

Art Therapy Activities to do at Home



A helpful and fun guide for parents and their families whilst staying at home.

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INTRODUCTION

A parent's guide to helping your family's emotional well-being whilst at home

This is an unprecedented time for everyone, and we aren't used to staying at home. Perhaps you are left with feelings of uncertainty as we do not know how long this will last. You might be feeling confused with all sorts of various information or questioning yourself about how to best support your child/children. Possibly you have noticed behavioural changes in yourself or those in your family. It could be you don't even know how to describe how you are feeling. Perhaps you are missing a relative or friend. In whatever way this situation is affecting you and your family, this guide is about helping us maintain good mental health through looking after our emotions.

The activities in the next few pages are aimed to help your children and you to enjoy expressing yourselves in a positive and creative way. The activities can help to process and communicate difficult emotions which contributes towards maintaining good mental health. Also, the act of art making is a way of releasing emotions from our bodies. What's more, you either don't have to talk about it if you don't want to or it helps, facilitating a space to talk about thoughts and feelings.

Making art, helps us express our feelings. This guide gives activities to help us through our worries, fears and anxieties during this unique time.



I hope you enjoy this guide and have fun with it.

WORRY WAND

AIM: Everywhere we turn, we are aware of coronavirus. Whether it's the advertisement on TV, people wearing masks or not being able to do our usual activities; we are reminded every day. This may cause worries, fear and anxiety. As adults and parents, we may find ourselves acting and feeling differently. Our children will be going through the same thing; fear of the unknown, worrying if they would catch it and uncertainty of what's happening are a few examples. The purpose of this activity is to name and acknowledge the worry or fear. Naming and acknowledging, whether it's spoken through word or kept in the mind; it can be a powerful tool. Then it's about letting the worry or fear go. This can be done by creating and using a worry wand. (See below). Alternatives to the worry wand are explained in the extension part.

MATERIALS NEEDED: A straw/chop stick/skewer, paper, fabrics, glue, glitter – any art and crafts materials to make a unique and personalized wand.

YOUR MISSION: This can be done together or on your own. The idea is to create your very own wand and make it special to how you want it. Whilst you are making the wand think about what it is you are worried about. You may wish to talk about it, or you might want to keep it in your mind. Whatever you decide is the right way for you. After you have made your wand, use your imagination to magic your worry away. You may wish to create your very own spell!

EXTENSION: So, if magic wands aren't your thing; have a go at a worry box or worry doll instead.

Worry Doll – Children in Guatemala whisper their worries into dolls before bed. They put the doll under their pillow before they go to bed. Then once they are sleeping, the dolls take away their worries and the children wake up with their worries gone. You can try this, maybe you can make your own doll or dolls?

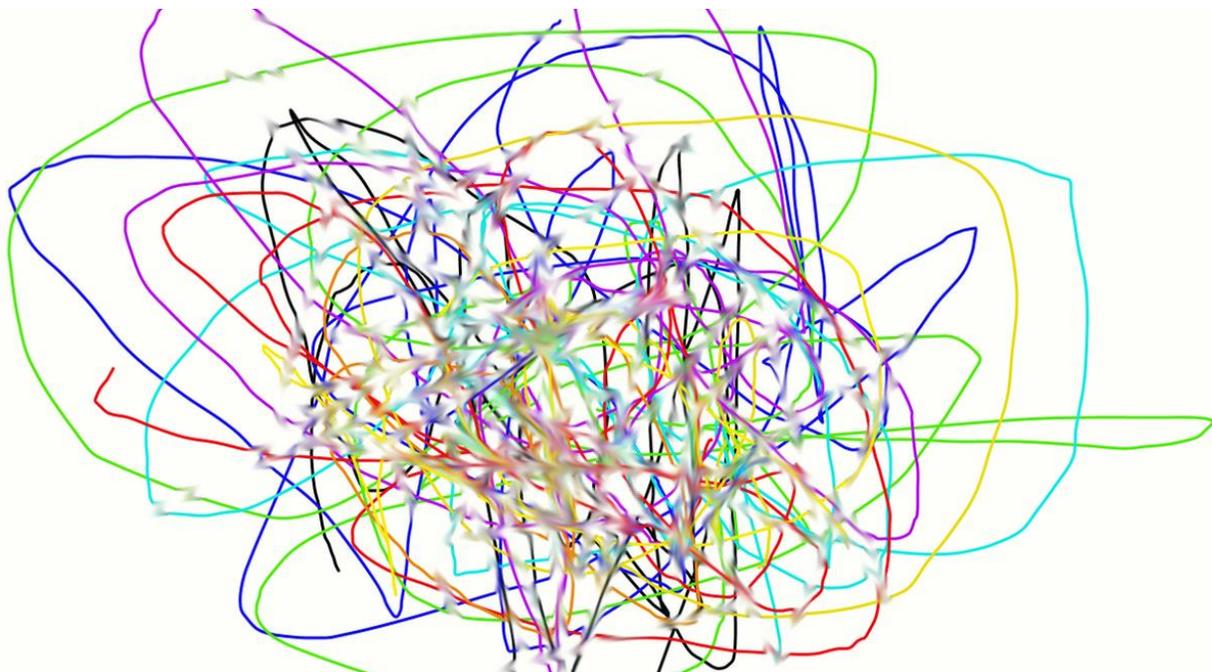
Worry box – To do this, you need to create your very own box and decorate it how you want. This can be a fun activity to do with your adult if you are too young or do it on your own. Then write your worries on paper and put them in your box. The worries have left you and are being kept safe in your box. Sometimes, you may want to read them at a later date and see how you feel.

MESSY FEELINGS

AIM: The aim of this activity is to express yourself with art materials and without thinking about it.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Any materials you can get your hands on

YOUR TASK: This task is simple; it's allowing your child to create anything they want with no guidelines. That means, parents don't worry about teaching them how to make art or setting a theme. Forget about the mess (you might want old clothes on and newspaper down). This is about letting your child/children have fun expressing themselves through art making in whichever way they want. This is a messy exploration of their messy feelings. Even adults find it hard to express themselves, can you imagine what it's like for our children? We are like containers for our children's emotions, if we can help contain their feelings and let them know it is ok to feel whichever way they feel, we are helping them. Give it a try yourself, you might be pleasantly surprised.



MASKS

PURPOSE: Seeing people around us wear masks and wearing our own masks for protection for ourselves and others could provoke lots of different feelings for our children. It's not normal, we can't see people's faces and let's be honest, it is unusually weird! Some children might even be scared.

STUFF TO GATHER: Preferably some thick card, paper will also do, crafty bits like glue, tissue paper, buttons, tin foil, plastic lids, usual art materials like colouring pencils, felt tips, crayons, anything you can get your hands on around the house, hole punch to create holes, string or similar to tie around the head

THE JOB: The idea of this, is to make fun and silly masks you and your child/children can wear around the house to play games and have fun with. Adults can cut out an oval shape, make eye incisions and holes for the strings to go through so it stays on your head. Then it's up to your children to decorate it any way they like. You may wish to use old things lying around the house or check out the recycling. It can be a bit of a scavenger hunt around the house and garden too.

This is a great opportunity to have time with your family, to talk about your thoughts and feelings about coronavirus, staying at home and the new unusual out of routine life you are now living. Perhaps you can act this out through drama scenes using your masks. Remember it's important to not make people talk about their feelings. They will talk when they are ready and some might not talk at all.



HAPPINESS BOARD

AIM: It's important to keep positive through these times. Spending some time each day to remember the things we are grateful for and the things that make us happy helps. By creating a happiness board, it can be a visual aid to help us remember this.

MATERIALS: Newspaper/magazine cuttings, computer images printed out, glue, cardboard or large bit of paper, paints, pencils, craft materials etc.

HOW TO CREATE IT: Think about what makes you happy, what you are grateful for and things you look forward to doing. You might want to find things in magazines and newspaper or look at things on the computer and print them out. Cut them out and stick them on your board, or if you're feeling imaginative, draw it yourself. Then you can specialise it to your hearts content. Use your magical creative brain to make a board full of happiness and fun. Then you are ready to hang it up or place it somewhere in your home to look at daily.

PHOTO BOOTH

AIM: Not being able to leave home to visit external family and other significant people in our lives can be difficult. Consequently, we might miss them so much it's hard to think about them. This activity is about acknowledging this and learning to sit with these uncomfortable feelings. Please be prepared for difficult feelings to arise. If the adult is ok with sitting with your child during these emotions it teaches them that it is ok to feel like that and they are accepted. This is important for emotional well-being.

STUFF YOU'LL NEED: Scanner and printer if you want to use photographs of the people you miss, any art materials you can find, grocery stores have limited supplies

WHAT TO DO: You can either draw people you miss or use photocopies of photographs. Create a scene on a piece of paper, somewhere you'd like to go with the person you miss. Then stick yourself and that person or people you miss on your scenery. This activity is best done with adult(s) so you can have space to talk or not about missing people.

THE BUCKET LIST

AIM: Throughout the upcoming weeks everyone in your family will at some point miss doing something. Whether it's doing team sports, going swimming or missing out on a holiday. We will all be missing something. The idea of this activity is to acknowledge the feeling of missing out and to have something to look forward to. Reinforcing that this too will pass.

STUFF YOU'LL HOPEFULLY HAVE: A jar, Paper and Pen/felt tip/ pencil

TASK: Leave the jar, some bits of paper and a pen somewhere where everyone can reach it. As and when people in your home miss something, get them to write it down on paper and put it in the jar. Then once this is all over, you can work through each piece of paper. This leaves something to look forward to and helps practice appreciation and gratitude whilst you do what you've missed.



VISUALISATION

ABOUT: Visualisation is a great way to get children and young people into imaginative thinking. It is also a good way to be in the here and now and help attribute to mindfulness. The idea is to get children to close their eyes and let them hear a story. Perhaps YouTube might have some you like, or you can use the examples below.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Cardboard box, paints, felts, fabrics, recycling, anything you can find!

EXAMPLES:

Post package

Imagine you are sitting in your favourite place at home. You are doing something you enjoy and feel calm and relaxed. You hear your doorbell go and you wonder who it is. You hear your name being called so you rush to the front door and realise the postman has delivered you a package. What does this package look like? How big or small is it? What's inside the package? How heavy is it? What colours do you see? Who is the package from? Now when you're ready, open your eyes and use the art materials in the room to create something from your imagination of the package you received. Perhaps it is a copy of the thing you received? Or perhaps it is the box or envelop it came in? Perhaps you want to write a letter to the sender? Whatever you want to do is right.

Mountain walk

Imagine you are on your own in the forest and you are walking down a path. Around you, you see trees, nature, animals, bugs, the sky. It's a hot day and you can feel the sun on your arms. You are walking down the path. You hear all sorts of noises, birds chirping, leaves rustling, animals calling, there is noise everywhere but there is also a sense of calm and quiet. It is just you and your thoughts; you focus on your breathing, in and out. You easily clear your head of all thoughts and concentrate on your senses, hearing, seeing, touching, tasting and smelling. As you are walking you notice it gets harder to walk, and you are becoming more and more out of breath. You realise you are going up hill. It gets steeper and steeper. You pause here and there to catch your breath and to take a sip of water. You are walking up a mountain. You get to the top of the mountain and the path ends. You look around. Being at the top of the mountain what do you see? Hear? Smell? Create something from your journey using any art materials. Remember there is no right or wrong.