

Cooking Activities while Sheltering-in-Place

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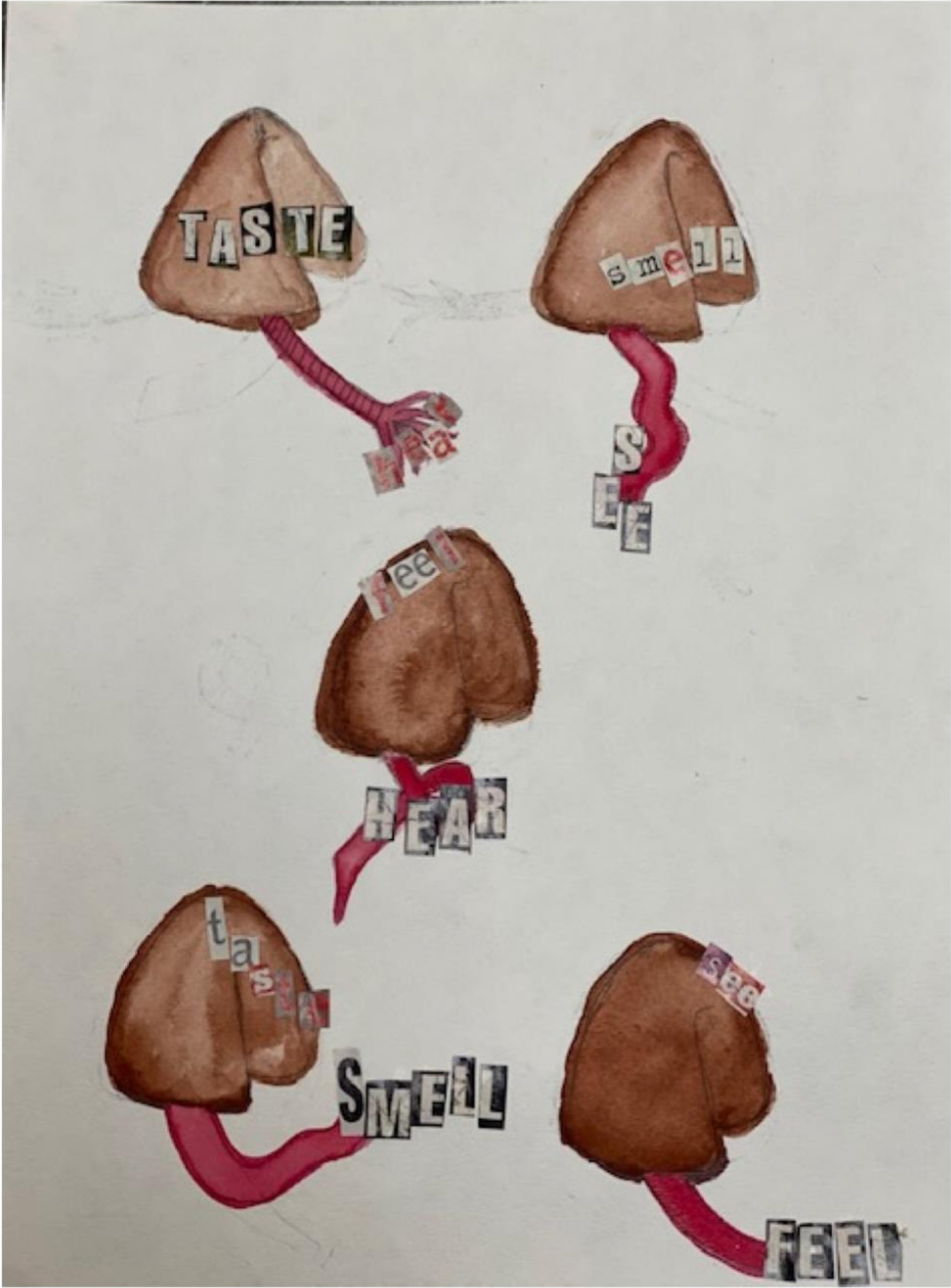
Time	Activity	Materials needed	Resources
8- 9 am	Wake up Routine and Discuss Plan for the Day	Clothes Breakfast	Schedule ideas http://blog.abadesk.com/2020/03/16/surviving-the-covid-19-pandemic-with-children/ https://www.autismspeaks.org/news/how-cope-disrupted-family-routines-during-covid-19 https://makesociallearningstick.com/coping-with-overwhelm-through-connection-free-printable-calendar/
9-9:10 am	Stretch	Yoga Mat	https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/elementary-exercises.html
9:15-11:00 am	Academics	Highly Preferred Activities Items for implementing the activity: Token board Timer	Tackling Academics ideas http://blog.abadesk.com/2020/03/16/surviving-the-covid-19-pandemic-with-children/
11:00 – 11:15 am	Outside activity	Hide and Seek, Tag, Treasure Hunt, Chalk Art	
11:15-11:30 am	Life Skills	Vacuum, wiping down counters, cleaning room	
11:30 -12:30	Lunch and Recess	Easy to assist meals	https://simplebites.net/42-simple-summer-lunch-ideas-kids-can-make/
12:30-12:45	Story	Read aloud, Podcast	Common Sense Media https://www.common Sense Media.org/blog/the-best-podcasts-for-kids

12:45-1:45	Academics	Highly Preferred Activities Items for implementing the activity Token board Timer	https://www.510families.com/covid-19-shelter-place/ Lawrence Hall of Science https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vePk9CDvz2I Mystery Science https://mysteryscience.com/lessons/seasonal/spring
1:45-2:30	PE	Walking the dog, Running, karate, soccer, basketball	https://www.510families.com/where-to-play-outside-with-kids-during-shelter-in-place/
2:30-4:00	Independent Play or Activity or Social Thinking Activity	Preferred activity that can be done by self or with a sibling Special Interest activity	Legos, Puzzle, Draw, Clay, Chalk https://www.theloop.ca/38-screen-free-activities-thatll-keep-your-kids-busy-while-you-do-your-business/ https://www.waterford.org/education/mindfulness-in-schools/ https://www.waterford.org/resources/mindfulness-activities-for-parents/
4:00 - 5:00	Movie/ Tablet	Simple healthy snack	
5:00 - 6:30	Dinner Prep, Dinner, clean up	Assist in prep and clean-up	
6:30-7:00	Evening Walk		https://www.waterford.org/resources/mindfulness-activities-for-parents/
7:00-8:00	Night-time routine and read		

As a parent, a trained medical professional and a special education teacher in-training trying to develop a schedule to nurture learning for all (including my two children) during a public health and education crisis has been overwhelming, humbling, and ironically, inspiring and rewarding. As I try to break this enormous task down into small chunks a few important common threads have emerged: social connectivity and developing ways to engage, shape, access and communicate information, in an unstructured environment, while making it personally relevant and useful. These threads have globally entwined our collective “Shelter in Place” existence and interestingly enough they are also the elements that some autistic individuals, and many neurotypical individuals, need to be explicitly taught to strengthen. As we are all forced to adapt and survive in a time of transition, we are being asked to learn new tools and adjust our skill set so that we can survive and navigate “relatively” independently and successfully, while participating and adding our voice to the connected world. Social connection, communication and mindfulness, supported by routine, spontaneity and play, have become the foundations for my “Shelter in Place” daily schedule and resource guide.

Our weekday mornings begin as if we were going to school, just one hour later. This adjustment allows everyone to naturally wake up and prepare for a day of “potentially” active engagement and creativity. Since this routine applies to my children and not to a general classroom, I find that beginning each day with stretching helps my children gear up for a period of “academics.” Although I repeatedly say that learning does not only happen in the classroom it can be difficult for them to immediately shift context. Needless to say, it is a challenging task to shift from the informal “parent” educator into the formal “academic” educator with my own children. Therefore, stretching marks this transition and helps my kids engage. Academics in the morning typically focus on literacy and mathematics. A convenient and positive aspect of homeschooling is that I am able to teach from where they are, start to see areas of special interest for each student and find ways to put context to the information they are asked to learn. During our “shelter in place” we are dependent on documentaries, the internet, books and podcasts, as a means to further expand learning, but normally we could head to a museum, go to a play or check out a science museum. I believe this type of learning is invaluable for every child because it can be differentiated and personalized.

Along with exercising the mind we also need to sprinkle physical exercise and playtime. One specific activity we did together focused on eating with all of our senses. We regularly bake bread and cookies together, so I thought we could take our activity one step further and have a mindful and respectful discussion as we ate a freshly baked cookie together. The purpose of this exercise was to savor the cookie and explore it using one sense at a time: hearing, taste, sight, sound and smell. I encouraged the kids to share through speech, drawing, collaging and painting. Since both of my kids love cookies, they were willing to participate in this meaningful social thinking discussion. The true success of this exercise came in the form of cooperation, shifting perspective, teamwork, listening and speaking, turn taking and a growing gratitude of our senses. The kids found it fun and threw out words and phrases such as, “*smells like sugar,*” “*feels rough or looks moist,*” “*chewy,*” “*tasty butterscotch sweet,*” and “*reminds me of walking into a bakery with Grandma.*”



This playful activity added levity to our shelter in place routine and allowed us to comfortably explore other perspectives through our senses or lack of senses. In a future play session, we could use baking to practice new vocabulary words or explore cause and effect through storytelling prompts, such as *"If you Give a Mouse a Cookie..."*. Using play as the mode of interaction the kids were more willing to participate creatively and free of inhibition. As we continue to grow and learn in quarantine, I strive to inject play (and humor) into our routine based on Dr. Stuart Brown's, founder of the National Institute of Play, research findings in mind, *"play is as basic a natural phenomenon as sleep, and, like sleep, many of us are not getting enough of it."*

References:

Waterford.org. (2019, February 26). *Why adding mindfulness education to school curriculum strengthens social emotional development and academic achievement.*

<https://www.waterford.org/education/mindfulness-in-schools/>

