

CAMHS ARTS THERAPIES



FAMILY TOOL BOX

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How to talk to children and young people about the Corona Virus

Children and young people worry more about things when they are kept in the dark. It is important to keep them informed on an age appropriate level, provide comfort, and give them practical tasks to help them feel like they are doing something to help.

Children and young people are hearing all about coronavirus (COVID-19), let's make sure they get reliable information from you. Here's how to talk about it.

What does your child already know?

Ask questions appropriate to your child's age level. For older children, you might ask, "*Are people in school talking about coronavirus? What are they saying?*" For younger children, you could say, "*Have you heard grownups talking about a new sickness that's going around?*" This gives you a chance to learn how much children know — and to find out if they're hearing the wrong information.

Follow your child's lead. Some children may want to spend time talking. But if your children don't seem interested or don't ask a lot of questions, that's OK.

*A little reassurance
goes a long way...*

Offer reassurance and honesty

Focus on helping your child feel safe, but be truthful. Don't offer more detail than your child is interested in. For example, if they ask about school closings, address their questions but if the topic doesn't come up, there's no need to raise it unless it happens.

If your child asks about something and you don't know the answer, say so. Use the question as a chance to find out together.

Check the <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance> website for up-to-date, reliable information about coronavirus (COVID-19). That way, you have the facts. Speak calmly and reassuringly. Children and young people are generally aware when parents worry so when talking about coronavirus use a calm voice and stay focussed.

Give young people space to share their fears. It's natural for children to worry, "*What if this happens to me?*" Let your child know that children don't seem to get as sick as adults. Let them know they can always come to you for answers or to talk about what scares them.

Know when they need guidance. Be aware of how your children get news and information, especially older children who go online. Point them to age-appropriate content so they don't find incorrect information, talk to them about Fake News.

Help children feel in control

Give your child specific things they can do to feel in control. Teach children that getting lots of sleep and washing their hands well can help them stay strong and well. Explain that regular hand washing also helps stop viruses from spreading to others. Be a good role model and let your children see you washing your hands often!

Talk about all the things that are happening to keep people safe and healthy. Young children may be reassured to know that hospitals and doctors are prepared to treat people who get sick.

Older children may be comforted to know that scientists are working to develop a vaccine. These talks also prepare children for changes in their normal routine if schools or nurseries close in the future.

Put news stories in context. If they ask, explain that death from the virus is still rare despite what they may hear. Watch the news with your children so you can filter what they hear.

Children and adolescents often worry more about family and friends than themselves. For example, if children hear that older people are more likely to be seriously ill, they might worry about their grandparents. Letting them call or Skype with older relatives can help them feel reassured about loved ones.

Let your children know that it's normal to feel stressed out at times. Everyone does. Recognising these feelings and knowing that stressful times pass and life gets back to normal can help children build resilience.

Keep the conversation going

Keep checking in with your child. Use talking about coronavirus as a way to help children learn about their bodies, like how the immune system fights off disease.

Talk about current events with your children often. It's important to help them think through stories they hear about. Ask questions: *What do you think about these events? How do you think these things happen?* Such questions also encourage conversation about non-news topics.



Developmentally Appropriate Videos

Brain Pop: BrainPop is a group of educational websites with over 1,000 short animated movies.

Brain Pop Movie on Corona Virus:

<https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/>

Brain Pop Jr. on Washing Hands:

<https://jr.brainpop.com/health/bewell/washinghands/>

Information taken from:

Jennifer Shroff Pendley, PhD, March 2020

Making a (flexible) Schedule

One of the secrets that makes school days work so well is a routine. Children are used to following a schedule regardless of age. In times of heightened anxiety it can be comforting to know what is coming next and feel like there is a direction to your day.

Making a rough blueprint can help everyone feel more organised and purposeful. The most successful home schedules tend to be spacious and flexible with independent play/learning/parent break times built in.

Below is an image of a sample schedule which you can use as a starting off point. Take what works and change what doesn't to ensure your schedule is tailored to your family's needs. Don't get stuck in thinking you have to make up for everything that is being missed due to these changes, stay relaxed and do what you can. The most important thing is to be connected and look out for each other.

Before 9am	Wake up	Have some breakfast, shower, make your bed
Before 10.30am	Get outside	Go in the garden, for a walk, get out of the house for a bit of time, take the dog for a walk
10.45am	Eat something	Have a snack
11am-12.30pm	Do some learning	Access lessons from school, use some revision books, read, access BBC Bite Size
12.30-1pm	Eat something	It's lunchtime
1-1.45pm	Play/Relax	Go outside in garden, play computer, FaceTime a friend
1.45-3.15pm	Do some more learning	Access lessons from school, use some revision books, read, access BBC Bite Size
3.15-5pm	Play/Relax	Baking, Jigsaws, Painting or Drawing, Chat with friends
5.30pm	Eat something	Have tea, help each other make food, lay the table, clean up
6.30pm	Relax	Spend time together, play a game, watch a film or TV show you all like, spend time in room

Apps & Resources for Daily Activities

Twinkl – educational resource

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/>

BBC Bitesize

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

Lunch Doodles with Mo Willems

Author of popular children's book Piggy and Gerald is hosting an instructional doodle on YouTube every day at 1pm.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjaYnyCJDdU>

Daily Book Reading on You Tube

Author and illustrator of children's books, Chris Van Dusen, is going to be uploading at least one book reading a day to You Tube.



Below is a link to him reading the book The Circus Ship.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9UMzqv0CjA&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0P2A2nwZsFFxU4WSIOR-btbWM3YxQd91r0hLxD-w_SgGPuqh53TWguOI

ABC Mouse

The ABC Mouse Early Learning Academy has a free 30 day trial when you sign up. It is full of academic games and activities for children age 2-8.

<https://www.abcmouse.com/abt/homepage?8a08850bc2=T1813797739.1584315987.4807>

Brain Pop/Brain Pop Jr.

Like ABC Mouse, Brain Pop offers a 30 day free trial. Brain Pop contains thousands of educational videos for Reception-Year 11 together with quizzes and related materials, covering the subjects of science, social studies, english, math, engineering and technology, health, and arts and music – it's a US based www but still interesting.

<https://go.brainpop.com/access-free-stuff/family>

Podcasts for Younger Children

Disney Story Central (ages 2 years+)

In the Disney Story Central Podcast a narrator reads through a familiar Disney story. Some of them feature music and the narrators keep it very interesting with enthusiasm and changes in intonation. It is essentially an audio version of a high quality library story time.

Story Pirates (ages 2.5 years+)

The stories in Story Pirates are written by children, for children. They are full of silly kid humour which the whole family can appreciate. The narrator reads the story written by a young child and then professional actors take over and do a longer "adaptation" based on the child's story.

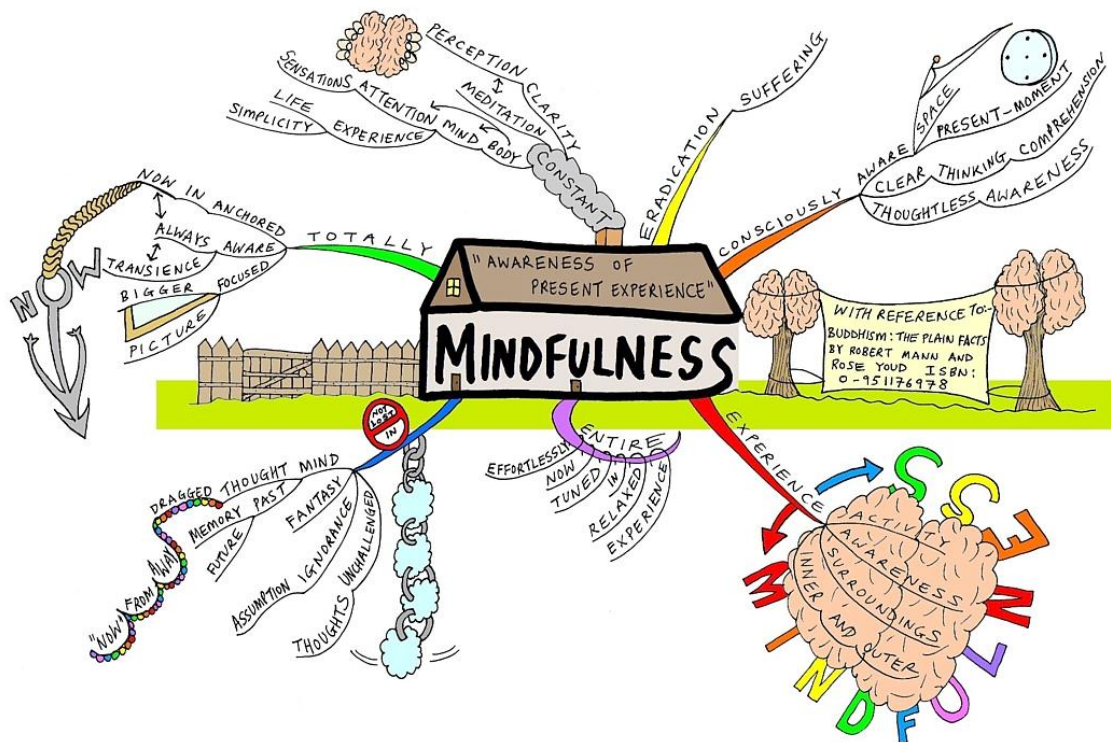
Story Nory (ages 3 years+)

Story Nory features a mixture of classic and modern children's stories. This podcast is built for more advanced listeners as there is only one voice for all of the characters, however, it will grow with your child and help teach them the basic format of a story.

Children's Fun Storytime Podcast (ages 4 years+)

The Children's Fun Story-time Podcast is also a single narrator without music. They do some classic stories and often split up longer chapter books into different episodes. As children grow older they will be able to engage with longer stories like this, and will be able to stop after one chapter and pick back up where they left off





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Mindfulness Activities for Children & Young People

The mental and physical benefits of mindfulness are widely recognised, not just for adults but for children too. The word “mindfulness” can be scary, and you might be thinking “my children will never do that.” There are, however, easy, quick, 2-5 minute ways to begin introducing this skill to children of almost any age. These shorter versions will begin to lay the groundwork all the same emotion regulating, stress reducing, brain changing, and breath strengthening benefits which the much longer more advanced versions do. And if nothing else, right now, a timed, structured opportunity to unplug (even if the guided story comes from an app) can be a positive way to focus energy.

Below are some of these activities and apps. All of the apps listed below have a free version which still provide many different guided relaxation scripts.

“Meditation for Children” App

This is a library of guided relaxations for younger children. Some of the files are just background noise/music but many of them have actual stories.

Cosmic Children Yoga – App/You Tube Videos

Cosmic Children Yoga has fun, engaging yoga for elementary age children. There is an app and there are a lot of their videos uploaded on you tube.

<https://www.cosmicchildren.com>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicChildrenYoga>

Breathe & Learn

Breathe & Learn is a California based children’s yoga program. The owner Joan Plake has made some of her digital downloads available for free if you enter promotion code “BREATHE” at checkout.

<https://www.breatheandlearn.com/free>

Stop Breathe and Think – App

Below are the links to information about the two versions of this app. You can actually choose how you are feeling first from several prompts and this app will suggest some appropriate guided relaxations for your current mood/challenge.

Children

<https://www.stopbreathethink.com/children/>

Adolescents

<https://www.stopbreathethink.com>

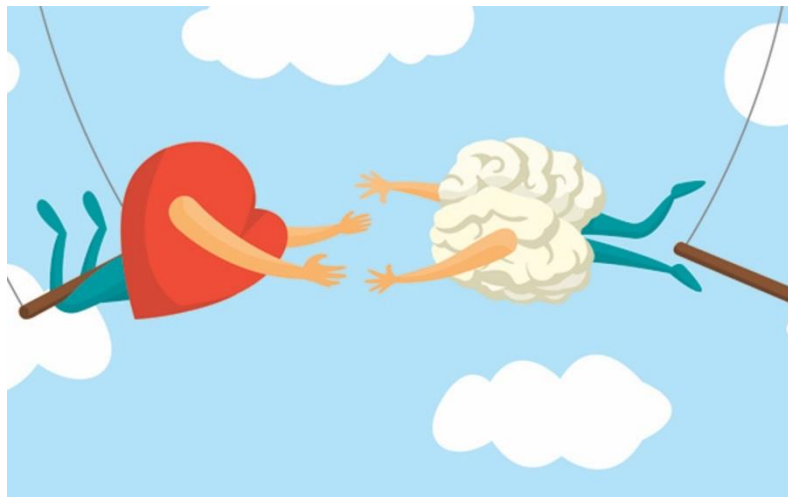
Smiling Mind – App for all ages

You can choose a programme built specifically for your child’s age and preferences in this app going all the way up to adolescents.

Mindfulness for Adolescents – Website

<http://mindfulnessforadolescents.com>

This Website is a great way to introduce a teen to mindfulness. There are testimonial videos from adolescents who have really experienced benefit and a full library of guided relaxation audio files available for free.



Short Guided Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script:

If at some point your child seems to have a lot of energy in their body (ex: struggling to sit still, wiggling all over the place, impulsive behaviour) from being stuck inside and away from friends, this can be a great, fast way to try and help them regulate that. You can just read the below script aloud: See purple box on next sheet!!

“Find a comfortable place to lie down on your back. Close your eyes if that feels ok. Take three long deep breaths.

Inhale. (Short pause) Exhale. (Short pause) Inhale. (Short pause) Exhale. (Short pause) Inhale. (Short pause) Exhale. (Short pause)

Can you feel your heart beating?

Can you feel your muscles?

We are going to do an activity where you squeeze certain muscles and then let them go to try and relax our whole bodies. I’m going to tell you which muscles to think about, when to squeeze them, and when to let go.

We are going to start with our hands and arms.

Notice your hands and then squeeze all the muscles in your hands making a strong tight fist. Keep squeezing (have them hold each squeeze for 5-10 seconds). Let them go.

*Now think about your arms, your whole arm from your wrist to your shoulder. Try to squeeze ALL the muscles from your wrists to your shoulders. Keep Squeezing....(5-10 seconds)
Let go.*

Let’s move onto our tummies. Try to focus on all the muscles in your belly and back. Squeeze all the muscles in your belly and back the best you can. Keep squeezing... (5-10 seconds) and Let go.

Let’s think about our legs. All the muscles from your hips to your ankles. Squeeze ALL those muscles in both legs. Keep squeezing... (5-10 seconds) Let go.

Let’s think about our feet, just like we did with our hands. We are going to squeeze all the muscles in our feet. Squeeze the muscles in your feet, curl your toes up. Keep squeezing... (5-10 seconds) Let go.

Let’s bring our attention all the way up to our heads. Think about all the muscles in your face. We are going to make really funny looking faces, squeezing all the muscles in our faces like we just ate a really sour lemon. Squeeze all the muscles in your face. Keep squeezing... (5-10 seconds) Let go.

We have one last squeeze. This time we are going to try and squeeze ALL the muscles in our ENTIRE body. From the top of your head all the way down to your toes. Ready? Ok squeeze EVERYTHING.

Keep squeezing... (5-10 seconds) Let go.

Let all your hard work sink in. Let your muscles relax. Let’s try to see if we can stay here, just like this, after all that hard work for a full minute. I will time you and let you know when the minute is up. (You can start as low as 20 seconds, gradually increasing by 10 seconds each time your child does this).”

Art Activities for Children & Adolescents

The biggest rule for most of these activities is always safety first. If there are steps that require scissors please assist your child to whatever level they need, or do it for them. If there are very young children/infants in your house and any of the art materials require small pieces which could be choking hazards be sure to designate an area for the older ones to work. Use all your same daily precautions in any of the below listed activities that you do for everything else your child engages in. Aside from safety, there are no rules about what these projects have to look like at the end.

It doesn't matter if their end piece of art barely resembles the activity or if your child hears what you are suggesting and decides to completely change it up. It doesn't matter if things are the colour they are "supposed" to be or if they don't look anything like what your child says they are. It doesn't matter if they start an activity and decide 5 minutes into it that they are done.

These are here to provide some stress relieving ways to fill your days. Not to create stress. If at any point they seem more stressful than helpful, pause, see if you can figure out what it is that isn't working and if all else fails, pick another activity or take a break and return when everyone is calmer.

Many of these activities can be enjoyed by most age groups. There are certainly some geared more specifically at the younger crowd, and at the bottom there are a few that are geared specifically toward older children/adolescents. But overall, most age groups could engage in the majority of these in some way.

Lastly, some of these projects may suggest materials you do not have. That does not have to mean you can't do that activity. There are often ways to substitute various items for the ones actually listed. Many of these activities can be thought of as a starting off point and you can be as creative and innovative with materials as you need to be.

Activities with Just Paper and a Drawing Material:

What is your favourite memory?

Materials:

Paper

Any drawing material

This one is just about as simple as it sounds. Ask your child to think of their favourite memory and use whatever drawing materials they have to illustrate part of it. You can be more specific and talk about a favourite memory with your family, a favourite memory with a friend, a favourite memory that happened outside, etc.



Peaceful/Favourite Place

Materials:

Paper

Any drawing material

During a time of heightened anxiety it can be helpful for children to be able to imagine a place where they feel safe and comfortable. Have your child think about a favourite place, a place they find comforting or peaceful. It can be real or imaginary. And then ask them to create any part of it they want on the paper.

If you want to take it further you can ask them what it is about the place they like so much. You can explain to them that any time they want they can close their eyes and imagine themselves there. You can help them practice this by having them find a comfortable place to sit or lie down and close their eyes. Ask them to imagine they are in their favourite place and ask them to notice what the temperature feels like? Do they hear anything? Do they smell anything? What colours do they see?

Mindfulness Drawing

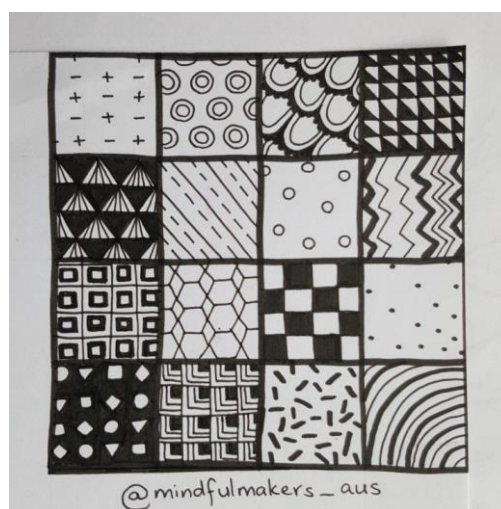
Materials:

Paper

Black pen

Any drawing material

The drawing in this example is black and white, which you can stick to but you can also incorporate as much or little colour into this activity as you want/have available. Your child will fill the page with lines to create an entire background of enclosed shapes (for really young children you can assist them with this part). It doesn't matter what the shapes are, how straight or bendy the lines are. And then they simply fill in the shapes. They can explore patterns with this by either filling the spaces with actual patterns as in the image shown, or by creating patterns with colours. They can also fill it however they want and abandon the idea of a pattern all together. Older children/adolescents enjoy this one too, often creating smaller or more involved shapes. Working to fill the page one small shape at a time can be a very meditative creative process for some children. This does not have to be completed all in one sitting.



A Butterfly a Day

Materials:

Paper

Any drawing material

Scissors

Tape

Optional: collage materials (ex: magazines, pompoms, sequins, googly eyes, etc.) and glue

With some scissors and any kind of drawing material you can turn a sheet of paper into multiple butterfly shapes. If you do not have scissors it can also be fun to fold the paper in half and try to rip the page into a butterfly shape that way. You can make multiple butterfly shapes all in one sitting, or, while you are stuck at home, you can turn this into an on-going activity that happens every



day/a few times a week/whenever you remember. One of the most fun parts of this is to watch the group of butterflies grow. So before you start, find a window, a wall, or a large piece of paper they can all be attached to and add them as you go.

If you want to add another element to this you can ask your children about where they would fly if they were butterflies? If it is something they are doing across multiple days/weeks you can suggest they use colours each day that reflects some part of that particular day. They can use lines, shapes, colours, words, etc., there are no rules.

Activities Using Mostly Household Items:

Sock Bubbles

Materials:

Empty Plastic Bottle (Fizzy drinks bottles work best but if you don't have these any bottle you can cut, get a sock around, and that has a mouth piece small enough for your child to blow into will work)

Scissors

Old Sock

Dish Soap and Water

Optional: Food Colouring

You will have to cut the end off of the bottle. This step should be done by an adult with care as the cut edge can be a little sharp. You will want to cut enough off so that when you pull the sock over the cut end it will stay on. You can also duct tape it to the bottle if that feels more secure.



Dip the sock covered end of the bottle into a shallow bowl with a mixture of dish soap and water, blow through the mouth piece of the bottle, and a bubble snake will start to come out the sock end of the bottle. For added fun if you have food colouring, add a few drops of food colouring to the part of the sock the bubbles come out of and they will change colour.

Rain Stick

Materials:

Paper Towel Roll

Rice

Aluminium Foil

Paper

Scissors

Pencil/Pen

Tape

Optional: Varied art materials to decorate the outside

Your rain sticks can be as wild as the example in the picture, as simple as markers on the tube, or even simpler with no decorations on the outside at all. First you will trace the end of the tube on your piece of paper. Cut out a circle slightly larger than the circle you've traced and then cut slits from the outside of the large circle to the line where you traced the roll. You will end up with tabs going all the way around what looks like a paper sun. Choose one side of the roll and position the circle on



it, fold the tabs around the tube and tape them on. You want to tape them on pretty well because children enjoy shaking these and you want to ensure the end will stay on. Next crumble your aluminium foil in a jagged, messy cylinder shape that is almost the same length as but slightly slimmer than the tube. The bendy and more jagged the better as long as it still fits in the tube. Slip your aluminium foil inside and pour your rice in. You want to fill it about half way with rice so that the sound lasts long enough but that there isn't so much that it can't move. Close up the other side the way you closed the first. Add some extra tape just in case. Decorate the outside however you want, and then start flipping it over from side to side to hear the rain.

Salt Painting

Materials:

Glue (PVA or similar, not a glue stick)
Salt
Watercolour Paint or Watered Down Food Colouring
Paper

Start by having your child "draw" on the paper with the glue making any design they want. It can be an actual image, or it can be lines and shapes. They will then cover their creation in salt, and pour off any excess. Add water to your food colouring or make very watery watercolour paint. They will dip their paintbrush in the colour, then touch it to the salt, and the colours will spread down the lines like magic.



Plastic Bottle People

Materials:

Cardboard
Paper
Plastic Bottles
Any drawing material
Scissors
Glue
Paper
Optional: Paint



You can turn old plastic bottles/containers into people. Have your child pick a container and remove any plastic wrapping from the outside. If you have paint they can decorate it that way but this is not necessary. Allow them to draw a face for their bottle person on cardboard and then cut it out for them. When cutting out the face, leave a strip under the chin to allow for easy insertion and attachment to the bottle.

From there the rest is up to your creative ideas. They can use the paper to create clothes, jewellery, arms, shoes, etc. You can make it a 3-d family portrait and actually make the members of your family. If there are any friends from school or family members they won't see for a little while they can make the bottles into them. They can also make up imaginary characters if interests them most. They can engage in play with the characters once they are done or simply leave them as pieces of art.

Outside/Nature Activities:

If you have a safe place to get outside, some fresh air can help push through being stuck at home. These directives include natural supplies which are usually easy to find. With any of these outside activities please be sure to take all the normal precautions while outside and wash your and your child's hands thoroughly upon going back in. They all also have an indoor option in case getting outside is not possible right now.

Power Sticks

Materials:

Sticks

Paint

Damp paper towels

Head outside, to a safe place, with the mission of collecting sticks. Wipe them down with a damp paper towel before you paint them to help the paint stick to their surface. It is entertaining enough to simply paint objects that we don't usually paint. Collecting, wiping, and painting the sticks is a full activity on its own. If you wanted, however, to take it one step further you could ask your children if they understand what it means to feel strong and powerful? Continue the conversation by asking them if they can name anything that makes them feel that way, or a time they felt that way. Once that feels complete, ask them to come up with a colour, or colours, that feel powerful and strong and start with those colours when they paint their sticks.

Inside alternative: paper towel rolls



Painted Rocks

Materials:

Rocks

Paint

Paper towels

Soap and water

This one is exactly what it sounds like. You can go on a rock hunt and look for rocks of different shapes. Rinse them off with soap and water when you get inside to help the paint stick to the rock surface, dry them off, and paint away. You can base your creation on the shape/size/colour of the rock or just let your imagination turn it into whatever you want.

Inside alternative: cut up pieces of cardboard into rock shapes and create an "inside rock garden"



Nature Mandala

Materials:

Any small moveable natural material you can safely find outside

The word “Mandala” is a fancy word for working within a circle. A circle is a naturally calming shape to work with and mandalas have been created for thousands of years for that reason.

There are really no rules to this one other than working within a circle (and even that is subject to artistic license). Find a flat-ish space outside where you will build your design and then the rest is up to you and your child.

You can collect all your supplies first and then start designing, or you can design as you go. You can use this as an opportunity to talk about patterns and incorporate them into the design, or you can completely abandon that and fill the space however you want.

Inside alternative: small toys, legos, game pieces, etc.



Nature Loom

Materials:

Sticks

String or Yarn

Natural soft, weave-able materials

You will start by collecting sticks to use as your frame and securely tying the corners together. You can get adventurous and change the shape of the frame into a triangle, circle, etc. But a square or rectangle works just fine.

Once the frame is tied together, tie your string to one corner and begin weaving it back and forth across the frame.

Wrapping the string/yarn around the stick twice each time will keep it tight enough to hold things in place. You want the string tight enough to hold your objects but not so tight that it breaks your frame apart. Once you get to the other side, tie off your string and you are ready to start weaving. You can find all kinds of things to weave through it: grass, leaves, seed pods, weeds, etc. Please be mindful of what your child is picking and of any allergies/potential irritation any of these objects could aggravate.



Inside option: You can turn an old picture frame into a loom with yarn using a similar wrapping technique on the frame as described above. Any soft household objects can be woven into the loom. It can be a fun reason to cut up old t-shirts that have been lying around, or you can simply use ribbon and strips of paper.

Older Children Activities:

Rolled Paper beads

Materials:

Paper

Scissors

Glue

A cylindrical prop to wrap the beads around (toothpick, straw, pencil, etc.)

String

This one can really be done by all ages with a few modifications which will be explained.

You will start with long skinny

triangle shaped pieces of paper. Depending on the age of your child they can help you create those or they can be prepared beforehand. The younger the child you are working with the wider and bigger you will want your triangles. You can have your child paint/design one side of the paper before you cut it into strips, keeping in mind it will be cut up. Making the triangles from magazine pages can sometimes create some interesting designs as well. Once you have your triangles it's time to roll them. The older the child the smaller the prop can be; teenagers can use toothpicks or pencils, younger children can use pencils or a large straw. Put a strip of glue down the side of the paper that will be the inside, and begin rolling it around the prop of choice. Add some extra glue to the very end before finishing the wrap and then remove the prop, setting the bead aside to dry. Once you have created enough to make a piece of jewellery string them together and you're done.



Altered Book

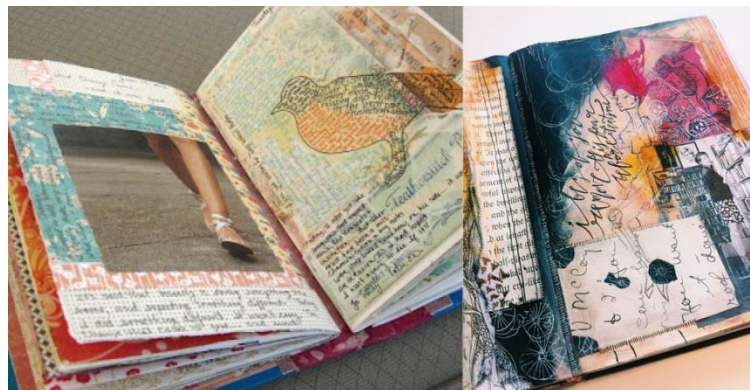
Materials:

On old book

Any art supplies you can find

An altered book is the process of taking a published book and turning into a visual art journal. Often a perk of this activity is the element of almost feeling like you are breaking some rule by creating inside an actual book. It can be an ongoing project (people work on the same altered book for years), and the sky is the limit (if you can think of a visual art technique there is probably a way to incorporate it into your book).

Your child would pick an old book, hardcover with mostly text usually work best, and just start creating. Some materials may bleed through the page so it can be useful to glue a couple pages together first. Some people decorate the cover, some don't. Some people work from the front to the back of the book, and some people open up to a random page every time they are going to make an entry. Some people



disregard the words on the page, and some people read the page for inspiration pulling out a few words to spark their creativity. Envelopes can be added, pages can be ripped out. It can be painted, collaged, drawn in, etc. This can be a great long term project for pre-teen/adolescents.

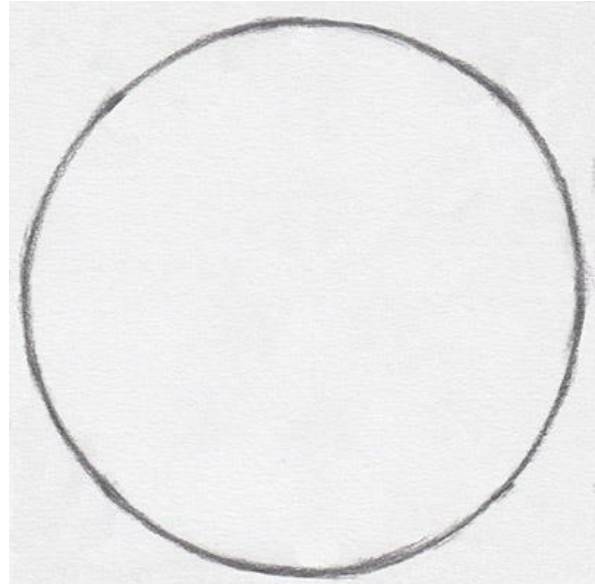
A Mandala A Day

Materials:

Paper

Drawing Material

Something circular to trace as your outline
(Tupperware container, large bottle, etc.)



As mentioned in the nature mandala description, “mandala” is a term for creating within a circle. There is an innately calming quality to working within that shape and it has been done for thousands of years. All you need is a piece of paper, drawing/painting materials of any kind, and something you can trace for your circle. This can be a one-time thing, or can become a quick daily practice. Some people use the circle as a container and create whatever they want inside, some people use the inside of the circle as a place to create something that reflects how they are feeling in that moment. They can use this container however they want. They can stay inside the circle or create on both sides of it. If this is something your child wants to do more than once, and you have any kind of drawing pad or notebook you can have them trace their circles in the book keeping all their mandalas in one place. They can also just as easily all be on separate sheets of paper if that is preferred or a pad is not available.

*We hope you will find some of this useful over the next few weeks.
All the staff at Leeds CAMHS*



Lots of the ideas in this booklet have been borrowed from various sources online. Thanks to all the other people out there trying to do something useful in these difficult times.