

May 12, 2020

Parenting during Coronavirus ~ PBS for Parents Article



When I called a friend to tell her how I was failing at enrichment activities for the kids recently — there’s been lots of screen time and maybe some stress eating — she interrupted me and said: You are enough.

I’m grateful for all the guidance on daily learning schedules, at-home science experiments, parent-led learning activities and online tours of the world’s museums. I love all those resources, really. But if I’m honest, they are also seriously stressing me out.

The expectations for being “perfect” during quarantine can add up. The best thing we can do right now is give ourselves what our friends offer us so willingly — the reminder that we are enough. That means you’re allowed to go a full day without a STEM experiment. You get to skip sentences while reading (super long) children’s books. You can hide the finger paint or tell your child that it dried up.

You’re also allowed to go easy on the rules. Have a picnic on the living room floor. Let the toys take over the house. Gather up your little people to snuggle and look at family pictures. Switch up your schedule if you feel like it. (Parent hack from the front lines: Try an afternoon bath-time. Turn down the lights and make it cozy. It’ll be relaxing for you and help the kids drop off into a solid nap afterward.)

And — you’re allowed to feel a little stir-crazy right now. Families weren’t made to live alone, with no social interaction and support. Tired of playing with plastic food? That’s okay! Sick of fights about who got there first, whose turn it is and who pushed who? Of course you are! Tired of picky eating, weird changes to sleep schedules and passionate demands for band-aids? Mmmm, yes. Even great parents get burned out, and it’s okay to acknowledge the hard moments. Parenthood isn’t a sprint to find who’s the best at cutting sandwiches into shapes. Parenting is a marathon where you sometimes hit Mile 12 and are like, why did I do this again?

I’ve never parented through a pandemic before, but I do know that when everything is crazy on the outside, children need love on the inside. The truth is that your child will probably remember little, if anything, about COVID-19 and this extra time at home. But the moments you carve out during the day to connect and cuddle are just what they need right now. The everyday stories, songs and routines you share are exactly the right stuff to help them feel safe, secure and loved. So, drop that load of expectations and take a deep breath. From one friend to another: You are enough.

~ Rebecca Parlakian

[Click here for the complete article and more from PBS Kids for Parents](#)

May 8, 2020

How to create your own "Weatherproof Fun"!



Keeping children active and entertained while we remain mostly indoors is a challenge that many of us can relate to as we adhere to coronavirus restrictions. But staying home doesn't mean you have to listen to continuous cries of "I'm bored". As we continue to stay indoors and work from home while taking care of kids, it's important to find time to do things we love. Just because social distancing is in full effect, it doesn't mean your time indoors can't be fun filled! We have found some great activities you can enjoy while at home.

1. Let the kids raid your closet and put on a fashion show.
2. Break out the Board Games.
3. Cotton Ball Painting - [Click here to learn more](#)
4. Play "Simon Says" or "Follow the Leader."
5. Paper Plate Tic-Tac-Toe - [Click here to learn more](#)
6. Have a Dance Party!
7. Paper Plate Ring Toss - [Click here to learn more](#)
8. Make paper-bag puppets and put on a show.
9. Crayon Push Activity - [Click here to learn more](#)
10. Use hallways for classic games like "Red Light, Green Light" and "Leapfrog."
11. Make a Sensory Bin - [Click here to learn more](#)
12. Click any of the links below for some additional great activity pages!

[BSC COLORING PAGE](#)

[BSC MAZE PUZZLE](#)

[BSC WORD SCRAMBLE](#)

May 7, 2020

How to have a "PlayMazing" time at home!



The BSC PlayMaze is known to provide hours of fun! This custom multi-level play unit entertains children ages 3-12 with 82 different play elements including slides, tunnels and bridges. Children enjoy the Super Spiral Slide or crawling their way through the Alligator Squeeze. We have found some pretty cool ways for you to make your very own "PlayMaze" at home! Click on each item to direct you to the tutorial for some PLAYMAZING FUN!!!!

[MAKE YOUR OWN MAZE](#)

[BUILD YOUR OWN LABYRINTH](#)

[HALLWAY "LASER MAZE"](#)

[GIANT FLOOR MAZE](#)

May 5, 2020

Celebrate Mom this Sunday!



Even though we are social distancing, there are some great ways to celebrate the moms (and grand mom's) in your life on Sunday. Versions of Mother's Day are celebrated worldwide with traditions varying by the country. In Thailand, for example, Mother's Day is always celebrated in August on the birthday of the current queen, Sirikit. Another alternate observance of Mother's Day can be found in Ethiopia, where families gather each fall to sing songs and eat a large feast as part of Antrosht, a multi-day celebration honoring motherhood.

In the United States, Mother's Day is celebrated in May. Families celebrate mom by giving flowers, a card and/or a day off from activities like cooking or other household chores. [Click here to learn about more Mother's Day traditions around the world.](#)

Mothers' Day Fun Fact - *"Did you know? More phone calls are made on Mother's Day than any other day of the year. These holiday chats with Mom often cause phone traffic to spike by as much as 37 percent."*

We found some fun activities for you to enjoy this Mother's Day!

DECORATE HER FRONT DOOR ~ If you're lucky enough to live nearby, sneak over the night before to deck out the doorway with a wreath of spring flowers, greenery, or even one made of photos featuring the grandkids or sweet notes and sentiments. Or make the floral display play double duty as a gift, too. If she's a gardener, for example, fill a watering can and add a note like "Thanks for Showering Us with Love".

GO ON A PICNIC "TOGETHER" ~ Surprise mom with a pre-packed picnic basket—either via porch drop-off or a snack-filled mail delivery—and schedule a time to enjoy your alfresco fixings at the same time (either on speakerphone or video chat).

DANCE CLASS ~ Take a virtual dance class together! Mom has always been your go-to dance partner. Now more than ever, you both need to tap into the joy that dancing brings.

FUN CRAFTS FOR THE KIDS ~ Click any of the below ideas to learn more!

[BUTTERFLY HAND PRINT CARD](#)

[PLASTIC SPOON FLOWERS](#)

[RECYCLED TIN CAN WINDSOCKS](#)

May 1, 2020

STEM in the Arcade? Game On!



Science & math learning opportunities can be found in the most unlikely places! Classic amusement arcade games can be used as analogies for the wider world.

Hover Hockey (Air Hockey)

Hover hockey is that classic game where a hockey puck is suspended over an air cushion so you can hit it around the table at serious speeds in order to score a goal against your opponent. All sorts of physics concepts can be raised in this game: velocity, acceleration, friction, Newtonian forces and more. Apart from looking at motion, the puck could represent light reflecting off a mirror – you can measure the angle of incidence vs the angle of reflection off the table walls and compare that to what occurs to a light beam off a reflective surface.

Skee-ball

Roll the ball up the ramp and try to score the highest points! This game has been around for years and can be very popular for young and old students alike. As per the hover hockey game, you can use the game as an analogy for many of motion concepts however as this game also introduces a launch ramp you can discuss the physics of stunt car jumping. To be able to launch a car off a ramp and have it land safely on another ramp requires careful calculations of car velocity and weight as well as the launch angle of the ramp and subsequently the landing ramp as well.

Ball Drop Game

Push the button at the right time to get the ball drop into the hole with the most points! Sounds easy right? Not quite, those holes are spinning too. You've got a few things going against you: your reaction speed, the time for the mechanics to release the ball after you pressed the button, the parallax error introduced from viewing angle not being directly above the pipe, predicting the rotating platform speed and more. Even chaos theory begins to play a part with this game as slight imperfections on the playing surface can influence the final result. You can identify variables in the game plus the points gained in each game.

Whack 'em! (Whack a Mole)

This game tests the reaction speed and coordination of the player to quickly hit the objects rising up at random intervals. The scores attained are effectively a measurement of students observation skills and hand-eye coordination skills, which makes this a simple but fun way to introduce reaction speeds when discussing the nervous system.

~ Fizzics Education - [Click here for full article](#)

April 30, 2020
Fun in the kitchen!



Branchburg Sports Complex (BSC) concessions offers a variety of snack options that are peanut/tree nut free including popcorn, soft pretzels, ice cream and more! We also offer a variety of hot menu items (also peanut/tree nut free) that are guest favorites; hot dogs, chicken nuggets and more! We have found some great recipes so you can enjoy some of your favorite BSC snack items while at home.

SOFT PRETZELS ~ We found two great recipes! Since yeast is tough to find these days [click here for a "yeast free" recipe](#) and [click here for a great pretzel bite recipe that calls for yeast](#).

ICE CREAM ~ I scream... you scream... we all scream for ICE CREAM! What a cool way to make ice cream and with only 5 ingredients. [Click here to learn how to make ice cream in a bag!](#)

CHICKEN NUGGETS ~ These are a crowd favorite at BSC! Our campers and guests love them with a side of ketchup or honey mustard. We found two great recipes that you can try at home. Click on the link to be directed to the recipe. 1) [These "Toddler Perfect" Chicken Nuggets look amazing and with fun shapes!](#) 2) [We also found a great recipe that offers a copycat version to the "Chick-fil-A nugget](#). Complete with a recipe for honey mustard sauce!

HOT DOGS ~ Here is a bit of "hot dog humor". 1) Why did the dog stay in the shade at summer camp?... It did not want to be a hot dog. 2) What did the Mama Hot Dog say to the little frankfurter?... Ketch-up! 3) Where do smart hot dogs go?... On the honor role! 1) [Click here for a recipe to make Hot Dog Nuggets](#). 2) [Click here to learn how to make Mac/Cheese Hot Dogs](#).

April 29, 2020

Favorite camp activities you can enjoy at home!



A day of camp at Branchburg Sports Complex (BSC) is always full of fun activities from the minute children walk in the door. We have found a few great ways to enjoy some of our campers favorite activities at home. Check out this fun-filled list!

SCAVENGER HUNT ~ Our campers always enjoy teaming up with friends and participating in the BSC Scavenger Hunt. This activity was newly added last summer and a huge hit! We found this Alphabet Scavenger Hunt idea that is a perfect activity to do at home indoors. All you need is: Sticky Notes, Markers and objects from around the house. Ask anyone participating to join the fun in finding objects around the house that begin with each letter of the alphabet.

PAPER AIRPLANES ~ Who doesn't love making a paper airplane and seeing how far it will fly! Our campers truly enjoyed designing, naming and creating their very own paper airplanes. Taking turns flying them down the field and seeing who's went the furthest was tons of fun! [Click here to visit an amazing tutorial that will show you how to fold 4 DIFFERENT TYPES OF AIRPLANES!](#) How cool is that! Want to take it a step further? [Click here to check out this amazing tutorial on how to make a "Paper Plane Launcher"!](#)

TIE DYE SHIRTS ~ We all had a blast making our own Tie-Dye t-shirts! Each camper enjoyed being creative making their own personalized shirt with the help of our camp staff. Here are some fun things you can Tie-Dye while at home in addition to making a t-shirt.

HEADBANDS ~ Tie dye headbands are easy to make from t-shirts! You will need a white t-shirt or any light colored shirt, a basic tie-dye kit or you can use tie dye separately, make sure you have rubber bands, gloves, and plastic wrap (these supplies are generally included in a kit).

[Click here for Instructions on how to make a Braided Headband](#)

[Click here for Instructions on how to make a Knotted Headband](#)

[Click here for Instructions on how to make a Twisted Headband](#)

Here are a few more cool tutorials on things you can make with tie-dye! Click on each item to direct you to the tutorial for some TIE-DYE FUN!!!!

[PILLOW CASES](#)

[BEACH TOWELS](#)

[SHOES](#)

April 28, 2020

Keeping kids active through creative sports and activities



Branchburg Sports Complex (BSC) proudly offers a variety of sports programs and classes for children ages 18 months to 12 years. During the coronavirus outbreak families are finding fun and creative ways to keep kids moving. We know that being home for a long time can be very stressful and frustrating for you and your family. A little physical activity can go a long way in helping everyone's physical and mental well-being.

Getting outside seeing a bit of nature and getting fresh air is great for improving your mental state. If you have kids, take a family walk while ensuring social distancing guidelines. Make it a game – run for 30 seconds, walk for 30, and set a place or landmark in the distance to race to. Go for a bike ride and try to spot what neighbors have put in their windows, like teddy bears, hearts, and rainbows. If the weather doesn't cooperate, take the activity inside.

Being indoors, doesn't mean you have to sit still. There are lots of ways to stay active. Families can create a range of indoor activities using things you may already have at home. Take a look at the list below of some fun activities you and your family can enjoy while at home during this difficult time.

PAPER PLATE TENNIS ~ Who needs to get rackets and go to a court to play tennis when you can make an inside version and play in your living room? Here is a simple way you can make a paper plate tennis game with paper plates and balloons. You will need craft sticks and duct or masking tape, along with your paper plates. Feel free to color and/or paint your plates aka rackets! Simply tape the stick to the back of your plate and you are ready to play. The secret to this game is to under fill your balloon! It makes the balloons easier to direct with each touch of the paper plate paddles. Hours of Fun! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4QaBt3dKkv4>

** Fun Fact - Instead of traditional "tennis" you can play keep away or try to keep the balloon balanced on your paddle while your pals try to knock it off.

FLY SWATTER HOCKEY ~ This game is a lot of fun to play! Make sure you have plenty of beach balls and/or ping pong balls, and a fly swatter for each player. The object of the game is to hit the ping pong ball into the opposing team's goal to score a point. Most points after 3 minutes wins.

Game Rules - Players cannot touch the ball with their hands at all. They can hit it with their fly swatter, only. They must use their fly swatter like a hockey stick.. on the ground. If a player hits another player with his or her fly swatter, they get 1 minute in the penalty box. Have fun and be safe!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60c1B2hCMyw>

TABLE PING PONG ~ Who doesn't love a game of Ping Pong! Players hit a lightweight ball back and forth across a net using small rackets. Players must allow a ball played toward them to bounce one time on their side of the table, and must return it so that it bounces on the opposite side at least once. A point is scored when a player fails to return the ball. If a player misses the ball after it bounces once on his or her side, the other player gets a point. A player can lose a point if they hit the ball out of bounds, off of the table or into the net. The player who first scores 11 points wins the game.

Fun Facts about Ping Pong:

In 1993, Jackie Bellinger and Lisa Lomas set a world record by hitting 173 balls back and forth in 60 seconds.

Ping Pong was once banned in the former Soviet Union from 1930 to 1950 because the sport was believed to be harmful to the eyes.

The world's top ping pong players can smash the ball at speeds of more than 100 miles per hour!

Create your own ping pong game with some household items; Cereal Boxes, Plastic Cups, Books and more! Check out this great video showing everyday items in action, Have fun and be safe!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRenrd1gT5o>.