

Little Tiger

Health Crisis Answers for Children



Steve Doherty

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Foreword

The outbreak of a new type of coronavirus, abbreviated COVID-19, is causing many adults to panic and rush to grocery stores to buy food, toilet paper, masks, and hand sanitizer. If adults are anxious over the virus, imagine how our children feel.

Although the immediate health risk in the United States is low for children, we must answer any questions they have and do so calmly and confidently.

When you encounter turbulence on an airplane, the pilot usually comes onto the loudspeaker and says confidently, “Folks, we are experiencing a bit of turbulence, so fasten your seatbelt. We should pass through it shortly.” If the pilot sounds worried, scared, or unsure, you would most likely not feel very confident!

Your children are looking to you for cues on how they should respond to the coronavirus. Imagine what your children are thinking when they see adults panicking over the situation.

My suggestion is to spend time with your children discussing what all the handwashing precautions and restaurants and school closings are trying to prevent. Carrying on confidently with your day is the best approach.

STEVE D. DOHERTY, MHSc



During Taekwondo class, Cade walks up to his instructor and says. “Mr. Steve, I’m worried about this new virus.”



“What’s got you worried, Cade?” Mr. Steve asks.



“My mom says that a lot of people might get sick and die,” Cade replied.



“A lot of people are getting sick, but our country is implementing health practices to stop the spread of the virus,” Mr. Steve says.



“You mean like restaurants and school closings?”
Cade says.



“Yes. When a lot of people come together and are in close contact, it is easier to catch a virus and get sick,” Mr. Steve says.



“Will we all get the virus?” Cade asks.



Gabby is listening and says, “Just wash your hands a lot during the day, Cade. And don’t let anyone sneeze on you.”



“That’s good advice,” Mr. Steve says. “You also don’t want to drink from another person’s cup or water bottle.”



Mr. Steve thinks for a moment then says, “Also, if you are sick and have a fever, you should stay at home, so you won’t make others sick.”



“My mom says she’s worried that we could all get the virus,” Cade states.



“You’re healthy, Cade. Just keep using good cleaning habits like washing your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water.”



“And don’t forget to cough into your elbow,”
Olivia says.



“Also, stay six feet apart from people when you are out in the public so you won’t come into contact with an infected person,” Cole responds.



“And don’t touch your face or nose because that’s where a lot of germs live,” Donovan adds.



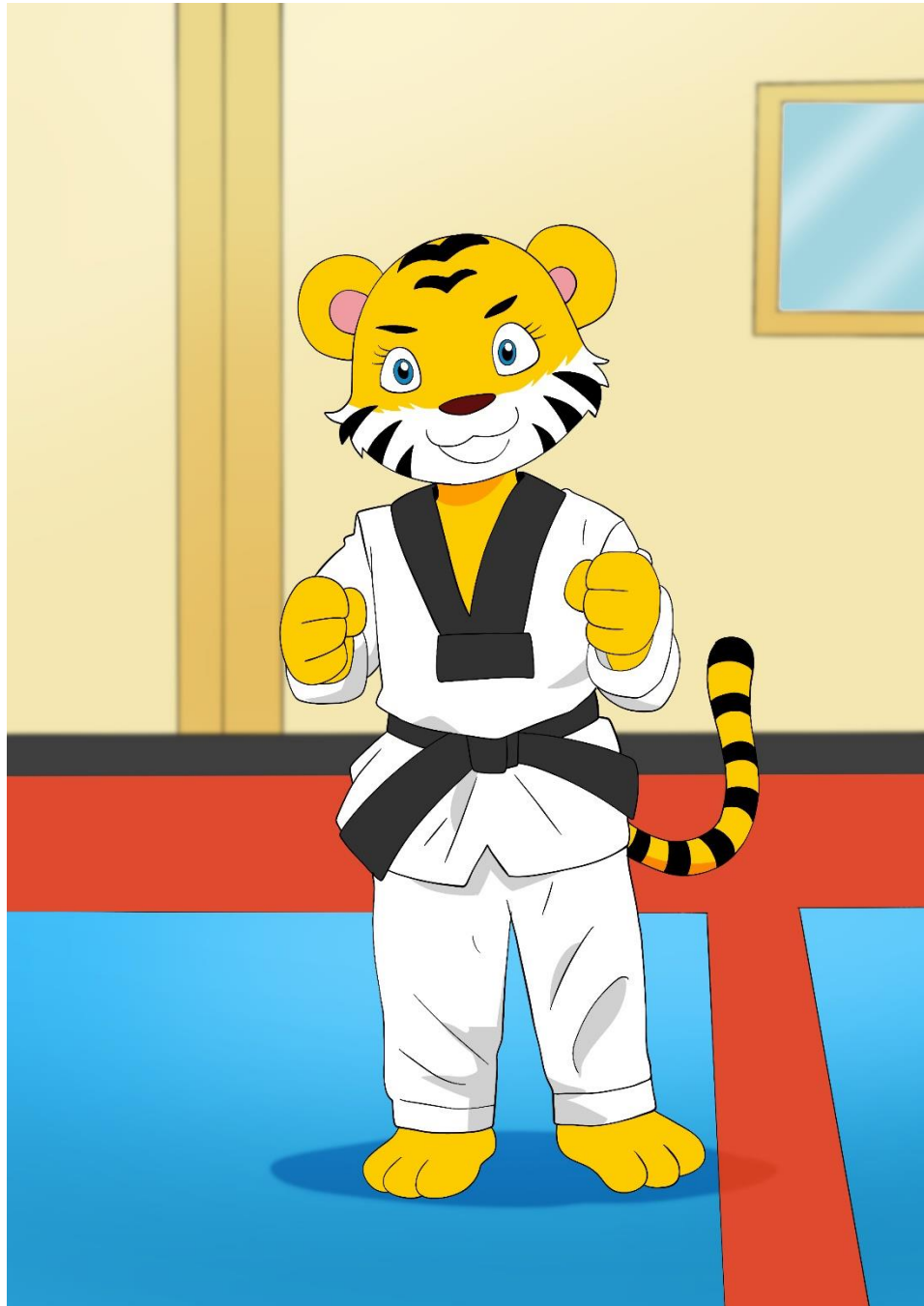
“Okay, I’ll do all those things. How long do you think the schools will stay closed?”



“The president said three weeks, but some newscasters think it will be a lot longer. We may not have to go back until August,” Olivia replies.



“But I need help with math and reading!” Cade exclaims.



“Don’t worry, I can FaceTime with you and help with your reading and math,” Olivia responds. “That way, you won’t fall behind.”



“What happens if they shut down the gym? What am I going to do to keep learning my Taekwondo forms?” Cade asks.



Olivia replies, “Mr. Steve will send out some YouTube videos, and you can practice at home.”



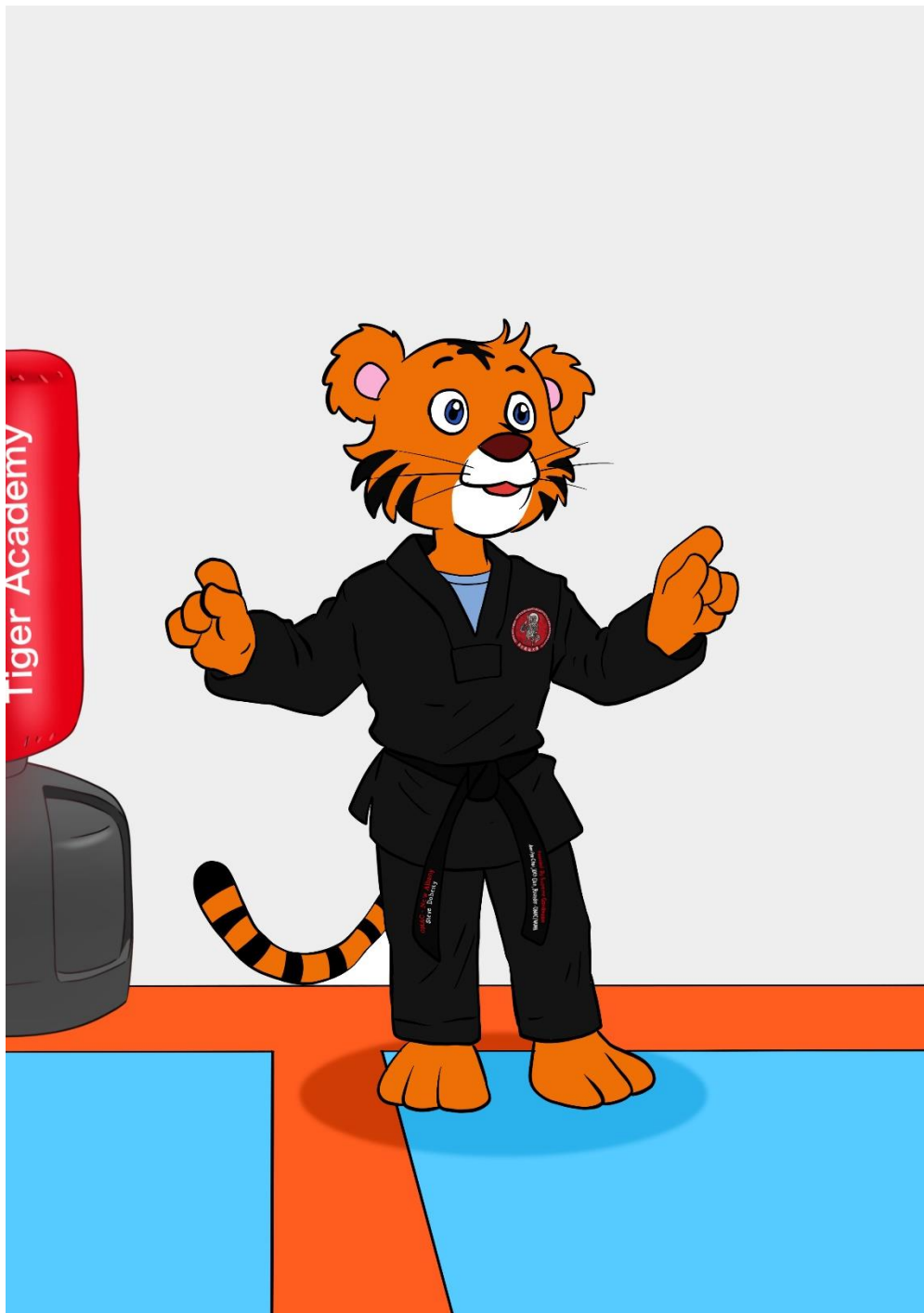
Cade says, “It won’t be as much fun as it is here with all my friends.”



“That’s true, Cade, but if the gym does close, it won’t be closed forever,” Olivia says.



“Olivia is right, Cade. We may be a little inconvenienced, but we will get through this virus crisis,” Mr. Steve says confidently.



It's time for kicking drills, so Mr. Steve stands up and says, "Who wants to practice kicking?"



“I do,” says Cade as he runs to the kicking bag, performs a perfect roundhouse kick, and shouts. “Kiap!”

About the Author

Steve Doherty is a retired United States Air Force officer and the author of four fiction thrillers and two children's books. Steve obtained his undergraduate degree in biology and chemistry from Texas State University, earned a master's degree in health science from Chapman University, and completed post-graduate studies in adult education at The Ohio State University. Steve lives in New Albany, Ohio, where he writes and is a 2nd Dan Instructor in Taekwondo.



What parents need to know to protect their children from coronavirus (COVID-19)

Make sure your children understand that hand-washing isn't optional. You may have to show them how to do it properly: using soap, warm water, and time for 20 seconds. Be sure they wash whenever they come in from outside, after using the bathroom, before eating and, of course, after they cough, sneeze or blow their nose.

For younger kids, it doesn't hurt to remind them that nose-picking is a no-go and that they should cough into their elbows. If you can, clip their fingernails frequently, because they provide a sneaky hiding spot for viruses. Also, hand lotion keeps skin comfy and unbroken, which also helps prevent the spread of infection.

If your school closes, think about using video chat to continue learning opportunities: piano lessons, tutoring, or martial arts with your child's regular teacher. A company called Outschool does free, live online classes for kids. Khan Academy is available for academic subjects.

Lastly, don't panic. Keep it simple and fact-based. For example, don't tell your child they won't get COVID-19; you don't know. The CDC suggests telling children that, from what doctors have seen so far, most kids aren't getting very sick. Most people who've gotten COVID-19 haven't gotten very ill and do recover.

Author's Notes

It's essential to listen to your children about what they are hearing, what they understand, and what questions they have about coronavirus. It is difficult to judge how much bad information our children have been exposed to by the media and by their peers. Find a quiet time to sit down with your children and listen. Being calm and confident will ease their fears.

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