

## A few games and playful activities to try during isolation times

This is going to be a challenging time for children and their families, and the confinement and co-living will make days long and busy, especially with the responsibilities of home schooling. However, it can also be an opportunity to enjoy the time spent with your children, slow down and really connect with each other. When it comes to feeling connected and enjoying being around each other, remember that this is a good chance to be more child-led. Show curiosity about how your child wants to play and engage with you. When you are busy try to include them in your tasks as much as possible but also let them know that there is time for everything. You can explain how much you want to do A or Z with them but that right now you need to prepare lunch or do some work. Make sure you tell them what time of the day you will be doing A or Z with them. Even if you are really busy and tired make sure you reserve that promised time and that you are present when you “meet”. Your curiosity and interest will make up for your lack of energy!

These are some ideas for more structured games:

### The Squiggle

Great for those wanting to do a bit of drawing but have no idea what to draw or doubt their skills.

Take turns: One draws a squiggle, doodle, pattern or shape. Make sure that a fair amount of room is left elsewhere on the page. The other person looks at it, turns the page any way they like and adds anything to turn it into something else.

### Exquisite corpses

This is a circle game that can be done by a group of people or just two of you. You need blank paper and pens or anything to draw with. You are going to cooperatively draw a person, animal, fantastic creature...anything!

An image of the character is drawn in portions, with the paper folded after each portion so that later participants cannot see earlier portions. Usually the paper is folded in 3 portions: First person draws the “head”, folds and then without looking at the previous drawing the second person draws the “body”, folds, and the third turn is for the bottom part of the creature (legs, tentacles, wheels, anything... there are no rules!). Make sure you show a little bit of your drawing on the next portion so it is clearer where to join it (like a bit of the neckline, a bit of the waist, etc). Remember not to peek while the others draw! When the last person finishes the bottom part the paper can be unfolded. Check out your exquisite corpse! Give it a name, make up a story about where it comes from, where it lives, what he likes and does not like! Parents and children can do all of this

together. If you don't have much time the kids can think about the stories by themselves and come to tell you about it when you are free.

### Tents and dens

We are all going to need a bit of *me* space these days. Being able to play in secret and without being disturbed will always spark the imagination. And tents are always a good place to chill out when needed!

You could help the kids make one with a couple of chairs and a spare sheet or blanket. They can bring in a cushion and favourite toy or books. If you don't have space for the den to be a permanent thing explain this from the beginning and agree on the terms. It could be something that can be easily taken apart, but make sure you explain if they will be able to do it again and when.

### Newspaper cut-outs

This needs a bit of preparation. You or your children need to cut random words from newspapers and magazines. You can keep them all in a box or bag and use it as and when they feel like it.

They (and you) can rearrange the words to make poems. You can try a haiku, which is exactly seventeen syllables long.

They can also write an anonymous letter (if you have some glue) like a ransom note in a movie. You can make this less threatening and send loving messages! But it is ok to have fun with it and let them use their imagination!

They can also do it with pictures and drawings.

### Exquisite portrait collage

As above but this is using magazine's pictures and photographs and sticking them together or drawing on them to make a very odd-looking character.

### Storytelling corner shop

This is an ongoing project you can send your kid to do while you are busy. Give them a box or a bag. They can gather toys and miniatures who will be characters for multiple future stories; pictures they make or find with ideas for the story - they can be places, actions, characters..., they can also write down phrases or words they hear around or on the tv or they come up with- With all of this they can have all the ingredients for

different story making. This is something they can gather as and when they feel like it. Then when you have time you can come to hear their story or to make it up together with them. If they want to they can write it down, but it would be great if they don't have to focus so much on the writing as it might seem too much effort and like homework and kill the joy and creative part of this. You could write it down for them when you have time, or maybe they can record it? One way to do it is choosing or picking a toy, then a picture and then one of the words or phrases they had written down from the bag or box, or you can try it with their/your eyes closed, then repeat again so the story progresses. Don't worry too much about how coherent the story is! Let them run with it and be very curious about the feelings of the characters, but most of all ....have fun with it!!

### Sock puppets

If you found time for a spring clean you may have gathered a few odd socks. Get the kids to draw and stick on them so they can become very easy to make puppets.

### Picnics

Try an indoors picnic. You won't need the nice weather. You just need a rug and the floor! You can play *I-spy* pretending you are outdoors

### Going on a holiday

First decide where to go. Then everyone will need to pack (you can give them a small bag if you are not willing to do a lot of sorting out clothes afterwards!). Make sure to have your tickets and fake passports. Pretend you forgot them at home to make it more authentic!

Work out if your journey is by plane, train, boat, car...

Once you reach your destination you can:

Change into holiday clothes; jump off into the warm sea keeping an eye out for sharks...; explore the jungle with your binoculars looking for exotic animals; find an oasis with water in the desert....or just sunbathe on the beach.

At the end they can draw a postcard and write on it.

### Dear Diary

Keep a family diary where everyone can add an entry of how they are feeling or something that was funny or amusing that day. If nothing seems funny you can make up

something really extraordinary which might amuse the others when they read it. The idea is that it is a pretend secret diary for each person, but we are all aware that everyone else is reading too...(if that makes sense!)

### When I went to the moon

This is a memory game you can play while you are cooking or doing house chores but you have your child near you. You take turns saying “When I went to the moon I brought with me a.....” and add anything you want, then the next person repeats the same phrase and adds an extra thing. You keep on repeating all the items everyone has mentioned in the right order. It is more fun and easier to remember if we describe the item a bit, like “ I brought with me an Olympic swimming pool with warm water”

If your child is not keen or finds the concentrating/memory bit too much you can do it with quick drawings for each thing.

### What’s missing

Take a large tray and place lots of household objects on it. Some straightforward like a mug, a fork, and some unusual like a piece of ginger or a keyring. There should be about fifteen items. Place the tray on the floor and leave it for a minute. Then cover it with a cloth or tea towel. Give the players pens and paper, then they have three minutes to list or draw all the items they remember.

Another version is to show the tray, take it away, remove an object and show them the tray again. Whoever is first to guess which thing is missing is the winner.

### Newsflash

Everybody writes down a sentence on a slip of paper and puts them into a bowl. These sentences can be anything you like, but the sillier the better. If there are only a couple of you playing then write four or five sentences each to keep the game going. Tell them to try not to be too rude, but you can explain that some funny words are acceptable because they are very hard to say in a serious voice.

One by one each person must take a slip of paper from the bowl, put on a grave face and pretend to read the news . You start by saying, very slowly, clearly and solemnly, “Good evening. Here is a very important newsflash” and then read the sentence out loudly. The difficult bit is that you must not laugh or smile.