bed. His parents and siblings lament that Albert is not telling the truth. Albert's mother goes to her several "worrying" spots to worry and each time she emerges with new ideas for how to help Albert.



Worry Says What? by Allison Edwards

A little girl imagines worry as a monster in her mind, who tells her she can't do things, that people won't like her, and that she shouldn't even try. Worry tells her she will always be afraid as long as she listens to him, so she stops.



When Sadness is at Your Door by Eva Eland

A young child opens the door to a pale, shapeless creature, Sadness, who "sits so close to you, you can hardly breathe." The narrator tells the child to listen to Sadness and suggests comforting things to do.

Videos



"Piper"

A hungry sandpiper hatchling ventures from her nest for the first time to dig for food by the shoreline. The only problem is that the food is buried beneath the sand where scary waves roll up onto the shore.



"Managing Worry"

What is worry? The video suggests some strategies for managing worry, including deep breathing, thinking positive thoughts, and reaching out to trusted adults.

Loneliness and Isolation

Some Possible Questions

What is the relationship between being alone and being lonely?

Is loneliness always a negative thing?

Can you be lonely when you're with other people?

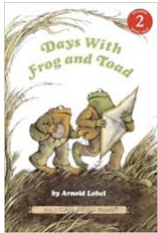
Can you be together with another person even if you're not in the same place?

What does it mean to be invisible?

Does everyone feel invisible at some point?

If we feel invisible, are we?

Books



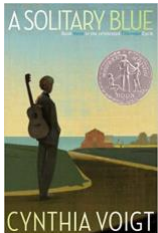
“Alone” from *Days with Frog and Toad* by Arnold Lobel

One morning Toad goes to Frog’s house to visit him and finds a note on the door that says that Frog wants to be alone. Toad worries that Frog is very sad or doesn’t want to be his friend anymore.



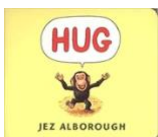
Hug Me by Simona Ciruolo

Felipe the cactus needs to be hugged, but his family do not like to hug. So he goes looking for someone who does.



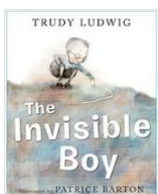
A Solitary Blue by Cynthia Voigt

At seven years old, a boy’s mother leaves the family and he is left with his father, who is not very demonstrative. When he visits his mother, years later, his experience with her only deepens his feelings of isolation. The story is about struggling to find human connection in a lonely existence.



Hug by Jess Alborough

Bobo needs a hug and searches for someone to hug when he can't find his mother.



The Invisible Boy by Trudy Ludwig

Brian seems invisible to all of his classmates and his teacher, until one day he makes a friend.

Videos



"Baboon on the Moon"

A baboon lives on the moon and his job is to light it. He gazes mournfully at the Earth, playing his trumpet.



"Why is Lonesome George So Lonely?"

Lonesome George is the last Pinta Island Tortoise in existence. When George dies, the Pinta Island Tortoise will become extinct.



Boredom

Some Possible Questions

What is boredom?

Why do people get bored?

Why do we avoid boredom?

Can boredom ever be a good thing?

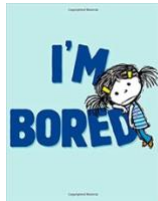
Are animals ever bored?

What is the right response to boredom?

What do we mean when we say we are doing nothing?

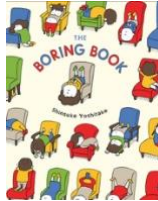
Can we ever do nothing?

Books



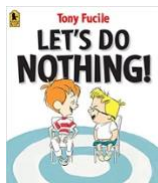
I'm Bored by Michael Ian Black

A young girl is bored, until she meets a potato who declares that it is children who are boring.



The Boring Book by Shinsuke Yoshitake

A little boy is bored, until he asks himself why, which leads him into some surprising adventures.



Let's Do Nothing by Tony Fucile

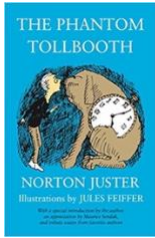
Frankie and Sal, who decide that they have "done it all," try to think of what's left to do. Then a brilliant idea emerges. Frankie exclaims, "Let's do nothing!" All throughout the day, Frankie and Sal try to do nothing, but actually, doing nothing appears to be a lot harder than they had imagined. Can they really ever do

nothing?



Barnacle is Bored by Jonathan Fenske

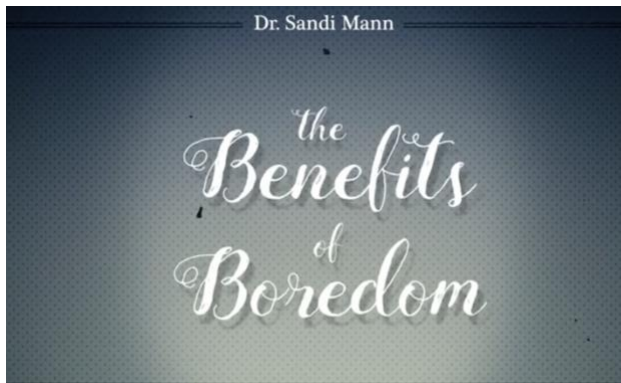
Barnacle is bored – every day seems the same. He yearns for something exciting to happen. When it does, he discovers that exciting isn't always better.



The Phantom Tollbooth by Norton Juster

Milo is bored with everything. He doesn't "know what to do with himself – not just sometimes, but always." He thinks that everything is a waste of time. So when a tollbooth appeared in his room, because "there was nothing else he wanted to play with," he drove through it. His experiences change his perspective about the world.

Videos



"The Benefits of Boredom"

What's the point of being bored? *The Benefits of Boredom* explains why boredom can be an important experience.



"The Time You Have"

A thoughtful look at the time/days you have in your life and how you spend them.

Illness and Death

Some Possible Questions:

What does it mean to die?

Where do we go when we die?

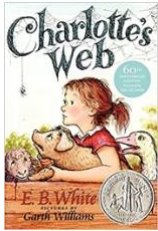
What happens to our minds when we die? Our souls?

Why do you think people are so scared of death? Do you think that people are scared of death or of the pain of dying?

Would life be life without death?

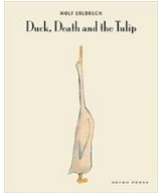
Would you want to know when you are going to die? Why or why not?

Books



Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

Charlotte, unsentimental and practical, treats the prospect of her imminent death quite matter-of-factly, instructing her emotional friend Wilbur, the pig, not to make a scene. Charlotte does not seem to be at all afraid of death, accepting dying as an ordinary fact of life.



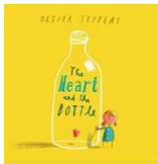
Duck, Death and the Tulip by Wolf Erlbruch

Duck meets Death, who tells Duck, "I've been close by all your life." The two talk about death. On some pages, Death carries a tulip. At the story's end, Duck dies. Death lays her in a river with the tulip on her body. "When she was lost to sight, he was almost a little moved. But that's life, thought Death."



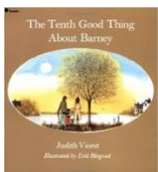
Cry, Heart, But Never Break by Glen Ringved

Four children live with their grandmother, and a visitor, Death, comes for her. The children plan to keep Death away from their grandmother, and he tried to help them understand why he has come for her. "What would life be worth if there were no death?" he asks.



The Heart and the Bottle by Oliver Jeffers

After a loss, a young girl shuts her heart in a bottle to protect it from life's griefs and learns what we lose when we keep our hearts closed.



The Tenth Good Thing About Barney by Judith Viorst

A young boy is sad when Barney, his cat, dies. His mother suggests that they hold a funeral and that the boy should think of 10 good things to say about Barney.



The Flat Rabbit by Bárður Oskarsson

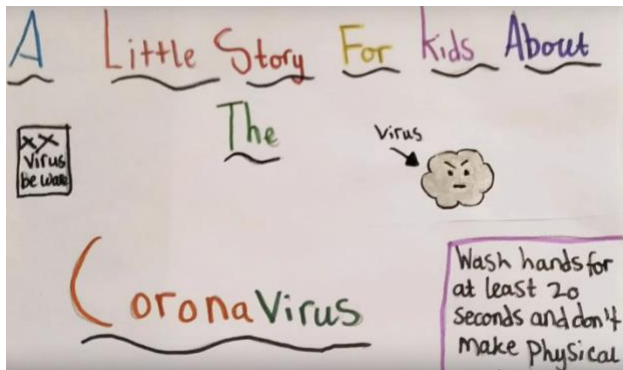
A dog and a rat come upon a rabbit flattened on the road and consider what they should do to help her. They know it's important that she be somewhere better than the middle of the road and they decide to move her somewhere. The humor in this book's treatment of death can open the door to children's deeper questions.

Videos



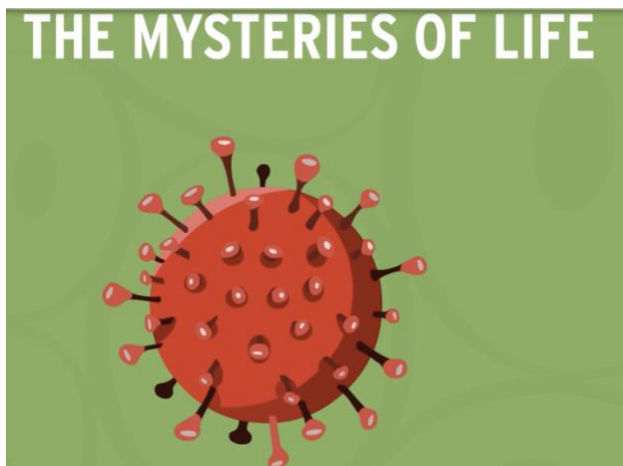
Scene from "Tuck Everlasting"

In the film version of the novel *Tuck Everlasting*, Tuck explains why Winnie should not be afraid of death.



"A Short Story About the Coronavirus for Children"

A short story about the Coronavirus made by an 11-year-old girl and her mother.



This Informational video for children about COVID-19 teaches the basics about viruses and how they spread.