

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

PACKET 3





THOUGHT

of the

WEEK



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

Maintaining Your Family's Mental Health During School Closures

On Tuesday evening, after eleven days of being cooped up in our home, unable to see his friends or extended family, our eight-year-old son cried. For over an hour, he wavered between uncontrollable sobbing and catching his breath long enough to share short sentences related to his feelings. His breaking point? He was sitting next to me on the couch and his little brother, our three-year-old, came over and snuggled his body between the two of us.

This is an unprecedented time and we all — the whole family — have to adjust to a new normal. My three children — 8-, 5-, and 3-year-old boys — are now ALWAYS together. This was creating intense feelings that were simmering under the surface and, as a mom, I wasn't even aware of it.

During this time, setting aside a few minutes each day to check in with our children may have immeasurable rewards. Building a vocabulary surrounding emotions will help children learn to identify and express their feelings in more appropriate ways. Find an opportunity to talk with your older children about their emotions. Ask them how they are feeling, acknowledge those feelings, and model empathetic responses. If they shrug their shoulders and say, "I'm fine," provide them with the words they may be struggling to articulate on their own. For example, "I wonder if it's disappointing and lonely not to see all of your friends regularly?" or "Having to play with younger brothers all day would make me feel overwhelmed. How about you?"

Younger children, who have an even more limited vocabulary, may not have the words to express their feelings. Instead, they may act out physically. In these cases, we, as parents, need to learn to read their body language. Hitting or yelling may mean frustration or anger; sulking and storming off may mean disappointment. When we take the opportunity to name these feelings for even our youngest children, we help them develop skills they will need to problem-solve in the future.

As a mom, I have noticed my children wanting to physically be closer to me more than usual. This past week, I have noticed their behaviors change — for example, instead of sitting next to me, they want to be on top of me; instead of having a conversation with me, they clamor over one another in an attempt to be heard. It was only when I stepped back and looked at their behavior from a different perspective that I realized they were looking for care and comfort. What I was initially reading as annoying behavior was actually them reaching out to me for love and guidance. But, in order to see that, I needed to let my own guard down.

Focusing on my family's mental health is important right now. So, in my family, we've attempted to build in more 1:1 time with each sibling — even in our tight quarters. We've created more opportunities to get outside and hike or ride bikes while maintaining a safe social distance from everyone else. Quiet time, when everyone disengages from technology and chooses a book or quiet toy, or takes a nap, is now a regular part of every afternoon. Video conferencing with our extended family helps keep us connected, and we've found family movie or game nights helpful to reduce stress. And, at the end of it all, my husband and I take some time each night to just sit on the couch and binge-watch something on Netflix.

These times are hard. Talk to one another. Find comfort in one another. If you are limited by space (and distance), determine what you can do within the space you have to not only survive, but thrive. Take time to focus on your mental health — whatever that means for you.

INFANTS



Art, Music and Movement: **Sing-Along**

Start by singing a familiar song, and tell your child that you're going to be singing some different songs too. Choose another song to sing that reflects your child's interests (e.g., if your child likes animals, sing "Old McDonald Had a Farm"). Keep the songs simple by singing only one verse and saving the hand motions or actions until your child has heard the words and melody several times.

Children experience:

- Listening to and singing along with familiar songs
- Exploring vocal pitch

After you have sung a song a few times, add in some motions/actions. Practice the motions first (limit motions to two or three per song to begin with), and encourage your toddler to copy before adding the words. You can add in more motions once your child is familiar with the words and original motions or actions. Accept your child's level of participation, whether he or she is simply observing, trying out some of the actions, or singing some of the words.

Invite younger children close to where you are singing so they can hear your voice and watch the way you move. Observe how they respond to your singing (e.g., gaze at you intently, clap their hands, or make sounds with their mouths). Comment on their attempts to sing and move along with you.



Communication, Language, and Literacy: **Talk to Me, Baby**

Children experience:

- Making verbal sounds, such as cooing and babbling
- Saying or signing a single word

Notice when your infant makes attempts at speech at times when he or she is content, set aside all distractions, and get ready to have a "conversation"!

When your infant begins cooing, respond by imitating your child's vocalizations or by talking (e.g., you might say, "You have a lot to say. Will you tell me some more stories?"). Model conversation patterns by pausing occasionally so your child has time to explore your facial expressions, think about what they will do next, and conjure up

a response. When your child uses inflections while cooing, respond to their changes in vocalization.

Older infants may soon begin babbling, which sounds more like speech. When your child begins to make these sounds, repeat and then introduce new sounds. For example, if your child makes the /m/ sound, face your infant and repeat the /m/ sound over and over: "Ma, ma, ma, ma." You may want to introduce a new sound, /b/; repeat the new sound, saying "Ba, ba, ba, ba"; and give your child a chance to respond. Even if children aren't quite ready to imitate a newly introduced sound, they will make new sounds in the coming months as their speech develop

You may also want to introduce a few simple signs for frequently used words, such as more, all done, eat, or drink (look up American Sign Language [ASL] websites to find these simple signs.) Just as your child won't begin repeating words right away, they won't imitate signs right away either; your child needs time to see, hear, and practice using the signs. You may find, however, that infants will sign some of these common words well before they are able to say them.

INFANTS



Early Math and Discovery: **Scents & Smells**

Gather together materials with a pleasant smell, such as lemons, apples, empty spice containers, flowers, and a variety of foods. Be creative! You may also have nice smelling soap or candles around the house that would be perfect for this activity.

Bring an object up to your nose to smell it first, then gently place the item near the child's nose. Watch to see if the child picks up an object and brings it to his or her nose and mouth. Does your child show any preferences for or aversions to different smells? Take note!

Children experience:

- Smelling and reacting to a variety of food items
- Observing the natural and physical world around them

As you go through this activity, talk to your child about what he or she is doing and smelling, using both familiar and unfamiliar words. What does each object smell like to you? Does it remind you of anything? Share your observations as you smell each one.

As children begin to lose interest in the activity, let them know that you are going to smell one more item and then transition to the next activity!



Myself and Others: **So Close**

Children experience:

- Turning toward or away from objects or people
- Being persistent in moving toward things

Observe which toys, objects, and sounds catch your child's attention (e.g., young infants might turn their head toward a bottle; older infants might reach for a brightly colored stuffed animal that jingles when shaken). Likewise, pay attention to objects, sounds, and other sensory input that your child might try to avoid (e.g., infants might turn their head away from a bright light).

If your infant is not yet mobile, try holding a colorful toy that makes a pleasing noise about 10–12 inches above your child's face (you'll know if your child can see and hear the toy because they may smile, coo, or kick their legs in excitement). Slowly move the toy from one side to the other (occasionally shaking it), and stop periodically to make sure your child is still tracking it. If your infant is mobile, position an interesting toy near your child, making sure they know it's there. As your infant attempts to reach the toy, encourage your child by saying things like "Stretch just a little bit more!" or "You're going to get it!"

As infants grow, they are able to creep along the floor, sit independently, and move into a crawling position. At this stage, try positioning an interesting toy just beyond your child's reach. Over time, your child will begin to show more persistence in moving toward the object. Once your child reaches an object several times, you might want to position it a bit farther away. Be aware of children's reactions to this challenge, however, because they may become frustrated or may lose interest if the object seems too far

INFANTS

away. To keep children interested in the challenge, be sure they experience frequent successes and encouragement.

Before you know it, your child will begin crawling, pulling to a standing position, cruising along furniture, and taking first steps. Infants' natural tendency to move toward interesting objects can become dangerous if the items of interest aren't child friendly or if dangerous obstacles are in the way; be sure to babyproof where necessary. You can also place interesting and infant-friendly toys and objects around your child's play space, which will encourage crawling and cruising.



Physical Development and Healthy Habits: Treasure Baskets

For nonmobile infants, create a treasure basket of appealing materials – objects that are easy to grasp and explore. Some things you might want to think about including are: bean bags, cardboard tubes, rattles, brushes, small toys. Put them all together in a shallow container and place them near your infant so that he or she can easily reach in and grab anything that looks fun!

Children experience:

- Grasping a variety of objects
- Moving parts of the body

Note when infants reach for specific objects, and pass them from hand to hand. Feel free to make observations out loud about what the child is doing, saying things like, “How about this one?” and “You grabbed the blue bean bag!” Pay attention to any preferences the child is showing for types of objects and/or colors.

Allow infants to explore the materials until they begin to lose interest, then transition to the next activity.

TODDLERS



Art, Music and Movement: **Rub-a-Dub-Dub, Artist in the Tub!**

This activity can be done leaning over the bathtub or sink or in the tub. Fill the sink/tub with a small amount of lukewarm water. Offer your toddler the spray bottles or soap dispensers filled with colored water, and invite them to spray or pump water into the sink/tub.

Give your toddler time to explore the bottle and figure out how to squeeze the lever to make the water come out. If your child becomes frustrated, gently offer to show them how to squeeze it (your child might need to use two hands). As your child sprays water on to the walls of the tub or sink, comment on the colors and describe how the colors drip down the wall and what happens when the colors mix. Join in the play by grabbing another bottle/dispenser and adding to the colors on the wall. Be sure to trade and swap bottles if your child makes that request.

Children experience:

- Mixing colors
- Noticing color change in the water



Communication, Language, and Literacy: **A New Favorite Book**

Children experience:

- Looking at or pointing to familiar objects in photos
- Speaking one-, two-, or three-word statements about the photos
- Responding to an adult's statements

Before you get started:

1. Take and print pictures of important people (or pets) in your child's life as well as pictures of items that are familiar to your child (e.g., a stuffed animal). (The number of photos you use will be determined by your toddler's attention span; four or five pictures for younger toddlers and a larger selection for older toddlers.)
2. Cut the cardstock to the desired size — make the book larger to fit several pictures on a page or smaller to fit fewer pictures on a page. (With younger toddlers, put one or two pictures on each page.) Secure the pictures onto the pages with adhesive tape or glue, and use a hole puncher to create two or three holes that align on the left-hand side of each page. Secure the pages together with yarn, string, or metal rings.
3. Place a photo of your child (or children) on the front cover and write a title.

Introduce the new book at a time when you typically read to your toddler. Encourage your toddler to help you turn the pages or to hold the book independently. Give your child time to look at and respond to the pictures. Younger toddlers may simply point to pictures that catch their attention or might use a single word or gesture to label a picture they see. Older toddlers may label pictures, begin using two- and three-word phrases to talk about them, and respond to your statements or questions about the pictures.

TODDLERS

As with so many activities for toddlers with varying attention spans and interests, you'll need to determine when your child is losing interest in looking at the book. If your child wants to continue to look at the book when it is time to move on, tell them that you'll look at it one more time before you put the book away. Assure your child that they can look at it again soon.



Early Math and Discovery: **Counting Never Tasted So Good**

Place a small amount of food on your child's plate or highchair tray (keep more food on the table in a bowl/plate so children can see that there will be more available). Give your child time to pick up each piece of food and eat it. Talk about the food you've given your child, for example, "Your crackers are all gone!"

When their plate or tray is empty, young toddlers might indicate that they want more by reaching for the bowl or plate of food and/or by making a vocalization. Ask, "Do you want more bananas?"

You may want to repeat the word more again and/or make the sign

for more (look online for the American Sign Language image of how to sign more). Over time, if you repeat more to your toddler, you will find that they will begin saying or signing more when wanting more of something.

If your child has already moved beyond this developmental stage, count out loud (e.g., "1, 2, 3, 4, 5") when your toddler asks you for more of a food item as you place the items on their tray or plate. Over time, you will notice your child will begin using number words or start counting by rote; it's okay if he or she doesn't understand what each number means because experimentation with number words and rote counting is an important step in learning to count. Encourage your child's attempts at using number words and continue to model counting.

Older toddlers who have had practice saying number words will begin counting with one-to-one correspondence, starting with just a few objects and gradually counting up to 10 or more objects.

This activity isn't meant to be a "counting drill and practice"; rather, it's meant to be an ongoing, natural process throughout mealtimes. The activity will draw to a close as the mealtime ends.

Children experience:

- Indicating more
- Using a number word
- Counting by rote (saying numbers by memorization)
- Counting with one-to-one correspondence (developing a sense of number; touching each object and associating one number with each object counted)

TODDLERS



Myself and Others: Exploring Magazines!

Children experience:

- Enjoying reading materials
- Identifying what's happening in different photos

To get started, gather a variety of postcard and/or magazine pictures of children, animals, and common objects for children to choose, handle and look at. You may want to put these items into envelopes or slitted boxes (like a mailbox). Then your child can experience “opening the mail,” just like you.

As you go through the different items, talk with your child about the pictures, and listen to their responses. Things you might want to ask about:

- What is this person doing?
- How is this person feeling today?
- Why is the person in this picture doing that?
- How is this person like you? How is this person different?

Keep your questions open-ended, and let your child make their own observations about the different pictures! Their thoughts might give you some helpful insights into their interests, and provide inspiration for more activities.



Physical Development and Healthy Habits: Tearing and Gluing

Gather together scraps of materials that are easy to tear, such as tissue paper, aluminum foil, and newsprint. Put them all together on a covered surface that your child can easily sit and play at. Also provide glue for the child to use. You can use a glue stick, or liquid glue.

Encourage your child to tear and glue small pieces of the provided material to a piece of paper or card stock. As the child engages with the materials, ask questions like, “What are you making?” and “What are you going to put on next?” You can get in on the action too, tearing different pieces in different ways, and see if your child copies you!

Make sure to display your child’s masterpiece at his or her height around the house!

Children experience:

- Moving parts of the body
- Being creative with different materials

PRESCHOOL



Art, Music and Movement: **Bouncing Bed Sheet**

Pop popcorn with children. An air or microwave popper works best because the children can see the kernels popping, but popcorn in a microwave bag is fine. Talk about the steps in making popcorn or why corn pops. As you talk with your child, you might say:

- “Wow. I hear a lot of noise! What do you think is happening?”
- “How do you think those hard, yellow kernels turn into fluffy popcorn?”
- “What does popcorn feel like in your mouth?”
- “Look at the pieces of popcorn and find your favorite shape

Children experience:

- Physical activity
- How one thing can affect another (cause and effect)
- Spatial relationships
- Moving to music

Let children help you finish making the popcorn by dumping it into a bowl and pouring on butter and shaking on salt. Once you and the children have enjoyed some popcorn, move on to the second part of the activity.

Spread out the bed sheet and ask children to hold on to an edge. Ask children to pretend that the bed sheet is a giant popcorn popper, and that you would like them to help you make popcorn. Place the balls, or rolled up socks, in the middle of the bed sheet. Depending on the type of popcorn popper children are familiar with, pretend to add oil, and/or turn on the heat.

Play the music quietly and help children shake the bed sheet. Shake slowly at first to pretend it is like the popcorn getting hotter and hotter. As you are shaking with children, talk about how the balls are moving. Use words such as rolling, bouncing, and jumping. Use other words that show direction like over, under, in and out. Play the music louder now and have children shake faster so the balls pop up in the air. When the balls fly off the bed sheet, encourage children to put them back on.

When you and the children start to get tired, have the children slow the shaking; turn the music down. Slow the “popping” and, finally, stop.



Communication, Language, and Literacy: **Car Talk**

Children experience:

- Rhyming
- Writing letters and words
- Building vocabulary

Try this rhyming activity next time you have bored children riding in the car. Warning.... In order to make this activity successful, you’ll need to be able to think of and say silly-sounding words. Tell children that you are going to play a rhyming game — they will shout out a word and you will think of something that rhymes with it.

Listen for a word and then think of at least one word that has the same ending sound, or that rhymes! If children say “car,” then you could respond with “bar” or “far.” You can respond with as many real rhyming words as you can, but what makes this game fun is when you say nonsense words. So, go ahead and say “bar” and “far” but keep going with “rar,” “zar,” and “nar!”

Keep going until your child tires of the game!

PRESCHOOL



Math, Science, and Technology: **Laundry**

Tell children that there is so much laundry to finish that you really need their help!

Options:

- Have children match all the socks and identify their color.
- Categorize all the clothes into piles based upon whose it is or types of clothing (all shirts together, then all pants...)
- Count the number of clothing pieces the family has in the pile.
- Sort all the same colors together.
- Count all the things that need to be hung up. Ask children to go and get the same number of hangers and lay one hanger on top of one piece of clothing.

Children experience:

- Building fine-motor skills
- Following directions
- Colors
- Self-help skills

Have children help carry the clothes to each person's room. Once they get to their own room, they will put their own clothes away. When the activity is done, your house should be cleaner than when you started!

Younger children:

- Younger children will have a harder time folding clothes and towels. Adjust your expectations and accept their efforts.
- Alternatively, give younger children simple jobs that don't require as much folding or precise work, like pairing socks or putting underwear in a drawer. As they get older, give children more responsibility

Older children:

- Teach older children how to fold towels, roll socks, and hang up their own clothing. Once they have learned how to do it, they can be assigned the job of doing it periodically to help the family.
- Teach older children about fractions as they fold a towel in to half, then in quarters.
- Teach older children how to do laundry from beginning to end. Have them help you carry the laundry to the washing machine, then show them how to put in the detergent and how to move the clothes over to the dryer when the wash cycle is done.

Folding laundry may seem fairly simple, but it can support a lot of learning! Take the time now, when children are young, to get them into a routine of helping; as they get older and can handle more responsibility, they will be able to do this job on their own.



Myself and Others: **Draw Your Day**

Start this activity early in the morning before much of the day has slipped away. Sit with children and talk about what you will be doing that day. Tell them that they can help you draw a simple picture for each thing you will do together that day or at least in the morning. For example, you might divide the morning like this:

PRESCHOOL

Children experience:

- Learning about time
- Describing a sequence of events
- Making choices
- Taking initiative

1. Get dressed and get ready to go
2. Dance activity
3. Have play time
4. Eat lunch
5. Have naptime

So, for this sample morning, there would be five pictures. Find a place to hang the pictures, and hang each of them in the order of when they will happen. Tell children that each time they start a new part of the day, they get to put a sticker on the matching picture. In addition, let children pick one thing they want to do during each part of the day. This might look something like this:

1. **Get dressed** – They can pick what they would like to wear.
2. **Dance activity** – They can pick a new dance to try.
3. **Have play time** – They can decide what they would like to play.
4. **Eat lunch** – They can pick one thing they would like to eat for the meal.
5. **Have naptime** – They can pick the story they want to read before they go to sleep.

Let children put a sticker on the first thing and get ready to go.

Continue to go through each part of the day. As you go, talk about what comes first, second, third.... Have children talk about what is coming next and what they choose to do during that part of the day.

This activity ends at the last part of the day you have identified with children. Take them back to the pictures they drew that labeled each part of the day. Ask them if they can remember what they did during each part. Talk about their day.



Physical Development and Healthy Habits: **Cooking Granola Bars**

Talk to your children about their favorite food. Share your favorites, too! Tell children that they are going to cook a new food and that maybe it will become a favorite. Decide ahead of time what recipe you will cook with the children. Write out simple directions on a few index cards, like this:

1. Measure all ingredients
2. Mix in bowl
3. Stir
4. Bake in oven

Children experience:

- Measuring
- Learning about healthy foods
- Sense of taste and smell
- Building fine-motor skills

PRESCHOOL

Together, gather all the ingredients. Then, have children wash their hands with you. With their help, begin making the healthy treat of their choice by showing them the directions on the index cards you made.

Granola Bars

Learning activities:

1. When you make the recipe given below, peek into the oven every so often as the granola bars are cooking. Have children describe the changes they see happening.
2. Ask the children "Why do you think the heat makes it change?"

Tools

- Large bowl
- Mixing spoon
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Ingredients
- 4 cups Quick Quaker Oats, uncooked
- 1½ cups chopped nuts
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- ¾ cup melted butter
- ½ cup honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ teaspoon salt (optional)

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Combine all ingredients; mix well. Press firmly into a well-greased 15½ X 10½" jelly roll pan. A simple cookie sheet works just fine too. Bake for 10–12 minutes or until golden brown and bubbly. Cool thoroughly; cut into bars or crumble for granola.



MORE RESOURCES



Visit the Boston Children's Museum

You can access the virtual tour of the museum here:

www.bostonchildrensmuseum.org/museum-virtual-tour?mod=article_inline

They have also developed some wonderful play and learn resources, which are available here:

www.bostonchildrensmuseum.org/learning-resources?mod=article_inline



Under the Sea

Access some virtual tours under the water captured by the National Marine Sanctuaries:

https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/vr/?mod=article_inline

Why not sing to a fun water-themed song while you're exploring? Favorites include, "Under the Sea" and "Baby Shark"!



Get Cooking!

Here are some tasty, hands-on recipes for toddlers:

www.cookinglight.com/food/recipe-finder/recipes-for-toddlers



Storyberries: Stories for ages 0-3

Expand your literary repertoire with these colorful online books:

www.storyberries.com/category/age-0-3-bedtime-stories/



Whale of a Time! Whale Activities continued

This segment is best suited for older preschoolers, 3.5-5 years old and school age children. Great for anyone who loves whales or wants to learn more!

Storytime with COR Advantage: Maranda reads part two of a book called "100 Things You Should Know About Whales & Dolphins" by Steve Parker!

<https://vimeo.com/401390938>

National Geographic for Kids: Follow it up with a short video about blue whales from NatGeo!

www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgiPTUy2RqI&t=6s

Origami for kids: Finally, try this simple whale origami activity!

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjole5KutUA