FUNctional Routines for Quarantine

From the OT Department

While the world is slowing down and our children are relying on us for structure, this is an ideal time to prioritize building independence with daily living skills, and address specific goals or things you wish your child could do, or do better. This does not have to be a huge undertaking. You can choose a part of an activity or one step, and focus hard on that each time you confront it in your daily routine. And speaking of routines—it is important now more than ever to keep a consistent one—with bedtimes, mealtimes, and allotted screen time. This will make the transition back to school much easier when the time comes, and alleviate anxiety, whining, and the building of negative behaviors associated with the abrupt change in schedule, the news, and any confusion/stress you may be feeling.

Here are some ideas:

**1).** **Dressing**- Pick one aspect that would help your child be more independent. Maybe putting on socks and shoes, hanging up jacket, removing a shirt, pulling up pants, working on clothing fasteners, or tying shoes. Direct your child’s attention to it, and practice, again and again. If you run in to an obstacle, consult your therapist for troubleshooting. This is an excellent time to practice dressing skills since families will be at home more and not in a rush to get out of the house to go somewhere.

**2).** **Cooking/snack/meal prep**- at least one time each day, fix something together. Even if it’s just microwaving, include your child in the process- opening the package, removing contents, throwing things away, getting a utensil. Or maybe you want to do something more ambitious like make a salad- tearing lettuce, peeling a carrot, slicing a cucumber. Even if your child won’t eat any of it, seeing, smelling, and handling the food are precursors to eating it, and doing it together builds relationship. Finally, for a treat, try a new recipe. Attached are a couple popular kid-focused ones.

**3).** **Laundry**- sort, match socks, fold towels and washcloths, transfer clothing into washer or into dryer. Push or carry laundry basket, put clothes in drawer, hang clothes on hangers. Choose appropriate level of difficulty for your child and teach the task if needed. Try not to set them up too much. Help them think through the sequence and figure out what comes next.

**4.)** **Exercise**- Go for a walk in nature or around your neighborhood (keeping in mind “social distancing” recommendations); encourage your child to actively explore and recognize things around you that may normally go unnoticed (things in nature, signs of spring, street signs, neighborhood pets, etc).

**5.)** **Leisure**- Participate in activities the whole family can enjoy such as board games, card games, or simple crafts. Select games appropriate for your child’s level and support them as needed for learning how to play (have them help set up the game, make sure they understand the purpose/outcome of the game, demonstrate strategies for being successful, or even make up your own rules to meet your child’s abilities). Try a quick Google search to find spring time craft ideas, most often you will easily find ideas using materials you already have around the house.

**6.)** **Play**- Take this time while you are at home with your child to focus on playing together. Playing with your child has unlimited possibilities. Follow your child’s interests while engaging in play. Play activities include, but are not limited to, the following: pretend play, play kitchen, play store, hide and go seek (practice counting out loud during this activity), building forts with blankets and couch cushions, building with wooden blocks, building with Duplo blocks or Legos, play doh activities (you could even make homemade play doh together), working puzzles together, coloring, drawing, cutting paper with scissors (with parent supervision), making creative art with items you have around the house, and playing outside (while maintaining “social distancing” recommendations). Think of games and activities you played as a child when we did not have all the technology like tablets and cell phones that we have today. Introduce those games and activities to your child. Make sure you are doing the activities listed above with your child so you can help, teach, and encourage as needed while playing.

**7.)** **Reading books**- Read books to your child. Never underestimate the power and importance of reading books to your child.

**8.)** **Limit screen time**- In times like this we know how easy it is to get out the tablets, iPads, cell phones to let your child play games or watch videos, or turn on the television and leave it on all day long. Now more than ever it is so very important to limit the use of screen time especially since your child will be at home more often. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following in regards to screen time:

* For children younger than 18 months, avoid use of screen media other than video-chatting. Parents of children 18 to 24 months of age who want to introduce digital media should choose high-quality programming, and watch it with their children to help them understand what they're seeing.
* For children ages 2 to 5 years, limit screen use to 1 hour per day of high-quality programs. Parents should co-view media with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.
* For children ages 6 and older, place consistent limits on the time spent using media, and the types of media, and make sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviors essential to health.
* Designate media-free times together, such as dinner or driving, as well as media-free locations at home, such as bedrooms.
* Have ongoing communication about online citizenship and safety, including treating others with respect online and offline.

Source: https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/American-Academy-of-Pediatrics-Announces-New-Recommendations-for-Childrens-Media-Use.aspx