

# FAMILY ACTIVITIES

PACKET 10





# THOUGHT of the WEEK



From Holly Delgado, Early Childhood Specialist at HighScope Educational Research Foundation

## Resilience

We have been cooped up for ten weeks. That's bound to grate on anyone's nerves!

In my home, we have noticed much shorter fuses, an unwillingness to engage with new academic tasks, and a lack of initiative to expend pent-up energy in productive ways. The stress of only interacting with our nuclear family--the five of us who live under one roof--the limited time spent outside the four walls of our house, and the dwindling excitement of playing with the same toys day after day is causing stress levels to rise not only in my three young children, but also in my husband and me.

Indeed, COVID-19 has caused increased stress among families around the nation. Questions such as, "I am not trained in teaching, how do I do this?" pale in comparison to "How will we pay our bills when I am not receiving a paycheck?", "How do I prevent my children and family from getting sick?", or, "How do I grieve the loss of a loved one alone?" Some of us are nearly ten weeks into mandated stay-at-home orders; for those asking themselves the questions above, the weight of COVID-19 is exhausting.

Anxiety during this time is normal. Our ability to bounce back from it, our resilience, is what determines how we come out on the other side of quarantine.

I like to think about resilience as a rubber band; you can stretch it to its limits and it will still maintain its shape. Overtime, however, with added stress and pressure, it loses some of its elasticity. It might still bounce back, but the wear and tear doesn't go away. Eventually, it might break.

Like rubber bands, as humans, we are all different in regards to our strength. We expand and retract at different times. On occasion, we may snap. However, unlike broken rubber bands, we can get back up and put ourselves back together. And resilience takes that wear and tear and makes us stronger going forward.

Inevitably, COVID-19 is causing our children to experience stress, that wear and tear, right now. Situations and hardships that may seem small or trivial to us as adults may be viewed as much larger and more intense from the perspective of a child. Although we cannot protect our children from every obstacle they will face or emotion they will experience, we can implement strategies that help them to build their resilience.

1. Strengthen the emotional bond between you and your child(ren). Spend a few minutes throughout the day focused on them. Put aside adult tasks and other interruptions, such as your cell phone, to join them in play. Read books together. Have conversations about their interests. Snuggle. The safety and security you provide them will serve as a base from which they can explore and grow as individuals.
2. Acknowledge their emotions and discuss them together. Stop hurtful behaviors, but de-escalate tense situations by using simple descriptive words that reflect the intensity of your child's emotions. Interpret children's body language for them. Model appropriate coping strategies. Helping your children learn to label and manage their own emotions will increase their ability to cope with frustration and regulate their physical and emotional response when angry.
3. Problem solve together. Ask children for ideas to solve problems. Talk through multiple solutions and decide on one together. Try out ideas even if they may not work and reflect on the process. This helps children recognize they can make their own decisions, gain confidence in their abilities, and remain persistent when challenges arise.
4. Encourage children to try new things. Challenge children to participate in activities that may be just outside of their comfort zone. Watch their responses carefully. Limit anxiety by acknowledging effort and providing just enough assistance to achieve success. This will help children build confidence and initiative.
5. Spend time being physically active. Lower stress by being outdoors. Exercise. Take walks in nature. Let children play freely, climb, and explore. Healthy, engaged minds are more resilient minds.

### References:

Hurley, K. Resilience in Children: Strategies to Strengthen Your Kids.

[www.psycom.net/build-resilience-children](http://www.psycom.net/build-resilience-children)

[www.centerforresilientchildren.org/preschool/about-resilience/](http://www.centerforresilientchildren.org/preschool/about-resilience/)

# INFANTS



## Art, Music and Movement: **Tin foil painting**

Spread a large piece of tin foil over a paint-proof area, like a highchair tray or kitchen floor. For this activity, we recommend using non-toxic craft paint. You can also make your own edible paint using the following ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons sugar.
- 1/3 cup cornstarch.
- 2 cups water.
- Food coloring

Scoop a small blob of finger paint onto the surface. Let your baby slide their fingers around the tin foil to explore the paint on a new texture! When the painting is dry, the tin foil also makes a fun, open-ended toy for your baby to explore sounds and movement.

Children experience:

- Finger painting on tin foil
- Texture and color exploration



## Communication, Language, and Literacy: **Signing “more”**

Children experience:

- Simple sign language
- Empowerment to ask for what they want
- Hand gesture to communicate

To make the ASL sign for “more” hold up both hands in front of you, and on each hand individually, bring all five fingers together at the tip -- as if you were to make a duck with each hand. Then tap both hands together at the tips of the fingers of the opposite hand.

more



Meal time is a great time to introduce this to sign to your baby. For example, as they are sitting in their highchair, hand them one piece of food (especially one they enjoy) from a bowl. After they eat the piece of food, as they are reaching or making sounds that you know mean they would like some more, show them this sign on your hands and ask them, “You want more?” and then hand them the next piece. It may take several demonstrations of this symbol for them to learn. This is a great way to empower your baby to communicate their needs!



## Early Math and Discovery: **Knock it down!**

Knocking things down, including structures and objects, is vital to your baby’s development! This is how they begin to learn cause and effect and object permanence. Try sitting with your infant on the floor, and build a small tower out of blocks or stacking cups. Small boxes are also great for open-ended building activities. Start to stack up some of these objects to make a “tower” and let your baby knock them down! Then after they knock the structure down, you can rebuild the tower for them to continue to explore this phenomenon.

Children experience:

- Knocking over and stacking
- Early exploration of gravity

# INFANTS



## *Myself and Others: Dance, dance!*

### Children experience:

- Dancing with you to different music!
- Discovery of themselves and closeness with you

Play some music that you like to dance to, and include your baby! You can start by holding them and gently dancing back and forth, or when they are lying on the floor you can hold their fingers and move rhythmically in an upper body dance. If your baby is standing, and you can face them while holding their hands, and on your hands and knees, dance mirroring them while they bounce along with you. Try out different songs and see how your baby reacts! This is such a fun way to engage with your baby, and see what type of music they enjoy moving to the most.



## *Physical Development and Healthy Habits: Pom-pom whisk*

A kitchen whisk is a wonderful tool for facilitating fine-motor development. For this activity, stuff a kitchen whisk full of colorful pom-pom balls. Your baby may be able to hold it with one hand or lay it on the floor or their lap. Watch as they try to pull the pom-poms out of the whisk. This is great for developing their pincer grasp and strengthening their finger muscles!

### Children experience:

- Pinching pom-poms out of a bendable whisk
- Practicing pincer grasp
- Fine-motor activity

# TODDLERS



## *Art, Music and Movement:* **Swirling scarves**

Lead your child in an activity of dancing and movement with colorful, translucent scarves. Each of you can start by holding one scarf. Turn on some music that your child enjoys and start by holding the scarf at waist level. Begin to move the scarf in a wave to the beat of the music. The second position is holding the scarf with arms outstretched directly in front of you. Move the scarf in a wavy motion, again to the beat of the music, and for the last position, hold the scarf up overhead. Then challenge your toddler to make up the next movements. You can say, "Your turn! What should we do next?" and see what movement they choose. This is a great way to explore movement and colors while having fun together!

### Children experience:

- Creative expression
- Scarf movement
- Open-ended toys
- Colors



## *Communication, Language, and Literacy:* **Letter sensory bin**

### Children experience:

- Exploring letters
- Matching
- Built-in sensory play

### Materials:

- Alphabet puzzle
- Sand or other sensory material
- Large bin or storage container

Fill a large plastic storage container with play sand as the base of the sensory material. Take the alphabet puzzle letters from the board, and hide the letters in the sand. Place the empty board next to the sensory bin. You can also incorporate hand-held shovels or scoops or even paint brushes into this activity to provide your toddler with some utensils for uncovering the letters. Then let your toddler play! See if they are able to uncover any letters and place them in the corresponding place on the puzzle board. If not, that is ok, this is a great way to introduce letters and can also be a soothing activity as they dig through the sand.



## *Early Math and Discovery:* **Tube tapin' wall**

For this activity you will need some different sized tubes, like paper towel and toilet paper tubes, some masking tape, and some pom-pom balls or other small objects that can fit easily in the tubes without becoming stuck. Find a space on a wall at home where your toddler will easily be able to reach. Tape the tubes in a configuration in which your child will be able to drop the pom-pom balls into the top of the tubes, and watch them roll down. For example, on one side of the space, you can take a tube horizontally, and place another tube at the bottom of this tube, but in a vertical position.

### Children experience:

- Exploring gravity
- Movement of objects falling downward from tube to tube

This is a great activity to keep on the wall to allow for recurring exploration! If you have stacking cups or bowls, keep them nearby for your toddler to explore with. Try placing them below the tubes to catch the pom-pom balls!

# TODDLERS



## *Myself and Others:* **Make a face!**

### Children experience:

- Learning about emotions
- Book reading
- Reflecting emotions they notice in stories

As you are reading books with your toddler, stop to notice different character emotions. Pause, and ask your toddler “How are they feeling?” and point to the expression on the character’s face in the book. Then when your toddler responds, you can repeat back to them what they notice. “Oh you think she looks angry?” and prompt them to demonstrate the emotion to you: “Can you show me what ‘angry’ looks like?” You can also continue the learning moment by asking them, “What are some things that make you feel angry?” and ask, “What do you do when you feel angry?”



## *Physical Development and Healthy Habits:* **Tall, tall tower**

On a wall in an area where your toddler can build with blocks or duplo, stick some tape to the wall at different heights. One piece of tape could be six inches in length, stuck to the wall vertically, and the next could be 12 inches tall, for example. Place a bin filled with large Legos, Duplos, or small blocks near the tape. Then ask your toddler “Can you build your tower this tall?” while pointing to the top of the tape on the wall. This is a great way to challenge your toddler in their building! Duplos or Legos are an especially awesome activity for finger grip, dexterity, and the building of small motor muscles in fingers.

### Children experience:

- Seeing how high they can build a block tower!
- Working to make their tower as tall as the tape

# PRESCHOOL



## *Art, Music and Movement:* **Sounds of Nature**

This is a great activity for outside, or you can gather materials outside and bring them into your home. Tell your child that natural materials can be used as “instruments” because they make interesting sounds. Demonstrate, for example, by crushing leaves between your hands or hitting a small stone on a larger rock.

Talk with your child about the sound qualities they hear. Distribute the materials and say something like “I wonder how you will use the things in your baskets to make sounds like instruments.”

Encourage your child to experiment with a variety of natural materials. Say things like “I wonder what different sounds you can make with a stick” or “What do you see that might make a similar (or a different) sound?” Talk about how the sounds remind them of other musical sounds your child is familiar with – for example, you might say, “The rustling grasses remind me of when we rubbed the whisk broom on the cymbals.”

You can extend learning by encouraging your to explore more variations by altering the tempo or pitch of the sound (e.g., smaller stones produce a higher pitch than larger ones). Once they’re comfortable with the “instruments”, see if they want to play along to a song! If they’re enjoying it, you may want to capture a video to share with your family and friends.

### Children experience:

- Creating and appreciating music
- Exploring the natural and physical world



## *Communication, Language, and Literacy:* **Story Movements**

### Children experience:

- Listening to stories and reacting to the narrative
- Making up movements to go with prompts
- Adding to a story

Explain to your child that you are going to tell a story and they are going to act it out as you tell it. Begin a story that involves moving in different ways, such as creeping through a forest, rolling in the sand, or swimming in the ocean. For example, you might begin, “Sara and Sayed went with their family on a trip to the beach. First, they set down their blankets. (Pause for your child to act this out.) Then, Sara and Sayed ran down the sand to the ocean. (Pause.) But – ouch! The sand was hot on the bottoms of their feet because the sun was shining on it.” (Pause.)

Continue to make up the story (for example, describing diving in the water, splashing, swimming away from a shark), pausing often for your child to invent the accompanying movements. Ask them to contribute their ideas to the story (“We’re running away from a crocodile!”) and move to their ideas.

Also, encourage them to label (name) and describe their movements, and to watch you and imitate you, or any others who are participating in the activity. Reciprocate by asking for directions so you can copy their movements: “Tell me how to move my arms and legs like yours.”

# PRESCHOOL

You can extend learning by presenting your child with additional challenges (e.g., saying something like “Suppose the waves suddenly got really high — how would you move then?”) and encouraging them to add their own challenging elements to the story.

You may find that your child wants to interject movements into other stories for the rest of the day!



## *Math, Science, and Technology:* **Bicycle Wash**

Learning can happen any time—even when doing chores! Tell your child that you are going to wash something outside. It could be a car, a bike, some gardening tools, something from the house that needs to be cleaned, or a dog! Note to your child that because things can get dirty, they need to be washed all over, from the top to the bottom, on the sides, and inside and outside.

Talk about what you will need to do the washing, and carry these materials outside together. Make sure to acknowledge your child’s suggestions, and problem solve with them should the need arise (“It doesn’t look like we have enough paper towels. What could we use instead?” Encourage them to select materials (e.g., a bucket and sponge) and to decide who will wash what. Your child may choose to work alone on one part of the cleaning, or want to work with you side by side. Both are OK!

### Children experience:

- Helping with chores
- Describing size, quantity, and process
- Making predictions
- Helping with household chores

As you work, talk about what you and your child are doing. Use spatial words related to position, direction, and distance in your descriptions, for example:

- I am washing the top of the handle bars, and you are washing the front wheel.
- Yes, it’s far to carry the pail from the faucet to the bike.
- The hose reaches all the way to the end of the driveway.

You can also discuss quantities. Talk about how much water (or how many sponges, towels, etc.) they think they will need to wash items of different sizes. Problem-solve about how they can carry supplies that weigh more or less.

Ask the child to predict how long they think it will take them to wash items of various sizes or with a different number of surfaces. Encourage them to predict how long it will take for things to dry depending on the item’s size, amount of sunlight or shade, and degree of wetness.

Comment on changes in items as a result of the children’s washing (e.g., items are less dirty or dull, metal surfaces are shinier).

When you’re all done, do a final inspection of the washed items, and with your child compare how the items looked before washing and after washing. Make sure to acknowledge their participation, and model acknowledging the work of other family members throughout the rest of the day.

# PRESCHOOL



## *Myself and Others:* **How Many Did You See?**

### Children experience:

- Observing the world around them
- Counting and analyzing data
- Making comparisons

Tell your child that you will be taking a walk around the neighborhood, school grounds, or school building. Ask what you might see on the walk. Make comments such as, “I wonder if we will see any trucks.” or “I wonder how many doors we’ll see in the hallway.” Using drawings or words, write in the first column of a chart on a piece of paper several of the things the children suggest. Tell your child that you will keep track of each thing they find on the list by making a tally mark next to it.

Ask your child to choose one or two pictures of things they want to look for on the walk. Carry the chart and something to write with to record their sightings. If your child is comfortable, they can have their own sheet too! Help them make a two-column chart of the things they will look for.

As you walk, make a tally mark on the chart each time your child finds an item on the list. And encourage them to make a mark each time they find an item they are looking for. Stop periodically and count the number of tally marks under each item. Note which items have the same number of tally marks and which items have more or fewer tally marks.

Add other items to the chart if your child requests them (e.g., Hey, we forgot about drains. Write that I saw two of them!).

When you return to the home, talk about what you saw on your walk. Encourage your child to estimate or count the number of tally marks in each column and compare how many of each item you saw.



## *Physical Development and Healthy Habits:* **Glued to the Floor**

Tell your child that they are going to pretend part of their body is “glued to the floor” and they have to figure out how to move the rest of their body with that part fixed in place. Model this for them by bending or crouching and putting your hands on the floor. Then move – for example, stretch one leg to the side and describe what you are doing: “I can’t move my hands, so I’m stretching my leg.” Tell the children to glue their hands to the floor; then say something like “I wonder how you will move another part of your body.”

### Children experience:

- Gross motor skills
- Developing body awareness

Comment on which body parts your child moves and how they move them; for example, you might say, “You are shaking her head” or “Have you tried twisting your feet?” Ask your child to suggest another body part to glue to the floor. Encourage them to share ideas and imitate you.

Extend learning by suggesting your child think of two body parts to glue to the floor at the same time and seeing how many different ways they can still move.



# MORE RESOURCES



## Do Some Redecorating

Ikea Russia has released fun schematics for how to build some super fun pillow forts with furniture and supplies you have laying around the house. This can be a great way to shake up your daily routine and get creative:

[www.cnn.com/2020/05/15/world/ikea-russia-blanket-forts-trnd/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2020/05/15/world/ikea-russia-blanket-forts-trnd/index.html)



## Listen to Stories for Adults and Kids

The Moth Radio Hour is producing a weekly podcast on Fridays with stories that are family-friendly, with discussion questions at the end so you can engage with your child about what you both heard. Learn more here:

<https://themoth.org/podcast/all-together-now-fridays-annalise-raziq-wilson-portoreal>



## Virtually Visit a National Park

You can take your whole family to a virtual visit to one of our nation's national parks and learn about the wonders of these wondrous places:

[www.nationalparks.org/connect/blog/take-virtual-visit-national-park](http://www.nationalparks.org/connect/blog/take-virtual-visit-national-park)



## Send Some Letters

A fun way to help children with communication is to build an in-house mailbox, so that family members can write each other nice notes, send pictures, and generally learn about how mail works:

<https://simplynecessaryinc.wordpress.com/2017/01/14/envelope-mailboxes-encourage-writing-and-communication-in-the-home/>