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Social Distancing with Children: Tips and Activities

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Social distancing is an effort to keep people away from each other to prevent the spread of disease. With local governments, school districts, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommending social distancing in the interest of public safety, many families are brought together in ways they did not expect or plan for. The CDC has made recommendations on its website about how to support your children throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. Here are some additional thoughts and activities:

• Keeping a regular schedule is key.

Meal times and bedtime should remain the same. The amount of screen time per day should also not change. In lieu of school and other structured activities, schedule time for learning as part of your routine. Need some free learning materials? Go to the Super Duper Publications Pinterest page, and click on the [Super Duper Worksheets for Speech Therapy board](#). Consider making a visual schedule (as discussed in [Handy Handout #492](#)) to hang up in the house to remind children about the day's agenda and to let them know what to expect. Have your children help create the schedule.



• Be creative with physical activity, and make it part of your day.

Although physical education classes are cancelled, and many densely populated areas do not allow for outdoor play, children can still move their bodies indoors. ["25 Exercise Games and Indoor Activities to Get Kids Moving"](#) by Anna Fader has some great suggestions; here are some additional ideas from a language learning perspective:



o In addition to its physical benefits, yoga is a great way to teach mindfulness and practice direction-following skills. Try to follow along with the many online videos available, or, for a language challenge, try to give directions to your children without a visual aid (e.g. a video or a picture). Super Duper's [Yogarilla®](#) has great, child-friendly directions to help.



o Play Mission Possible! Tape many pieces of yarn across a hallway. Then, have children move through the yarn while trying not to touch it, like the lasers in a spy movie. Have children say what they will do next before each move. Make sure to encourage temporal vocabulary (e.g. first, next, then, finally) and spatial vocabulary (e.g. over, between, next to, through).

• Alone time is hard to come by in a situation like this.

Establish a quiet corner in your home so children have a safe space to go when they are feeling overwhelmed or just need some time apart. The quiet corner should be comfy with lots of pillows, cushions, and blankets. Place quiet activities in the corner, such as crayons and books. Have a discussion with your children about how everyone needs space sometimes, and how they need to respect someone's alone time if he/she is in the quiet corner.





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(cont.)

• **Don't forget to schedule in some fun!**

This is a stressful time for children and adults alike. So here are some exciting, language-filled activities to pass the time and relieve the stress:



o Pretend games are a great way to escape when you are stuck indoors.



—You can go on a Bear Hunt by hiding a teddy bear. Look over “mountains,” under “rocks,” and in “caves.” Have children explain everything they are pretending to see. Bring along some binoculars. Part of the fun is running away when you find the bear!



—Make a garden in your couch! “Plant” toy (or real) vegetables between the couch cushions. Then have fun pulling them out and putting them in a basket. Use new nouns and verbs while narrating your play to provide an excellent language model for your children.



o Make sure to incorporate sensory activities in your play. Hiding small toys in a bin of rice or beans is always a hit. Children should label and describe what they discover. Creating slime is another great sensory and language activity. Children have to follow directions to make their gooey creation.



o At-home science experiments are an engaging and educational way to pass the time! There are plenty of videos online and suggestions in this [“63 Easy Science Experiments for Kids Using Household Stuff”](#) by Karyn Marciniak article to get you started. Unlock children’s language skills by asking them to make predictions, describe reactions, and sequence events.

Time at home with family is all what you make of it. Keep active. Wash your hands. Stay safe. Have fun!



Resources:

“25 Exercise Games and Indoor Activities to Get Kids Moving,” accessed March, 16, 2020 from <https://mommypoppins.com/newyorkcitykids/25-exercise-games-indoor-activities-for-kids>

“63 Easy Science Experiments for Kids Using Household Stuff,” accessed March, 16, 2020 from <https://mommypoppins.com/kids/50-easy-science-experiments-for-kids-fun-educational-activities-using-household-stuff>

“Manage Anxiety and Stress,” accessed March, 16, 2020 from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

“The Family Lockdown Guide: how to emotionally prepare for coronavirus quarantine,” accessed March, 16, 2020 from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/13/the-family-lockdown-guide-how-to-emotionally-prepare-for-coronavirus-quarantine>

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