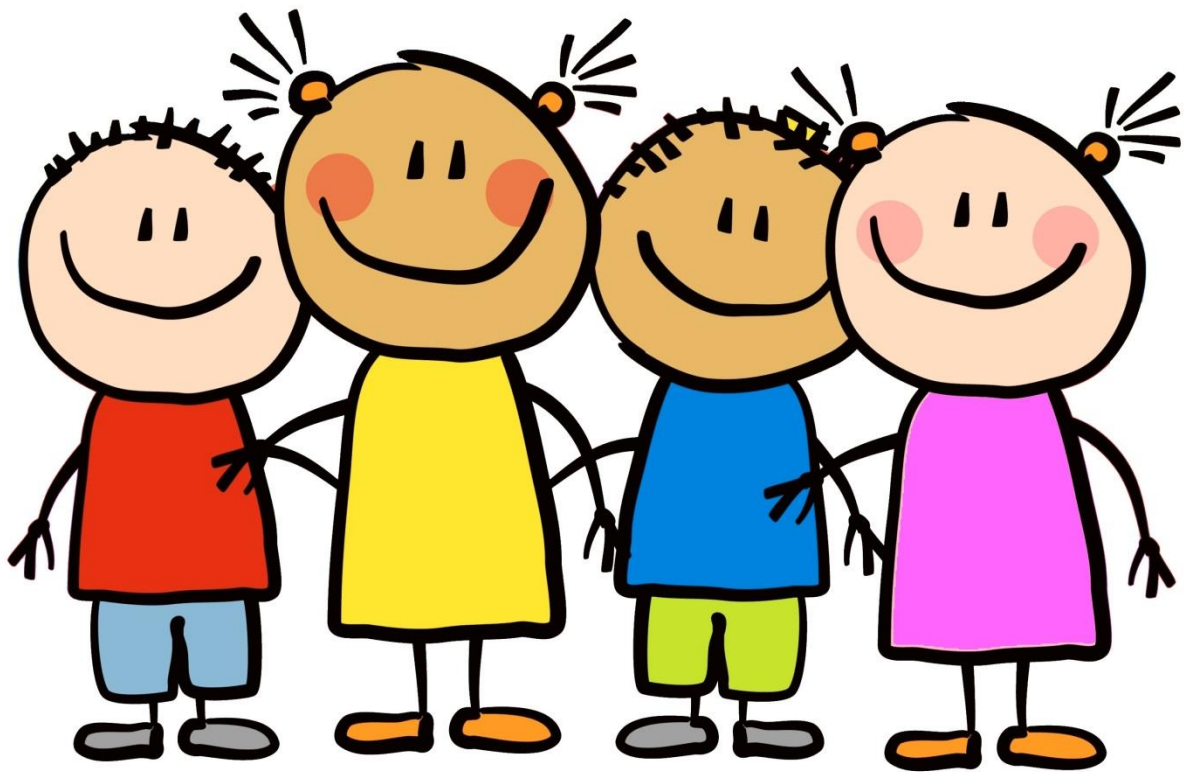


Activity Ideas for Primary School Aged Children



The country is going through a difficult time because of the recent COVID-19 Coronavirus outbreak and this is impacting on all of us. We recognise that, as parents, you may be experiencing pressure to think of ways to occupy your child's mind away from uncertainty and worry. This document is full of different activities that can help with your child's mental health, which families can do at home! *If you are self-isolating please ensure you follow the guidance in regard to you and your family.*



Creative Activities

During this time of uncertainty, as well as focusing on their school work, children need an outlet for stress and anxiety. You might be inclined to create a minute by minute schedule for your kids and you might have high hopes of hours of learning. However, what kids need right now is to feel comforted and loved. To feel like it's all going to be ok. We encourage you to engage in activities which are fun and engaging for your child. Many of you will have already been creative and found activities to do with your children, which are fun and engaging. For those of you who feel less creative, below are a number of activities which as well as being fun can help your child to regulate their emotions, and in turn improve their overall wellbeing.

Tactile Sensory Ball

Anxiety can cause unpleasant physical symptoms, i.e. tummy ache, dry mouth, heart beating faster, and this '**Tactile Sensory Ball**' can aid tension and stiffness, as you and your child squeeze and release the ball – as well as it being fun at the same time! They also help your child to focus on something, taking their mind off of the worry.

These balls promote independence as children can use them to self-regulate when stressed or anxious, as squeezing or squishing the ball can promote a sense of calm. This enables longer periods of concentration. Tactile sensory balls are a useful fidget toy for children with a short or fleeting attention span.

These balls can support with strengthening a child's grip when holding tools such as a pencil/ pen. The squeezing motion (clenching and relaxing the hand muscles) increases blood flow to the hands and supports muscle growth.

You will need:

- 3 Balloons
- Flour
- Funnel

Method:

- Blow up your first balloon and let it hold air for a minute. This will stretch the balloon to allow for a good-sized ball to be made.
- Attach the funnel to the balloon
- Fill with flour.



Texture Balloons



- Tie the balloon end tightly and cut close to the knot.
- Cut the ends off the other two balloons.
- Place the filled ball knotted end first into the other balloon.
- Place the balloon ball into the third balloon.
- Start squeezing

You can try this with other items: rice, jelly, pompoms, salt, play dough, sand and corn flour.

IMPORTANT! Children must be supervised when playing with these toys.

Sensory Bottles

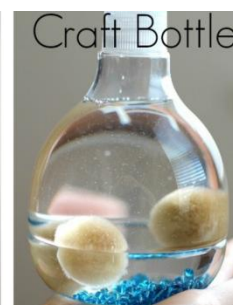
Sensory bottles are sometimes called ‘calm down bottles’. When you watch the oil move slowly through the water inside the bottle, this can calm their breathing, helps them to regulate and enables them to focus on the present moment. Some children can become stressed by sensory play, however, sensory bottles are a “safe” choice as they are not messy and allow children to make connections and discoveries as they make sense of their world around them.

Sensory bottles can also support skills in:

- Math’s: Counting, matching, addition, shapes, numbers, problem solving.
- Language: learning new vocabulary, e.g. descriptive words, following instructions, increasing length of concentration.
- Social skills: communicating with others, sharing enjoyment with others.
- Science: Sorting, predictions, observing, sink or float (heavy or light).
- Sensory processing: exploring sound, sight proprioceptive input, vestibular movement.

You will need:

- Water
- Any liquid vegetable oil or baby oil
- A plastic bottle
- A funnel
- Food colouring (1 colour)
- Superglue



Method:

- Pour 1/3 of your bottle with water
- Add 5 to 10 drops of your one food colouring • Fill the rest of the bottle with oil.
- Super glue the bottle lid inside and around the rim of the bottle for safety
- Leave the super glue to dry
- Once dry, make sure the lid cannot be opened for your child’s safety

- Get to shaking!!

Make the ocean

- Following the instructions above, use blue food colouring in the water.
- Put some shells in the bottle.
- Super glue the bottle lid inside and around the rim of the bottle for safety & let it dry.

Make a rainbow

- Get coloured plant water beads (Please keep out of the reach of children).
- Let them soak in water until full.
- Put the swollen water beads in a bottle- don't fill the beads to the top so they can move when the bottle is turned upside down.
- Fill the bottle with baby oil (it is clear) • Super glue the bottle lid and around the rim of the bottle for safety. Let it dry.

Calming glitter bottle

- Fill 1/3 of the bottle with warm water
- Add your art items- glitter, sequins, beads, gems...whatever you want to put
- Fill the rest of the bottle with clear hand soap. Fill all the way to the top as it works best with no air. And minimal bubbles
- Super glue the bottle lid inside and around the rim of the bottle for safety.
- Let it dry



IMPORTANT! Children must be supervised when playing with these toys.

Chalk Drawings

Sometimes, articulating emotions can be really difficult for children, especially at a time of high anxiety. Drawing is an excellent way for children to express themselves in an alternative way. It can calm the nervous system because when we are focused on creating something magical, our attention shifts from any worries we might have. Chalk drawings on pavements can be really fun for children and are very popular amongst creative individuals. There are various different drawings you can create with chalks:

- Freestyle
- Letters and numbers
- Shapes
- Whatever the interests are, e.g. superhero dinosaurs, vehicles, flowers
- Mark out a road or a car park or train station and track or whatever their interests are.
- Bring small world play items out (people, transport, animals) to play with the drawings.

Remember, it is about the process! It doesn't matter if your child draws something which doesn't look real or make sense, as long as they are focusing on the drawing and enjoying it, that's the most important part!

You will need:

- Different coloured chalks



Painting

Alike to chalk drawing, painting can help your children communicate their emotions or feelings. Through the use of different colours, they can express themselves without the use of words. Painting allows children an educational opportunity that is also fun and exciting.

Different Ideas:

- Freestyle painting (paint a bear hunt, or other books or pirates etc.)
 - Mixing glitter in with paint
 - Finger, hand and feet painting
 - Painting cardboard boxes and making them in to anything you want (a rocket, house, boat, train, car etc.)
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You will need some of the below things depending on which activity you choose:

- A roll of lining paper
- Paint, glitter
- Cardboard boxes, cereal boxes, empty tissue rolls

Leaf Rubbings

Being in nature can reduce anger, fear and stress and increases happier feelings! Whether you have a garden, a small outside space or on your daily walk, you can make colourful crayon rubbings of different kinds of leaves you find, to come up with a beautiful nature-inspired picture.

You will need:

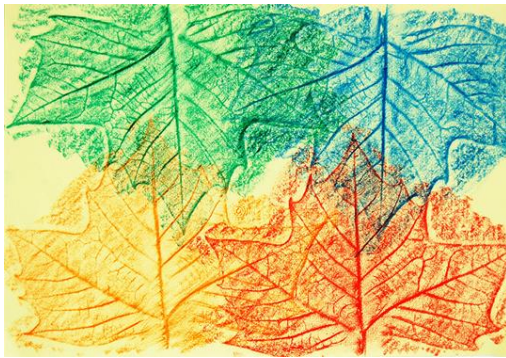
- Real leaves
- Paper (preferably thin or lightweight)
- Crayons or oil pastels



Method:

- Collect leaves of various shapes and sizes. You can use fresh leaves or dried fallen ones.
- Place a leaf with its bottom side facing up.
- Put a sheet of paper, preferably thin or lightweight, over the leaf.
- Rub the side of a crayon or an oil pastel gently on the area over the leaf. As you do this, you'll see the colored areas start to take the shape of the leaf.
- Continue until you've rubbed over the entire leaf.
- Remove the leaf from under the paper. This completes the basic steps for making a leaf rubbing.
- Make more leaf rubbings using other colors and different leaf shapes.

- Overlap the leaf rubbings to create a stunning picture!



Coloured Flour Paste

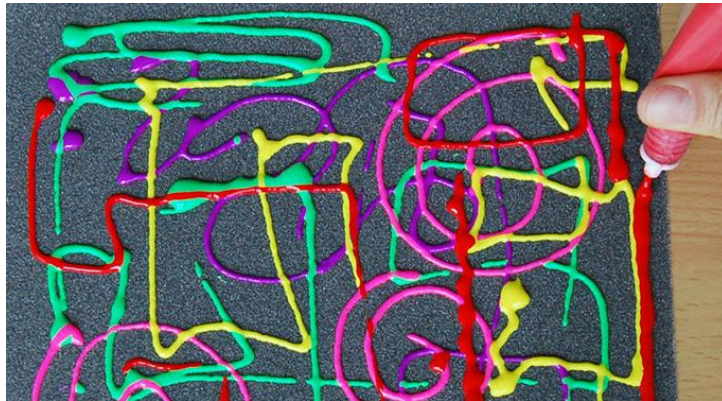
Make amazing and creative projects with homemade paint. Load the coloured paste into squeeze bottles to use them for your art activities and craft projects.

You will need:

- Plain flour
 - Salt
 - Water
 - Poster paint
 - Spoons
 - Measuring cups
 - Mixing bowls or containers or paper cups
 - Squeeze bottles (optional)
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Method:

- In a bowl or large container, measure out 1 cup plain flour, 1 cup salt and 1 cup water.
- Mix the ingredients together until they form a paste that is smooth and free of lumps. You can adjust the consistency of the paste. If you find it too runny, add some more flour or if it's too thick, add a bit more water.
- Divide the mixture into the desired number of colour batches.
- Add a small dollop of poster paint to each batch.
- Mix well until the paste is evenly-colored. Add more paint if you want to achieve a more intense hue.
- Make several colours of paste.
- Load the coloured paste into squeeze bottles (e.g. empty glue bottles). Use a funnel if the bottle's opening is small. You can also use paper cups instead.



Junk Modeling

Collect or go through your recycling and use PVA glue to do junk modeling! A child's imagination can run wild and they can create anything they want (house or train station/airport out of a box, making square windows and making a door/furniture for inside).

You will need:

- Recyclable material
- Paint
- Pipe cleaners, glitter, pompoms, stickers, sequins, feathers



Cooking/Baking

Similar to the other activities, cooking/baking is a form of mindfulness as it requires us to be present and engage with our senses! Can your child tell you which senses they are using when they cook/bake? Children love baking and cooking. This can be a fun activity, which can be done at home and great for being an activity where there is joint attention between you and your child.

- Child can bake together with parent.
- Allowing child to decide what to cook from a choice of recipes chosen by the parent.
- Preparing snacks and dinner
- Allowing child to help you weigh and sieve
- Smell ingredients and have discussion about ingredients
- Chefs hat and apron (optional)



Physical activity and exercise

Exercise releases ‘feel-good’ hormones into our brain, which makes us feel more positive and lowers our anxiety. We know that physical activity is important for our emotional wellbeing across all ages. Usually children access exercise through school and after school clubs, therefore we need to be creative in identifying opportunities for them to continue staying fit and healthy, mentally and physically!

Outside Garden Play

Create a fun nature treasure hunt for children to explore. This is a fun activity for the whole family. Spending time as a family can really help your child feel secure and understood.

You will need:

- Brown leaf, green leaf, twig, fur cone, conker, blossom tree petal, any bugs, etc.

- Binoculars or magnifying glass
- Containers
- Different lists with different plants, animals or bugs to spot.

Treasure Hunt Map (optional)

Method:

- Using binoculars or magnifying glass collect the items on the treasure hunt list.
- Use a container to collect the things.
- Look at the bugs, flowers and leaves with magnifying glass and try drawing them or counting their legs (bugs).
- First person to tick off their entire list wins!



Obstacle Course

Using whatever is safely available in the garden create a fun obstacle course. Try including various gym activities, e.g. when you get to the step at the bottom do 5 star jumps, round the trampoline throw the ball in the bucket, put five pegs on washing line, etc.

Other tips:

- Use small cones to dribble a ball
- Time older children
- Age appropriate activities for younger children

Outdoor Sports

- Football, rugby, cricket, gymnastics, jumping, basketball etc.



If you look up in the tree,
your next clue you will see.



Under or around the deck
is where you should next check.



For a piece of chocolate,
maybe look in a bucket.



Hurry now and you'll be ahead,
have you thought to check the shed?



Keep going and you will soon be there,
but first search under the chair.



Need a little extra push?
A clue might be hiding in a bush.



Run but don't walk
to the egg by the rock.



I know this search has been a lot,
but hurry now your basket is in a pot.



- Bat and ball
- Bike/scooter riding
- Water Sprayers
- Pretend fire fighters
- Washing Cars /Toys

Being Active At Home

• Skipping Challenge – grab a skipping rope and count how many skips you can do in a minute.

• Two handed bounce and catch – bounce and catch a ball in 1 minute. How many times can you catch the ball?

• Sensory Coordination:

Have two buckets full of water, with balls floating one of them. Using just feet, move the balls from one to the other. Who can do it the fastest?

• Balance – Tree Pose

One leg with the foot of your other leg placed against the inside of your knee. Can you balance whilst repeating your times table?

• Just Dance – using YouTube you can find an endless number of Just Dance songs. There is an avatar whose dance moves you copy. This can be done individually or in small groups.

• P.E. with Joe – Starting from Monday 23rd March, Joe will be hosting a free workout aimed at kids LIVE on his YouTube channel.



Social Contact

You might think it is unusual for us to suggest socialising during social distancing, however, feeling close to one another doesn't necessarily mean through touch. You can be creative with this! We know that social contact is extremely important for our emotional wellbeing and we would encourage you to prioritise doing activities together as a family and this can include relaxing together. Ideas include playing a board game, learning a new skill together, or snuggling under a blanket and watching a film together. We know that sharing time with important people can really boost feelings of happiness and lower anxiety.

We also know that children and teenagers tend to be really great at using technology and you can use this to your advantage by setting up virtual meet ups with friends and family members over Facetime, Skype, Whatsapp or Zoom. It's likely that people who are self-

isolating (such as grandparents) would really appreciate this. Sometimes it might feel like there's not much to chat about, so you can be creative here.

Create a Film

Considering the current situation this can be a very lonely time for older family members. An activity around creating a film for older family members can be fun for children as well as enjoyable for older family members to watch.

You will need:

- Camera or Mobile Phone
- Filming Ideas: what activity will children be doing when they are being recorded - read a poem/story, sing a song, dance, play a game, read out a personal message, etc.



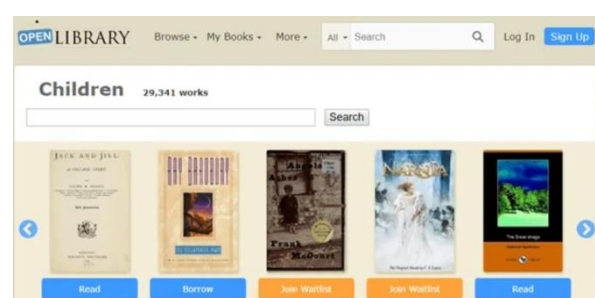
Learning

It is important for your child's mental health to keep their brain busy! Schools will be providing you with learning throughout this period and some of the above activities will also facilitate your child's development and learning.

Reading Books

Below are some good resources that provide free online books for children:

- Oxford Owl
- Storyline Online
- International Children's Digital Library
- Open Library
- Amazon's Free Kids Ebooks
- Barnes & Noble Free Nook Books for Kids



- Mrs. P's Magic Library
- Audible: Audible has announced that all their children's audio books will be free to listen to.

[International Children's Digital Library \(ICDL\)](#)

