

Creating Structure, Fun, & Connection Resources & Activity Ideas

Hi Friends,

This week's podcast episode ([Ep. 132](#)) is a recording of a live webinar Sara Kuljis & I did earlier this week. Our topic was *Creating Structure, Fun, & Connection* while we have our kids home and suddenly have a whole lot of unstructured time. Participants shared many amazing ideas and resources, which are listed (with links) in this document.

While this is a challenging time, we can also view it as an opportunity to evaluate, do a reset, and add in more fun and connection to our family lives.

Please [let me know](#) about your challenges, questions, and feedback. I'd love to connect!

Connection is weaved through everything we do - our schedules, routines, and daily activities. Try weaving a little connection into the structure of these unusual days - a walk with the dog, family dinner with sharing of highs & lows, or a nightly game or puzzle are all great options.

Stay Well!

Audrey "☀️shine" Monke

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STRUCTURE

The schedule at home will not be the same as at school, and that's okay. But it's good for there to still be some predictability and routine. For kids who have synchronous online classes, their schedule will be dictated by their school. For younger kids, or those who do not have scheduled online classes, consider having guidelines about getting school work done before other activities or in the morning.

Instead of following a rigid schedule, consider using a "Daily Checklist." This allows kids (and parents) some autonomy to choose when to do different things. We're all feeling a lack of control right now, so giving our kids some choices (when possible) is helpful.

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Creating Structure, Fun, & Connection Resources & Activity Ideas

Audrey's daughter, Gretchen, created a checklist for her high school students that works well for adults, too. It incorporates not just the school work, but the other things that will make us feel emotionally and physically healthy (exercise, mindfulness, connection, fun).

[Read more and download Gretchen's checklist for her high school students \(that also works for adults\)!](#)

For younger kids, consider using sticky notes (or a simple checklist with boxes for the kids to check off) of anything they need to get done each day. Keep it simple and let them have some autonomy over when to do different activities (within your guidelines). For example, you may require that school work is finished before any screen time. Some ideas to consider including on the daily checklist:

- School Work
- Exercise
- Hygiene (shower/bath, teeth brushing)
- Reading
- Chores
- Call or video chat with a grandparent

This is also an excellent opportunity to make sure your family has enough of each of what Challenge Success calls "PDF": Playtime, Downtime, & Family Time. These are common-sense strategies to promote health and well-being.

[Download Challenge Success PDF for Elementary-Age Kids](#)

[Download Challenge Success PDF for Teens](#)

CONNECTION & FUN

Try having at least one meal together. If you haven't been able to have [family dinner](#), try starting now! And [let the kids cook or help you cook!](#)

Do some sort of [family sharing](#).

If your family has a faith tradition, consider watching a live-stream of the service or listening to a podcast together.

Exercise together! Get outside if you can to walk, hike, run, or bike. If you have a ping pong table, basketball hoop, or trampoline, take advantage of those resources. Or,

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Creating Structure, Fun, & Connection Resources & Activity Ideas

stream a fitness or dance video to do together. It could be good for a laugh trying to attempt some new dance or yoga moves!

Cultivate [gratitude](#) during these stressful times. With your family, name people, things, experiences and opportunities you are grateful for. Gratitude builds hope, stamina and a kind of "emotional immunity," and helps us feel less alone. Model how to keep moving forward for our children.

Read together. Consider doing a family read aloud of one of your favorite books.

Come up with a hobby or new activity you can try together, either in pairs or as a whole family.

Pull out some games or puzzles. Learn a new card game to play together.

Family Activity Ideas & Resources

- My son is 12 and really misses playing with his friends. We take our whole family (son 12, daughter 8) and throw and catch a football on the beach. We only last a half hour or so, but they love it. Also we bike a lot and that is great with social distancing.
- We are doing a lot of reading aloud. Right now my kids are LOVING the book "[Ungifted](#)". It makes us laugh a lot.
- Went for a walk and did physical distancing with my 23 year old niece yesterday to connect with her. Books - it is nice to step away and get into a story.
- Reading out loud with kids while they work on [puzzles/legos](#).
- There are several restaurants in my town that are offering pick up. I'm taking my daughter a few times a week to pick up her favorite lunch and walk to the beach to eat.
- If you have access to [fleece](#) via amazon or elsewhere kids can make fleece blankets for a group called [Project Linus](#). They are easy to make and fun to do while chatting or listening to music .
- [Beetles Project](#) - resources usually for outdoor educators, but in these times, perhaps for families, too
- [Coursera](#) classes are often free and wonderful. My daughters and I did a Yale course on the science of well being and I highly recommend it.
- For families of the Christian faith, I think this is a great time for [family bible studies](#) or book clubs, too.

Creating Structure, Fun, & Connection Resources & Activity Ideas

- We've started asking our kids to research something and bring fun facts to dinner to share with all of us. Funnily, our son thought I asked him to bring facts about Candyland instead of Canyonlands, a place we want to visit, so last night we got a great laugh over the miscommunication!
- [20 Screen Free Things to do with Your Kids Indoors](#)
- Watch a TV series together
- [Take a virtual trip to a museum](#)
- [Another virtual museum list](#) (Travel & Leisure)
- Soul Shoppe Teach Peacemaking at Home – Dara Ackerman who works at our camps is involved! Free every day for the next two weeks each mid-day.

Self-Care Ideas & Resources

- [Peloton App](#) - yoga, strength workouts, outdoor run/walks and treadmill/spin bike workouts
- I do the [Calm](#) app each morning with my husband, plus 7 minutes of [Pranayama](#) (free app) first. We've been doing that for the past 3 years, so nice to already have established.

Academic/Educational Opportunities

- [PBS Kids for Parents](#) provides resources on things like how to talk to your children about Coronavirus as well as activities to do together .
- [PBS LearningMedia](#) helps you design at-home learning across grade levels .
- [DreamBox](#) is offering free 90 day accounts for online math resources grades K-8.
- [BrainPOP](#) is offering free accounts to students of closed schools, and has short videos on a wide range of subjects with quizzes to take afterward.
- [Outschool](#) - online classes for homeschoolers and is offering discounts during school shutdown
- [KQED TV](#) will be broadcasting educational programming aligned with state standards .

Activities kids can do independently (or, for younger kids, after setting them up)

- [Bitsbox](#) - coding for kids
- [Creative Bug](#) - online art classes for kids and adults
- [Hulu](#) (galinaatencio)

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- [The CEO Kid](#) - very cool program for kids to brainstorm and walk step by step thru starting a business
- The Jackbox Party Pack on AppleTV for super fun multiplayer games.
- [Write in names of favorite books & color \(from My Ideal Bookshelf\)](#)
- [Let's Doodle Together](#)
- [Audible is streaming kids books for free while schools are closed!!](#)
- [Let Grow's Independence Kit](#)

Further Listening (or Reading)

[Sunshine Parenting on iTunes](#)

[Sunshine Parenting on Android](#)

[*Happy Campers: 9 Summer Camp Secrets for Raising Kids Who Become Thriving Adults*](#)

[Ready for Adulthood \(Good time to print out the checklist and have kids start working on their “adulting” skills\)](#)

[Ep. 124: Promoting Mental Health](#)

[Ep. 130: Uncluttering our Schedules & our Homes](#)

[ADDitude Magazine: Coronavirus Homeschooling Parent Strategies](#)

[Positive Parenting Solutions: Strategies for Grieving Children](#)

Encouragement & Inspiration

“Worrying is carrying tomorrow’s load with today’s strength—carrying two days at once. It is moving into tomorrow ahead of time. Worrying doesn’t empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.”

- Corrie Ten Boom

[View the image of this quote on my instagram.](#)

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