Wellbeing support from Bridgend Educational Psychology Service for Pre-School Children

This leaflet is written to support families, carers and early years practitioners supporting preschool children during the COVID-19 Pandemic. We are all charting unfamiliar waters and there are no right answers about what we should be doing to help ourselves and our children during these times. What we do know is that there are many changes for us all but what young children always need are reassurance, familiarity and love, as do the adults around them.



These are the simple things we encourage you to focus when you can. When we are anxious, there are many recommended methods and activities for us as adults to choose to help us feel calmer and more in control. These can include:

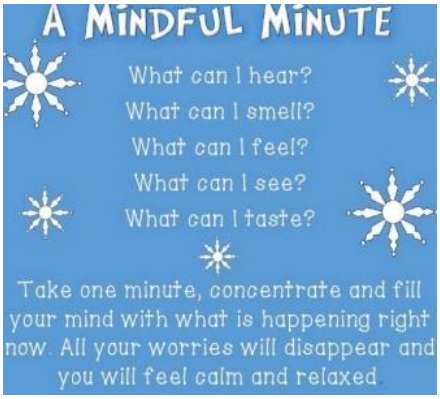
- keep talking : to family, friends, colleagues and neighbours in a physically distanced but emotionally connected way
- find time to have fun doing something you enjoy like reading a magazine, playing a game or watching a film or anything else that gives you a distraction or break

References: PACE – Dan Hughes; ELSA Support; Neath Port Talbot Council; Relationship Based Play; THRIVE

- try to think positive and celebrate your daily achievements,



- deep breathing from your toes, right up to your hair, or taking a mindful minute



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- move around for a moment or two or if you prefer be more physically active for a longer period of time



- try writing down persistent, difficult thoughts and throwing them away

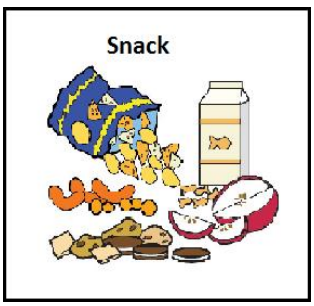


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This visual representation developed is useful in helping us to remember and focus on what is important for young children at this time.



We are aware of how important routine is to young children and their families but routine needs to include some flexibility and choice to remain fun in difficult circumstances. We all benefit from knowing what is happening next and what to expect but when understanding and language are limited by age or ability a visual routine can be extremely helpful. A good idea is to draw up a routine together with some choice built into the order of events using a Now/Next visual board or a sequence chart.

NOW	NEXT
	

References: PACE – Dan Hughes; ELSA Support; Neath Port Talbot Council; Relationship Based Play; THRIVE

Young children may not have the capacity or control to make these decisions and we need to create opportunities for them to experience feelings of calm and feel in control at times. Choosing the order they do things in or having a say in what is happening now and next can give a child reassurance and a feeling of being in control. This does not mean that rules do not apply but that choosing your battles at this time may help.



It does not matter if the activity takes an unexpected turn. What is most important is to have fun, experience happy feelings and to share enjoyment. Children learn through play with a trusted adult whatever the outcome and benefit from time with adults who show that they care how the chid is feeling.

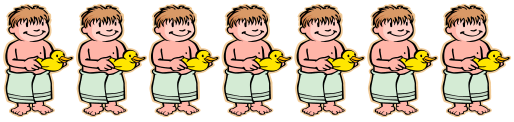
Many families have appreciated the following ideas from their Portage Advisors and Early Years Educational Psychologists over the telephone while home visits are on hold. Choose the ones that work for you and your children.

References: PACE – Dan Hughes; ELSA Support; Neath Port Talbot Council; Relationship Based Play; THRIVE

Outdoor Play as Summer is Coming!

Fill a large bowl with water and find a big paint brush. Brush water on slabs, or walls. Label "up" and 'down" when appropriate.

Add food colour, paint or bubbles to the water. Put cups, dishes and rubber ducks in the water with spoons. Fill them and empty them. Use words to describe what your child does - Pouring. Splashing, Full, Empty



Squirt an empty washing up liquid bottle to squirt the water again – make patterns, shapes, lines.

Make a mud tray and use a stick to make marks. A sand tray can be used too.

Paint on a big sheet of paper, newspaper or old wallpaper. Or paint on your child's feet for them to walk on the paper, hand prints can be done in the same way.



Paint leaves and print on paper with them (paint the vein side of leaf to get a better mark.).

Collect items like flower heads, sticks, grass in the garden and make a picture sticking them onto paper with glue. You could talk about the colour, shape, smell, texture.



Mini beast hunt – search under stones and in the earth. Place them in a container to look at. Place two snails on a piece of paper and watch how slowly they move across the paper making a slimy mark in a Snail race. Please remember to place the snails safely back where you found them!

Sing songs about the insects - Incy Wincey Spider for example. You can find songs on the internet

Make bird feeders using pipe cleaners and Cheerio type cereals. Thread the hoops onto the pipe cleaner and tie into a hoop and hang on branches out the back.

Shape hunt in garden - anything that matches in shape, start with a circle first and progress to another shape if your child is interested

Make an obstacle course with garden toys, furniture, pots and boxes

References: PACE – Dan Hughes; ELSA Support; Neath Port Talbot Council; Relationship Based Play; THRIVE

Indoor Activities

Remember that young children love to copy adults carrying out everyday activities, so when it helpful and convenient, involve them whenever you can. The following activities are for when you have a short period of time to play with your child using household materials wherever possible.

Give your child a variety of saucepans and bowls in the kitchen with some cooked pasta for them to spoon in and out of the different containers. You can colour the pasta with food colouring when cooking it.

Have a drumming session or kitchen band with the pans before you put them away. You can use different wood or metal spoons and tins from the cupboard



Fill a tray with flour or cooked rice for mark making. Encourage your child to use their finger to make marks.

Pour corn flour over ice to make good slime in a small tray or trough.

Make ice cubes with paint mixed in and use the ice cubes as paintbrushes to make patterns and lines

Freeze small toys/plastic animals in ice blocks for them to see them melt in a tray and provide small little wooden hammers for the child to try and break the ice blocks.

Make a den with a sheet or blanket draped over a table or unit. You can use torches, tea set, doll and teddies, rugs or anything to make it cosy and exciting.



Play parties with the dolls - role play "can you give teddy a drink...can you give the doll a drink"

Cut out shapes in black paper and shine the torch through to make shapes on the blanket. It needs to be a dark blanket for it to work.

Fill a Sensory Bag or Box to encourage touch and create interest. Label textures such as soft, shiny, hard, heavy and use different types of textures: brush, mirror, soft fabrics, coloured chiffon scarves, sand paper, bark, wood, sticks for child to explore.

References: PACE – Dan Hughes; ELSA Support; Neath Port Talbot Council; Relationship Based Play; THRIVE

Use photographs of family members, pets, friends to make a book and play games asking…..”where is dad? “Where is Digby”, encouraging your child to point to the pictures, forming their hand to point if needed.



You can also place photographs in a box for your child to take out one at a time and label . Make a Post Box from a cereal box and when you or your child labels a photograph encourage your child to post the picture into the Post Box. If your child is ready you can place 2 different photographs in a line and ask your child “where is mammy” and then post it in the box.

Fill a basket or box with objects, toys, items from around the house that link with your child’s favourite song or story. Sing the song or re-tell the story with the objects.

Make playdough and colour or flavour it. Here are a few recipes to choose:

Play Dough Recipe

1 cup of plain flour

1 tablespoon of vegetable oil

1/4 cup of salt

Just under 3/4 cup of water (adding until dough feels right)

3 tablespoons lemon juice

Add few drops of food colouring and/or fragrance

Mix water and lemon juice and heat in microwave until just boiling

(about 3 minutes)

Then add desired amount of food colouring depending on intensity of colour to the liquid.

Meanwhile mix flour and salt.

Once water has boiled in the microwave, add the flour and salt mixture very slowly, stirring until it is all mixed into a dough! Add more flour if needed to take away stickiness.

References: PACE – Dan Hughes; ELSA Support; Neath Port Talbot Council; Relationship Based Play; THRIVE

Longer Lasting Play Dough

2 cups of plain flour.

3 quarters cup of salt.

4 teaspoons Cream of tartar.

2 cups of Luke warm water.

2 tablespoons of vegetable oil (coconut or baby oil works too)

Food colouring and Food flavouring optional (peppermint, coconut, etc)

Stir together the flour, salt and cream of tartar in a large pot.

Add water and oil.

Add colour.

Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly.

Continue stirring until the dough has thickened and begins to form into a ball.

Remove from heat and when cool place in a zip plastic bag or plastic sealed tub and it will keep for a while in a container.

Calming Ideas

Young children are used to going out and about with their families and sometimes to playgroup or nursery. These opportunities are restricted for them at present and they may ned some time with you to play games that soothe them. Relationship-based play suggests the following games to physically calm and distract young children and we suggest selecting one or two that are appropriate to your child's level of understanding and physical development.

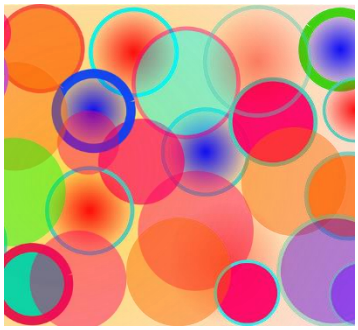
Cotton Ball Touch: Have child close eyes. Touch child gently with cotton ball. Have child open eyes and indicate where she was touched.

Drawing Around Hands, Feet or Bodies: Make a picture of the child's hand or foot by drawing it on a piece of paper. Full body drawings require the child to lie still for some time and are therefore more challenging. Be sure to maintain verbal contact with the child as you draw, for example, "I'm coming to your ankle; I'm drawing around your hand."

References: PACE – Dan Hughes; ELSA Support; Neath Port Talbot Council; Relationship Based Play; THRIVE

Patty-Cake: Hold child's hands and lead her through "Patty-cake" "Patty cake, patty cake, Baker's man. Bake me a cake as fast as you can. Roll it and pat and mark it a (Child's initial) and toss it in the oven for (child's name) and me! You can use feet as well.

Pop the Bubble: Blow a bubble and catch it on the wand. Have the child pop the bubble with a particular body part, for example, finger, toe, elbow, shoulder, ear. This is structured way of playing with bubbles. Bubbles readily capture the interest of young children and can be used as an engaging activity either in this structured form or in a manner that invites more spontaneity (for example, by having the child pop all the bubbles as quickly as she can).



The Little Pig: Wiggle each toe as you chant "This little pig went to market-This little pig stayed at home-This little pig had roast beef-This little pig had none-This little pig cried "Wee, wee, wee" all the way home". Change details to fit the particular child. As you say "all the way home" walk your fingers up the child's arm in a playful way.



Twinkle Song: Adapt the words of "Twinkle, twinkle, little star" to the special characteristics of the child. "What a special boy you are-Dark brown hair, and soft, soft cheeks-Bright brown eyes from which you peek-Twinkle, twinkle little star-What a special boy you are". Hold the child in your arms and touch the parts you refer to as you sing.

Crawling Race: you and the child crawl on your knees as fast as you can around a stack of pillows. Try to catch the other's feet. Switch directions

Beep and Honk: Press child's nose and say "beep!" then press chin and say "honk!" Guide child to touch your nose and chin. Make appropriate beeps and honks, as you are touched. Child may be able to supply noises also.

Peek-a-Boo: Hold child's hands (or feet) up together in front of your face. Peek around or separate the hands (or feet) to "find" the child.

References: PACE – Dan Hughes; ELSA Support; Neath Port Talbot Council; Relationship Based Play; THRIVE

Many things we do with our children help them to feel safe, feel special and have their needs met. All this helps their emotional development too! It just takes a few minutes but do as often as you like! Pick one!

Let your child know the special things you like about them.	**Smile, laugh and be available to have fun.**
Mirroring –face child, move arms, face, other parts of the body. Take turns being the leader. Add noises!	**Do activities about eyes and faces: draw, make from playdough, paint, sand, spot in magazines and books.**
Communicate delight in their presence-not just the things they do. 'I love doing this with you'!	**Link feeling words to accompanying body experiences eg 'shaky', 'butterflies in my tummy', 'hot and sweaty'.**

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