

How can our children be creatively occupied now that they stay home?

12 March 2020

The growing outbreak of the new type of coronavirus, Covid-19, has raised worldwide concern and has led many countries to take steps to reduce the spread of the virus. One of the measures recently announced by the Greek government is to suspend the operation of schools for two weeks. This measure results in children spending more hours at home and the key question is how to occupy them now that they stay at home.

Some simple advice is:

Limit children's exposure to television and Internet

For many people it may be the simplest solution, but lately there has been a proliferation of news broadcast through television shows as well as articles published online. All of this can cause to the child intense anxiety and confusion and the child may not know how to handle the information received. Explain to the child that many of the stories presented may not be real or may be excessive and encourage them to engage in more interesting activities rather than watching television and spending time online. It is useful to replace the time spent in front of a screen with more sleep and/or sports activity.

Suggest more creative activities to the child (for preschool and early school children).

- You can propose to the children to make several drawings that you will use to decorate the space. Find old board games, spend time with them and try to do activities together. In addition, you can make children involved in house activities such as cooking.
- Create constructions with them.
- Read together with them fairy-tales and try to embody various roles through theatrical plays and improvisations. With children's

imagination and your own suggestions, you can have a very beautiful result. In this way, you help them to express their feelings in a more creative and positive way, and by spending time with them, you offer them the contact they need when they face situations of stress and anxiety. It is important to adjust the activities according to the age of the children.

- Involve children in your planned (or not) cooking. Thus, children have the opportunity to create, release their imagination and get involved in the daily life of the house.
 - Show children photos of your childhood or watch old family videos. Through this process, parents will be able to tell stories and interact with their children. The latter will have the opportunity to express questions, discuss with parents and spend time creatively reinforcing the bond of family.
 - Take a stroll in the nature to pick flowers and then collect them in your own plantation. You can also dry some of the flowers you picked.
 - Collect clothes, shoes and toys you no longer need in order to donate. In this way, you help to arrange the house and the room of the child.
 - Play the well-known game "name, animal, thing" by adding more categories.
 - Make your own radio show, record it and send it to your grandparents, as we don't meet them often now!
 - Watch a movie at home and comment on it.
- Suggest more creative activities for your child (for teenagers).

It is advisable for children to limit meetings with many people and not to get in touch with them in general.

It would be helpful to devote time to study and sports. They can meet in groups of 2-3 people in open spaces without however having close contact, touching, shaking hands and carefully following all protective measures according to EODY. There are some open spaces, such as parks and groves that remain open for children to spend time with their friends.

Alternatively for indoor activities children can:

- Play board games
- Visit educational websites
- Browse museum sites

- Talk to their grandparents via skype in order to protect them from contamination
 - Exercise at home, sleep a little longer and
 - Prepare for their return to school by studying. In conclusion they can read books of literary or educational interest.
- Try as much as possible to maintain the daily routine of children.

This may have changed with the closure of schools, but if there are other activities that the child does outside of school and continues to do, encourage them to continue.

For any further information or clarification you can call “The Line SOS 1056”, which is supported by specialized scientific staff (Social Workers and Psychologists) to respond effectively to questions from children and adults, providing them with psychosocial support in relation to the management of emerging issues and the daily new data.

The Line is available 24 hours per day, with free of charge mobile and landline calling.

The text is based on the following:

- World Health Organization (2020) Mental Health Considerations during COVID-19 Outbreak https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_2
- NASP National Association of School Psychologists & NASN- National Association of School Nurses (2020). Talking to children about COVID-19 (Coronavirus)-A parent resource. Retrieved from: [https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)