**Off nursery / School activities**

Top tips with 10 activities that can be done with your children during this period of time off nursery/school: Here are some preparation top tips:

1. **Setting Up a Family Meeting** – calling a family meeting is important to set ground rules and expectations for the duration of this situation. Ask all to participate and look into what is their understanding of the situation, what this means and why are we doing this…it will give everyone a sense of purpose and meaning. Validate emotions as children may feel like things are not fair. Write together a poster with ground rules, decide on the ground rules together, like how many hours of devices and games for example, chores, cooking and ask for everyone’s contribution to the family household.
2. **Setting Up a Schedule** – Having a calendar or a schedule outlining different activities will help create a routine and establish predictability. It can be done visually using colour coded signs, see picture above. Although not necessarily needing to be equally dispersed across the day, deciding on a schedule together will help family functioning.
3. **Deciding on Different Activities** – When discussing different activities, it is important to ensure that all family members’ needs are met. For younger children, they may need play and unstructured times, as for older children, it may mean learning online with structured educational activities set by the school. For parents, it may mean the need to have some time to work and communicate with colleagues. Remember it is also important to allow for self-care and time for you, like putting the oxygen mask on you before someone else! What activities can we do from home? You may think it will be a long haul! Here are some ideas of different educational, cognitive and creative activities that can be done at home…

**10 Activities for Home**

1. **Setting Up a Den in the house or a Camp in the garden**– This activity can be useful to create a safe place for children and a place they know they can have some quiet time, such as, reading a book, playing with little people, teddies or puppets. You can ask them to contribute to set it up with you, make decorations, put up lights and a sign. Children will find this fun and different. It can create an imaginative world for the child.
2. **Setting Up a Learning Place in the house and Do Learning Together**– It is important that children feel they have an allocated space in the house where they can concentrate and focus on learning. It does not have to be a big space and can even be a shared space. It is more about how we use this space and what we do when we are learning. Setting up some ground rules for this will also be helpful. With a schedule, allocate time to learning in short and fruitful bursts, it is more about the quality and the positive experience of learning rather the quantity and speed at which we do these learning tasks. When you are noticing that learning is no longer fruitful, have a short break, a snack, a glass of water, some movement breaks. Family learning can be rich as we can all learn together and share understanding, problem-solving and information.
3. **Cooking Together**– Cooking is great as it also includes literacy and numeracy tasks, such as, reading recipes or counting and measuring ingredients. Involving children in cooking can be fun and full of joy as they are involved in producing a tangible product at the end. You can also ask the children to finish off the cookies, cake, etc. by decorating them, lots of time can be spent on this.
4. **Puzzle, Lego, Visual-Spatial Activities** – These activities tend to be calming as the brain focuses on putting things together rather than verbal or emotion demanding tasks. Offering these activities in the house will be of benefit to everyone as it will help all involved to be grounded and calm.
5. **Setting Up a Fun Project** – It is important to vary activities, like a carousel. Start with one and move on to the next. When activities are designed to promote different areas of development, children will find this more engaging than if it is tapping into the same type of skills so it is important to also have something creative, a fun project you will enjoy doing together. A fun project could be: making a scrapbook of different drawings, paintings, making characters out of modelling clay, picking up leaves from the garden and finding the name of the tree online, taking photographs of wildlife in the garden such as birds, animals, painting rocks with emojis on them, drawing a cartoon strip or writing a collection of short stories, inventing characters and drawing these, so many things that can be done. Some children may like the challenge of a research project.
6. **Starting a Collection, Playing Board Games** – Stamps, stones, leaves, labels and lots of other things can start collections.  Board games, such as snakes and ladders, can be made using templates on the web.
7. **Sending Messages, Letters and Postcards to Family and Friends** – Keep in touch with your social networks via different communication modes either video call or messaging.
8. **Learning a New Skill Together and/or Teaching a New Skill** – There are lots of youtube videos nowadays that can teach skills step by step. Learn to say words in a different language, learn how to do sewing, knitting, crochet, slime, scrapbooking, photography, design a webpage together or design cards online.
9. **Implementing Routines for Self-care and Mindfulness** – It’s ok for all involved to feel this is not a normal situation. It is important to keep communicating, being transparent, responding to questions, presenting the facts as well as not bombarding with facts. Children are curious and like to find out about the world so it is a good opportunity to open their thinking by sharing information, exploring maps, countries. It is also important we are aware of feelings and able to recognise sensations, feelings and actions. Implement some self-care activities together such as doing a calming activity together, reading a book, relaxing, watching a film.
10. **Exercising**– Don’t forget to move and for the full family to move. You can set up some an obstacle course in the garden for example. This can be done using household items like a skipping rope, bottles, a ball. Like do 10 jumps, 10 skips, 10 hoops in the basketball hoop, knock 3 bottles down, etc. You can set up a challenge and time them going through the course. Walking the dog and playing with an animal can also be part of the routine.