

Acorn Psychology Services Improving Relationships and Building Skills Over the Summer

Many parents have had more time with their children over the last few months and have got to see first-hand their children's learning behaviours, strengths and weaknesses. With the summer holidays now approaching we wanted to think about ways parents can continue to help their children to develop over the summer and help prepare them for returning to school in September.

Speech and Language Development Ideas:

- Read, read. This exposes children to new language, lets them hear language in context and gives them story ideas which they can use later when writing in school. With younger children talk to them while you are reading, ask them to guess what might happen next, work out why characters may be feeling a certain way e.g. 'Why is bear feeling sad?' or guess how the story might end. Talk about sounds that make up words e.g. 'Look 3 words in that sentence started with a 'p' sound, do you know what they were? With older children, talk to them about what they are reading, encourage them to share books with you and make suggestions for other books they might enjoy.
- Plan a treasure hunt game, where your child has to listen to your instructions to find a clue or an object. For example, 'Try looking behind the sofa'. Help your child look for a specific number of objects and count them together such as 3 cups, 2 pink socks, 5 pens.
- Help your child to make a puppet show about their favourite story using toys and objects from around the house. Older children could use apps like story creator, scribble or movie maker to make their own stories or recount a family trip etc.
- Play sorting games together, collect a range of objects and help your child to sort them into groups e.g. by colour/size/use etc.
- Take a make-believe journey with your child. Make a car out of a cardboard box, some cushions or chairs, add some toy passengers and let your child drive you off on an adventure. Encourage your child to talk about where you are going, what you can see on the way etc.
- Talk together as a family about your day, things that you enjoy, what you are looking forward to etc. Support your child to listen, take turns and ask questions about what other family members have talked about.
- Sing, make up songs together, or sing along to ones you already know!
- Tongue Twisters and word games are an important part of learning to speak well. You can have fun teaching your child different tongue twisters, try saying them together. Who can do it best? Who can say it the most times without going wrong?
 - I scream, I scream, you scream, let's all scream for ice cream.
 - Peter Piper, where's the peck of pickled peppers that Peter Piper picked?
 - Red lorry, yellow lorry, red lorry, yellow lorry.
 - She sells seashells on the sea shore.



- Bubble bobble, bubble bobble, bubble bobble.
- See which ones are the most fun. Try saying them as fast as you can. You can even make up some of your own.
- Play a memory game together. This will help your child communicate, solve problems build concentration and memory. First, gather some of your child's favourite toys, books and objects. They can help you with this. Put them together and talk about what's there. Next, ask your child to close their eyes and turn around. Remove some of the items. Then get them to open their eyes and see if they can list what's missing. You can play this game the other way around, with your child removing the items and testing your memory.

Developing Fine Motor Skills

These involve the use of the small muscles in our hands, wrists, fingers, feet and toes. Fine motor skills require a child's brain to co-ordinate an action and what they are seeing e.g. to draw, to write, to tie shoelaces, use scissor, use a knife and fork etc. To develop these muscles, children need practice grasping, holding, pressing and using a pincer grip. Here are some activities which are particularly effective in the development of fine motor skills:

- Playing with playdough
- Doing jigsaws
- Drawing, colouring and painting
- Using tongs or tweezers
- Cutting with scissors
- Filling and emptying containers
- Building with blocks and Lego
- Threading and lacing
- Brushing teeth

Developing Social and Emotional Skills

To develop and improve their social skills, children need first-hand experience with turn-taking, emotional regulation, teamwork, and perspective-taking. Here are some ideas you can try at home:

- **Emotions and Puppets.** Puppets are a great way to introduce children to feeling words like *happy, sad, angry,* and children will sometimes talk to puppets about their feelings. Puppets can also help in discussions about challenging topics, like going to bed on time.
- Perspective Taking: This is an easy activity all about identifying the feelings and thoughts of others and you can do it when you are watching TV or a movie with your child. Press pause and ask, "How do you think that he or she feels right now? What are they thinking?" Let your child respond and then you can also share your own thoughts, "I think they feel scared because they are being



chased" or "I think they feel happy because I see the rain is stopping and they can go outside." "It's important to let your child practice identifying the thoughts and feelings of others," You can also do this while doing role play activities or acting games. The Good Dinosaur, The Incredibles and Inside Out are great film options for talking through emotions and feelings.

- Read bedtime stories. This end-of-the-day routine is an ideal time for talking about feelings. Discuss the characters and events in the story. Invite your child to share her thoughts and feelings by asking questions: "What do you think he should do? How do you think she feels? What would you do if you were this character?" Stories are a lovely way to begin to teach empathy. You can also talk through different scenarios and ask your child how other people might feel when certain things happen.
- Think out loud. When your child hears your thinking process, it helps them understand how to cope with frustration and solve problems: "Oh no! My favourite shopping bag has a hole in it. I'd better take another one with me to the shop." "Oh dear, I've spilled my drink. Will you help me clean it up and then I can pour another one?'
- **Pre-empt and Prevent potential problems.** Before a friend comes to play, help your child put away toys he does not want to share. Before taking a bus to the zoo, provide a step-by-step explanation of what you will do: "We will wait at the bus stop for 5 minutes, then get on the bus and sit together and watch the sights go by for about 30 minutes [explain this as the length of one episode of a favourite TV show]. Then we will walk for 5 minutes to the zoo and look round the lion house before anything else!" During the trip, remind your child of what will happen next.

Games and Activities to Support Social and Emotional Development:

- Card, board games and outdoor games such as tag or hop-scotch offer lots of opportunities for helping children learn to take turns, cooperate, handle frustration, and more. While playing games together, focus on fun instead of winning or losing.
- Would You Rather' Game: This is a silly game that lets kids laugh and let loose while using their imagination and creativity. Each person needs to come up with two silly or outlandish statements, making the other choose an answer no matter how ridiculous the options. This game is fun but also encourages children to think outside the box and ask follow up questions. (Some favourites to start could be: "Would you rather be able to fly or be invisible?" or "Would you rather live in the past or in the future?
- **Problem Solving with Props:** This one may take some planning, but you need props like paper clips, plastic cups, cotton balls, tape, lolly sticks, sticky notes, and straws (you can substitute for anything you don't have or things you do have around the house.) Then direct your child to solve problems with the items they have in front of them. Some problem-solving prompts could be: devise a slide for mini figures, create a jump ramp for cars, and build the highest tower you can. See where their imagination takes them!
- Maintaining a two-way conversation: This game (Stack) was developed to support children to take turns and stay on topic. To play this two-player game, you need only a set of stackable 'tokens' -- like draughts or blocks -- and an adult or peer group to help judge the relevance of each player's contributions. The game begins when Player One sets down a token and says something to initiate a conversation. Next, Player Two



responds with an appropriate utterance, and places another token on top of the first one. The players keep taking turns to advance the conversation. How long can they sustain it? How tall can their stack become? When a player says something irrelevant or off-topic, the conversational flow is broken, and the game is over.

- 'I spy' and 'Simon Says' games help children learn to follow instructions, maintain their focus and attention and develop language skills.
- **Scavenger hunts** in the house and garden. Make a list of things for your child to find e.g. leaf, twig, snail, pebble, or teaspoon, lollystick, scissors, tin, moneybox, pen. This game helps your child improve their reading skills, thinking skills and spatial awareness.
- **Obstacle courses** inside or outside will improve a child's gross motor skills and co-ordination. Inside you could use cushions, a chair, a throw or boxes. Ask your child to crawl under, through, and over, jump, throw and hop. This will support language development in younger children.
- **Pretend/role play.** Pretend play has a critical role in cognition, social and emotional development and language skills for younger children. Get out old sheets and charity bag clothes and make costumes, upcycle boxes into boats, shops or animals.
- **Improvisation games** increase children's confidence, thinking skills and focus and attention. For example, tell a story by narrating one word or one sentence each.

For more information visit: https://www.parentingscience.com/social-skills-activities.html

Educational Apps Your Child may Enjoy:

Teach my Monster to Read
Duolingo (Learn a different language)
Minecraft Educational
Roblox Educational
Epic (Ebook library)
Scratch (coding app)
Youtube kids
Puppet Pals (create animations)
Hit the button (maths games)
TT Rockstars (Times tables)
Artie's magic pencil (drawing app)
Toca Lab (virtual chemistry)
DragonBox Algebra



iMovie (movie making app)GarageBand (music app for older children and teenagers)AutoDesk Sketchbook (art app for older children and teenagers)

Improving Your Parent-Child Relationship:

The following leaflets have been produced by Unicef and provide some great tips to help improve relationships in your home.

COVID-19 PARENTING One-on-One Time

Can't go to work? Schools closed? Worried about money? It is normal to feel stressed and overwhelmed.

Set aside time to spend with each child

It can be for just 20 minutes, or longer - it's up to us. It can be at the same time each day so children or teenagers can look forward to it.



Ask your child what they would like to do

confidence. If they want to do something that Isn't OK with physical distancing, then this is a chance to talk with them about this. (see next leaflet)

Switch off the TV and phone. This is virus-free time

Ideas with your teenager

- Talk about something they like: sports, music, celebrities, friends
- Dook a favorite meal together
- Exercise together to their favorite music

Listen to them, look at them. Give them your full attention. Have fun!

Ideas with your young child

- Read a book or look at pictures
- Make drawings with crayons or pencils
- Dance to music or sing songs
- Do a chore together make cleaning and cooking a game
- Help with school work

For more information click below links:

Parenting tips In worldwide from UNICEF languages

EVIDENCE-BASE









Ideas with your baby/toddler

Oppy their facial expression and sounds Sing songs, make music with pots and spoons

Tell a story, read a book, or share pictures

Stack cups or blocks









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2 COVID-19 PARENTING Keeping It Positive

It's hard to feel positive when our kids or teenagers are driving us crazy. We often end up saying "Stop doing that!" But children are much more likely to do what we ask If we give them positive instructions and lots of praise for what they do right.

Say the behaviour you want to see

Use positive words when telling your child what to do; like 'Please put your clothes away' (instead of 'Don't make a mess')

It's all in the delivery

Shouting at your child will just make you and them more stressed and angrier. Get your child's attention by using their name. Speak in a calm voice.

Praise your child when they are behaving well

Try praising your child or teenager for something they have done well. They may not show it, but you'll see them doing that good thing again. It will also reassure them that you notice and care.



Get real

Can your child actually do what you are asking them? It is very hard for a child to keep quiet Inside for a whole day but maybe they can keep quiet for 15 minutes while you are on a call.



Teens especially need to be able

to communicate with their friends. Help your teen connect through social media and other safe distancing ways. This is something you can do together, tool



Parenting tips Parenting tips In worldwide from UNICEF languages



















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3 COVID-19 PARENTING Structure Up

COVID-19 has taken away our daily work, home and school routines. This is hard for children, teenagers and for you. Making new routines can help.

Create a flexible but consistent daily routine

- 0 Make a schedule for you and your children that has time for structured activities as well as free time. This can help children feel more secure and better behaved.
- Children or teenagers can help plan the routine for the day like making a school timetable. Children will follow this better if they help to make it.
- Include exercise in each day - this helps with stress and kids with lots of energy at home.



You are a model for your child's behavior

If you practice keeping safe distances and hygiene yourself, and treat others with compassion, especially those who are sick or vulnerable - your children and teenagers will learn from you.

vour about keeping safe

distances

Teach If it is DK in your country, get children outside.

child You can also write letters and draw pictures to share with people. Put them up outside your home for others to see!

> You can reassure your child by talking about how you are keeping safe. Listen to their suggestions and take them seriously.

Make handwashing and hygiene fun

Make a 20-second song for washing hands. Add actions! Give children points and praise for regular handwashing.

Make a game to see how few times we can touch our faces with a reward for the least number of touches (you can count for each other).

At the end of each day, take a minute to think about the day. Tell your child about one positive or fun thing they did.

Praise yourself for what you did well today. You are a star!



For more information click below links Parenting tips from UNICEF languages EVIDENCE-BASE

















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