

Fun Activities to Do with Your Child

Research has shown that one of the best ways to engage the mind of a young child is through play, especially 'messy' play. Interacting with your child during play not only shows them the joy that comes from playing, but also helps them to develop their social skills. It is also a good idea to have some fun activities to do when your children are BORED!

In One Family we would like to encourage each family to celebrate life as a family in today's busy world.

One simple way you can do this is to have regular activities which acknowledge how good it is to be part of a family. Here are some things you could do:

Tips:

- Have a family meal together – where everyone helps decide what you will cook and then everyone plays a part in preparing the meal. Even the youngest child can be given a task. You can each bring some special story to the table to tell each other about why you like being part of this family.
- Take out the old photo albums and sit together and look back at things you have all done together as a family. Remember what was good and what was a challenge and look at where you are today. Now take out the camera and take some new photos of each other to put into your album.
- Do something fun together – often we are so caught up in everyday life and what drives us crazy about each other that we forget to notice what we like about each other. So for one day try to notice what you like about family members and tell them. Maybe go to the park and play some football or hide and seek, have a picnic and tell stories.
- Have mums/dads day off if there are older children and ask the children to pamper mum/dad for the day/evening – come with some ideas so everyone can pamper mum or dad.
- Now mum/dad has to pamper the children – think of what each of your children really love to do and try to plan a fun evening of pampering and surprises – such as baking, DVD, play time, art session, dancing, dress up the list is endless – so think of your child and make a plan.
- Spending Quality Time together as a family helps to mend broken bridges and you will find that you can all communicate much better after spending a positive week together where all your energy is focused on what is working. If you can get

everyone liking each other then you can sit and talk about the problems and plan together how to solve them.

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Making Play dough

Making playdough together is a great way to play with your child. It is an inexpensive, quick activity that will keep your child entertained for hours.

Recipe:

2 parts flour

1 part salt

*2-3 drops food colouring

*2-3 drops essence for smell

Water

**These items are not necessary if you don't have access to them.*

Mix the flour and salt, and add food colouring and essence if you want (if using food colouring, you may want to wear gloves to keep the dye off your hands, although it will wash off within a day). Gradually mix in water little by little until it reaches a doughy consistency (it should not be too dry or sticky – if it becomes too sticky add more flour).

You can use jars to cut shapes, rolling pins, and butter knives and anything else you can think of to play and make shapes with the play-dough. When done playing, you can store the playdough in a

plastic bag in the fridge for up to a week.

Dress Up Day

On a rainy day it is great to have a back-up plan – an activity to keep your children occupied.

Why not clear out those wardrobes and make a dress up box. Every child loves dressing up, so the more old clothes, jewellery, hats and shoes you can collect, the more fun it will be for your children. This is also a great excuse to tidy up the wardrobe and make some space for yourself.

You could also invest in some face paints and a disposable camera, so everyone can take turns getting their photo taken in their costumes.

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Baking Day With Children

Baking with children can be a fun thing to do on a long, rainy day. Children learn a lot from baking such as measuring, pouring, weights. They get to use all their hand muscles stirring and rolling. They also get to see how food is made and the changes that take place in cooking foods.

Why not make some ginger bread men or fairy cakes. Recipes are easy to follow and the ingredients can be quiet cheap in the bigger supermarkets. Then you can invite friends over to play or for a tea party.

If you really don't like cooking you can now buy bun sets which come with decorations. Just follow the instructions.

Maybe you could also visit a farm in the autumn and see the wheat been harvested or cows been milked. Children often don't know where basic foods come from. There are lots of pet farms around the country and I am sure the farmer could explain how the farm operates and what foods we get from the different animals and crops.

Tips for art time with your toddler!!

- **Be safe!** Make sure all art materials being used are safe for your toddler. Non toxic and washable paint especially!
- **Be practical!** Place emphasis on the process of the activity rather than the end product! Don't focus on what the product will look like-emphasise the content. A good way to do this is to take photos during the process and display these pictures instead of the final creation!
- **Be prepared!** While your toddler is resting or engaged in another activity-take the time to prepare the art session. Have everything you need within arms reach. A toddler's attention span will not wait for you!
- **Be clever!** Art time with your toddler does not have to be an expensive occasion. Use items that you can find in your home, examples include: empty toilet roll holders, old newspapers/magazines etc. You wouldn't believe all the things you can use which your toddler will love!
- **Be flexible!** Allow your toddler to follow their instincts. Let go of any expectations you may have about how 'pretty' a picture can be. Let your toddler explore the materials and just have fun with it!

- Be Willing! It is important for a parent to join in the fun! You should be willing to enjoy the experience with your toddler and worry about the mess later!