

Dear families

We are pleased to be sending out this fourth issue of our Growing and Learning Together ideas with useful links and really hope that you and your family have been having fun spending time together with these inexpensive and easy but powerful learning opportunities. Hopefully, you are also able to take some lovely photos whilst carrying out these ideas to look back on promoting your children's recalling and memory skills as well as providing warm giggly moments. We would love to see and share how your family has been having fun and learning with these ideas so if you would like to send in photos with a short description to inspire other families please forward to threadsofsuccess@theeducationpeople.org. We will obviously need to gain your written permission to display your contributions so will forward you a consent form to complete and return before we display on The Education People website or in future Growing and Learning Together issues.

STAY HOME ▶ PROTECT THE NHS ▶ SAVE LIVES

Musical Moments

This is another great opportunity (see *Bathtime Scientists*, Issue 3) to recycle plastic containers, cardboard boxes and other packaging and provides hours of creative fun for all the family making a range of home-made musical instruments.

Whilst the sound produced from your creations may not match any professional music band and could even be a challenge to listen to 😊, if everyone gets involved you'll all be making the marvellous 'music' together and could produce some interesting rhythms which will fascinate your young children.

Of course let your children do as much as possible for themselves with your encouragement and guidance, when necessary. All activities are learning opportunities for your young children so chat through what is happening as you create the 'instruments' together, encourage them to find words (some may even be made-up ones) about how the objects being handled feel, discuss the shapes, colours and sizes of the objects, count out the scoops, discuss the length of tape being used, describe the sounds the 'instruments' make.

Try playing your 'instruments' whilst singing nursery rhymes and songs. Find different types of music and music from different countries to play along to ... and most of all have fun!

What you will need:

- A variety of clean empty containers with lids
- Kitchen paper towel tubing
- Rubber bands
- Items to put into containers to rattle e.g. buttons, marbles, beads, paper clips etc.
- Sticking tape, masking tape or child-safety glue
- Scissors
- Ladles or spoon

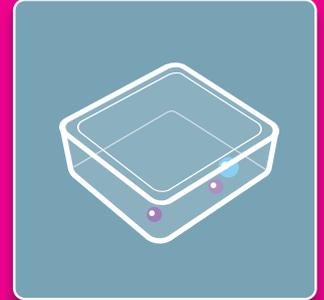


Musical Moments

N.B. As you know, small items can pose a choking hazard so keep a careful eye especially if several children are creating instruments at the same time. Again, as you're fully aware, scissors can be a hazard for young children. Rubber bands also need to be handled with care especially if being pulled tightly and then released - ouch!

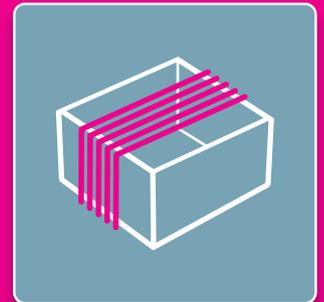
Making rattles/maracas

- Choose a container with a lid
- Using a spoon or ladle count scoops of items into the pot leaving space for the items to move around and make a noise when the lid is fitted
- Place lid firmly on container - you may wish to tape the lid in place especially if young children are involved to avoid small items being spilt



Box guitars

- Choose a plastic, metal or cardboard container
- Use rubber bands big enough to stretch over the container - this can be fiddly for little fingers but is an excellent hand-eye coordination exercise (and supports early writing skills) as well as promoting concentration...so lots of patience, encouragement and a helping hand if really struggling
- Place the rubber bands a little apart and then simply gently strum the bands with fingers. The tighter the rubber bands the more noise will be produced. However, the tighter the bands the greater chance they may snap which you want to avoid

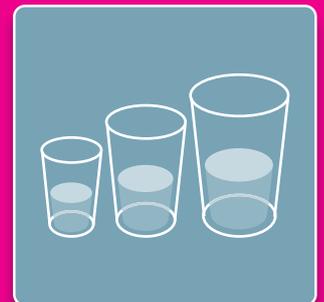


Musical chimes

The following idea is fascinating as children discover the varying sounds different quantities of water in a range of glass containers can make. Of course, as you know, care has to be taken with young children handling glass but gently guiding them will help them understand the risks involved.

What to do:

- Gather an array of glass containers. (Using a set of tumblers that are all the same size will give children a clearer message about how the amount of water changes the sounds made but this isn't essential - old jars are just as ideal)
- Provide water in a jug or bottle - younger children will ideally need a small jug or bottle to pour into the containers making sure that there are differing amounts of water in each container
- Food colouring to add to the water to provide another talking point (not essential) as the water changes colour
- Provide a range of items to gently tap the containers to hear what wonderful sounds they make.



Family Relaxation

Children tend to have loads of energy which can be exhausting especially if they have limited opportunity to run off steam. Children can also get over-excited and possibly frustrated with being indoors so much. How about doing some relaxation exercises together...if you have not done these before you may find yourselves dissolving into giggles ...that is absolutely fine as laughter is a great way of de-stressing and it means you're all having fun. Wear comfy clothing and give these ideas a go...

Deep breathing and stretching -

taking deep breaths will calm your heart rate and stretching will release tensions:

- Make sure you have enough room around each of you to stretch your arms out without touching each other
- Stand with feet about hip distance apart
- Take three deep breaths in and hold for a minute or so and gently let the breaths out - younger children may find this hard to grasp so go at their pace
- Stand on tip-toe...gently raise your arms above your head and stretch them up as high as you can reach. Younger children can be encouraged by suggesting they be as tall as a tree or imagine reaching the sky - let them come up with ideas too
- Gently flop forwards, bending at the waist, and just let your arms dangle
- Repeat three times



Relaxation

- If you have access to calming gentle music, you may want to put that on quietly in the background

Alternatively access [this link](#) on your phone

- Lie down on the floor and again encourage slow deep breathing
- Younger children may find it easier by putting a teddy on your tummy and watch it going up and down as they breath...see if they can slow the speed teddy moves up and down
- Older children may like you to talk quietly through a calming environment e.g. a deserted beach and hearing the waves gently lapping and the warmth of the sun etc.
- Carry out for up to five minutes or longer if the children are enjoying it



Chat with your children about their experiences and did it make them feel calm and relaxed. You may need to explore what 'calm' and 'relaxed' means and feels like for your children - they may never have discussed these concepts.

It could be worth considering doing these opportunities or similar every day (see links on back page) or when you see the children starting to get fractious and irritable ...and are equally useful to help keep yourself and other family members calm and relaxed too.

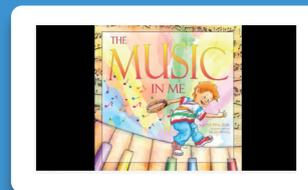
Creating Special Moments

The First Music:

1. A Folktale from Africa
by Dylan Pritchett



2. Music in me



Useful links to children's meditations and yoga exercises that you can all do as a family:

1. The Elephant's Cousin - a meditation story for younger children



2. Your Secret Treehouse - Relaxation for Older Children

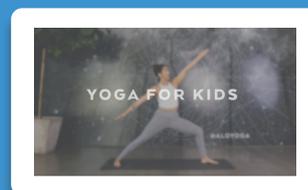


Yoga for Children and Families

1. On the Farm - Children's Yoga and Nursery Rhymes by Cosmic Kids Yoga



2. Yoga for Kids with Alissa Kepas of Alo Yoga



Children learn through play and they learn most from you so make your time together as playful as possible. They will love playing with you and many special memories can be created during this challenging time. Try to create a daily routine for you and your children - include making regular contact with other family members via social media so that children still feel connected to them.

Useful information to help explain Coronavirus to your children

Coronavirus explained through a cartoon by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

UNICEF guides to coronavirus for parents and children

If your child is worried or anxious about coronavirus, find professional advice from Parents Helpline experts at Young Minds

This information has been provided by The Education People,
Kent County Council's Education Services Company



Early Years and Childcare Excellence



Enhancing Family Involvement in Children's Learning

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