Banishing Boredom: Offline Kids Activities in Quarantine

As time goes on, families may begin to run out of ideas to keep children entertained while sheltering in place or quarantining themselves at home. Although it may be tempting to rely on additional screen time to fill the gap, heavy screen use is associated with obesity, attention issues, and poor sleep in children. So, if the kids are getting bored, here are some offline activities that can stimulate creativity and encourage physical activity.

Treasure Hunt

A variation of hide-and-seek, treasure hunts are easy to organize and can be entertaining for both children and adults. The hidden treasure can be anything—perhaps a trophy, ball, or piece of costume jewelry. After the treasure has been hidden, the participants compete against each other to see who will find it first. The degree of difficulty is up to you to determine. The person who is "it" can hint whether people are "hot or cold" or choose to narrow down the possible locations. For a more complex version, children can create (and color) an elaborate treasure map full of clues.

Family Kitchen

Let your children get their hands dirty while joining you in the kitchen. Little ones can pretend they are making a meal using wooden spoons, pots, and pans. Small amounts of water can be poured into measuring cups and tablespoons, creating a great opportunity for them to stretch their fine motor skills. Older children can participate in "real" cooking by picking out recipes from either a book or YouTube. Gathering the ingredients and following directions are great ways for them to work on both reading and math skills. The best part of this homemade activity is you can reward yourself with delicious cupcakes and cookies when it is over.

Full-Size Board Game

Chances are, your children don't often get a chance to turn the house into a giant version of Chutes and Ladders or Monopoly. This game could take hours as children help design the game and come up with the rules. This is followed by the actual creation of the game squares.

With an element of novelty, this is a great way to engage your future engineers. Help children move furniture away and create as much free space as possible to place the squares throughout the rooms. A dice or spinner can be used to determine how many steps players are to move forward or backward. Another option is to develop questions that must be answered correctly in order to advance.

Indoor Tent

A simple tent can be created simply by draping a sheet over a table. For more elaborate tents, add chairs and additional blankets. The tent can be used for quiet activities, like reading books or listening to music. They can also be a great place to take a nap. Tents can be disassembled at the end of the day and new forts erected the next morning.

The activities below incorporate screen time while still encouraging imagination.

Home Cinema

Building your own home cinema is easier than it sounds. Set up the movie chairs by arranging pillows or sleeping bags in a row on the floor. For those who like to raise the bar, you can put a mattress in the room. Someone can be responsible for making and selling the movie tickets, while others can make and sell popcorn. The easy part will be gathering everyone's favorite movies and then turning off the light to make the experience complete!

Musical Challenges on TikTok

If you are unfamiliar with TikTok, it is a popular social media network where users can create, edit, and share 15-second music videos of themselves (or others) dancing and lip syncing to popular lyrics. TikTok challenges are fun ways for children and parents to compete in choreographed competitions.

Parents need to be aware that some music lyrics and videos featured on TikTok may not be age appropriate. For children under the age of 13, TikTok offers a section of the app where children can access music curated for a younger audience. It also allows children to create videos, but not post them. Parents should carefully review TikTok's privacy setting options where they can block inappropriate content, restrict in-app purchases, and apply privacy restrictions.