**An Occupational Therapist’s Guide to Quarantine**



Dear Parents and Guardians,

As you know, we are living in different and challenging times. We know from speaking to many families on the phone that everyone is trying their very best to get used to new routines and new rules and even they are changing regularly.

As occupational therapists we know that how we spend our time is really important for our physical and mental health. We also know that lots of young people and adults are having a hard time doing all the things they usually like to do to keep them healthy, or maybe we’re spending too much time doing the things we love and even they’re getting boring!

These are some of our top tips to keep us going during these hard times.

**Routine**

Your usual routine might have changed a lot now with no school and some family members trying to work or study at home. As much as you can, it is still really important to have a daily routine. This means having a bedtime and a time to get up every morning, having meal times, and getting dressed daily. This keeps our brains going as normal and makes us feel safe.

**Get moving!**

Children need a minimum of 1 hour of physical exercise per day and adults need lots too. This means activity that leaves us warm and out of breath. This might be harder when we are stuck in the house. Please see below for some ideas for indoor and outdoor exercise for the family. Exercise is really important for sleep and keeping us calm, as well as keeping our hearts and bodies healthy. “Heavy work” activities are really important for children who can get a bit hyper or are prone to “meltdown”. Please see below for a list of ideas.

**Keep an eye on screen time!**

Let’s face it, we’re all on our phones and computers much more at the moment and it can be comforting to play a game or watch TV. Just make sure that you and your kids are stepping away from the screens for a couple of hours at least to do something else, and especially an hour before bed.

**Learn something new**

Whether your child is doing school work or not, now is a great opportunity to learn something new that might feel too stressful other times. Whether it’s how to tie your shoelaces, how to say hello in 5 languages, or how to play a new card game, learning something new keeps our brains ticking and helps us feel successful.

**“Me time” or quiet relaxation time**

We all need to take time for ourselves. Even if only for 15 minutes, it can help us get along with everyone a bit better. If this is scheduled into our day and is predictable it can make it easier for everyone to understand. It’s also a good opportunity to have a child pick an activity they can do alone for a few minutes. Some people need more “me time” than others and children often don’t realise they need this themselves so may need support, we also may need this at different times or parents may need to take turns so children are still supervised.

**Chill out zone**

If your child does not have their own room or space to go to when they need their alone time or to calm down from a meltdown, try to create a “chill out zone” somewhere in the home. This can be a tent, an old bed sheet or towels turned into a den with cushions and blankets and low lighting and an open window for cool air flow. Having headphones with soothing music or ear plugs may be helpful to block out noise. Use of this space should be *agreed before* a meltdown happens and it *should not be used* as a punishment.

**‘Bored’ is not a bad word**

When we have time and space to get bored our creative brains start to work! Don’t feel that you need to have every minute of every day planned. Encourage your child to come up with their own activity ideas. If they have a hard time doing this, have them pick from the activities below.

**Balance**

Some days you’ll get nothing done and stay in your pyjamas, other days you might get lots done. Aim for a balance between the two and you’ll be doing really well.

Please find below an example of daily visual schedules which you can use at home with the kids to think about how you’re spending time and support routines. Pinterest also has lots of visuals to download. There is also a list of activities and resources that might come in handy, there are lots more out there that we haven’t included so add your own as you think of them! *Please judge your own child’s ability and safety when it comes to learning new skills.*

**ACTIVITY IDEAS**

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| **Learn*** School work
* Fine motor activities – cutting, pasting, writing
* Start With Art – activities to develop fine motor skills – book by Ines Lawlor, OT
* A musical instrument or new piece of music
* 5 words in a different language
* About our emotions and other people’s emotions
* Research a topic or person of interest
* Teach someone else about something you love
* A new skill – bike riding, tying shoelaces, making a snack (see life skills below)
* RTE – “School on TV” every morning from 30/03/2020
 | **Move*** Walk
* Cycle
* Scooter
* The Body Coach – Youtube every morning at 9am for children
* 10 @ 10 on RTE
* Go Noodle
* Home circuits
* Free dance with your favourite music
* Learn a dance routine on TikTok
* Trampoline
* Cosmic Kids Yoga – YouTube
* Yoga with Adrienne - YouTube
* Kick a ball or play DONKEY
* Hopscotch
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| **Play*** Board games
* Card games
* Treasure hunt
* Playstation/XBOX(sometimes! And only kids games!)
* Blow football
* Imaginative play
* Dress up
* Playground
* Sensory play
* Obstacle course
* Adventure – set up a camp or fort in the garden/living room
 | **Create/make*** Art
* Daily drawing challenge - RTE Draw with Alan
* Colouring/mindful colouring – free online
* Make jewellery or pictures using beads or loom bands
* Make a collage of photos
* Make a costume out of old clothes
* Craft kits – candle making, crochet, knitting
* Make slime
* Leaf rubbing from the garden or park
* Make cards for birthdays or events coming up
* Baking/cooking
* Play a musical instrument/sing
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| **Life skills*** Basic meal or snack prep – cereal, toast, fruit, peeling potatoes or carrots, buttering bread, how to use grill/toaster, pouring cold liquids
* Making your bed
* Taking care of a pet – feeding/walking/cleaning up
* Tidying your bedroom/your things
* Laundry – choose one or more stages according to ability - put clothes in the basket, sort clothes, use machine, hang clothes out, dry clothes, fold, put away, iron (if very able!!)
* Dishes – bring your own dishes to sink, load dishwasher, wash dishes, dry dishes, put away
* Money – learn about basic purchases and using money, play shop, send into local shop for something specific, how to earn/use pocket money
* Go somewhere by yourself – an easy journey to somewhere safe and back
 | **Self-care and hygiene*** Have a bath/shower
* Brush teeth
* Brush hair
* Wash face
* WASH HANDS!
* Paint your nails
* Moisturise
* Do a face mask
* Massage hands and feet
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| **Quiet activity/Alone time*** Reading
* Drawing
* Mindfulness or meditation
* Colouring
* Sit and watch the world go by at home or in the park
* Go to your chill out zone
 | **Relax*** Gardening / take care of an indoor plant
* Read something you enjoy
* Watch TV
* Mindfulness
* Yoga
* Nature – go out to the garden or park and look for different types of animals and trees and flowers
* Puzzles – Crosswords, word searches, Sudoku
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| **“Heavy Work” activities to keep us calm*** Blow Football
* Chair push ups
* Wall push ups
* Monkey bars
* Yoga
* Pilates
* Making the bed (fluffing duvet and pillows)
* Hanging laundry on the line
* Vacuuming the floors
* Tug of war
* Using weights and resistance bands (depending on age and strength)
* Singing
* Deep breathing
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**Useful websites with lots of resources**

[www.beaconhouse.org/resources](http://www.beaconhouse.org/resources) brilliant resources from OT and other therapists with videos and links to activities, e.g. how to build a sensory obstacle course, mindfulness for kids, art activities

[www.annafreud.org/coronavirus](http://www.annafreud.org/coronavirus) resources for self-care and managing anxiety in children

[www.ncse.ie/online-resources](http://www.ncse.ie/online-resources) Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy activities for home, such as fine motor skills and sensory activities

<https://www.youtube.com/thebodycoachtv> Personal trainer Joe Wicks “The Body Coach” does free daily PE exercises with lots of heavy work!

Apps:

Stop, Breathe, Think – mostly free mindfulness, meditations and breathing exercises with some for children

Headspace – meditation and mindfulness with pictures, also on YouTube

Our Pact – helps parents manage apps on child’s phone, e.g. no TikTok between 9am and 5pm

