

THE SUBTLE ART OF CAPTIVATION

10 ways to entertain your kiddos while working from home

Maybe parents give off a pheromone of some sort when they're trying to concentrate on a non-child-oriented task. Or maybe, just like we can sense when something's wrong with them, they can sense when we've got something to do that doesn't involve them. Either way, it's no secret that children know when our focus needs to be on something other than them.

Even though the economy is reopening in some parts of the country, many parents are still at home trying to balance getting work done, playing with their kids, and even homeschooling. And that might be the reality for a while.

By now, many parents have learned to casually ignore the CDC's recommendations on screen time. (After all, desperate times call for desperate measures.) But what else can we do to keep these tiny (and not-so-tiny) humans busy while we continue working from home?



We compiled a list of 10 things you can try to help keep your children occupied while you're on the clock (or watching Naturally Slim!)

1. Pouring station

Ages 15 months to 3 years

Ah, toddlers. The most difficult age group to keep occupied and out of trouble! Luckily, making them a pouring station out of items found at home can keep them entertained! All you need is a few toddler-safe cups, bowls, scooping devices, and a pouring medium of your choice. Water beads and rice are usually crowd favorites.

BONUS IDEA: If you can take your work to the backyard, use water as your pouring medium and let your little one get some splashes out of their system. (We can't promise it'll minimize bath time splashing, but it may help tire them out for nap time!)



2. Magical magnets

Ages 15 months to 7 years

It turns out magnets can do more than just hold precious scribbles up on the fridge. Letter sets can help young readers practice sight words while shaped sets can keep young engineers occupied as they learn to construct abstract images. Any brightly colored magnets that are large enough to be toddler-safe are great for keeping little hands occupied!

3. Letter tracing

Ages 2 to 6 years

This one requires a little more supervision, but once you've got the activity set up, it can help you keep little ones occupied while you're on your next Zoom call.

You can either print pages off and have older children practice tracing their letters with a marker (4- to 6-year-olds), or you can make it tactile! All you need is a baking sheet or shoebox and rice. Simply pour the rice into your baking sheet or shoebox and have little ones trace letters or shapes in the rice with their finger.

BONUS IDEA: If you are OK getting a little messy, you can use shaving cream instead of rice. (Just maybe save this version for a little closer to bath time.)



4. Scavenger hunt

Ages 3 to 13

Based on the age of your kiddo(s), you can tailor their hunt and reward based on what's best for their skill level. For example:

Ages 3 to 4

Have them find three objects that are a certain color, then reward them with dinner in the backyard or a little extra craft time.

Ages 5 to 9

Have them hunt down items that begin with a certain letter, or that contain a certain number grouping, and then reward them with their "fun" (non-school) screen time for the day.

Ages 10 to 13

Make the hunt oriented towards chores (dust two mantles, put away eight items, or do two loads of laundry) and reward your kids with custody of the iPad or their desired technology for "fun" screen time.

5. Blanket fort picnic

Ages 5 to 12 years

Let's be real: This one is as much for you as it is for them. Tell your children that during your lunch break, you'll have a picnic together in a blanket fort! The only catch is that they have to build it first. Depending on the age of your child/children, you may want to set out pillows and blankets for them as well as plant a few ideas on how to drape them.



6. Virtual dance/yoga classes

Ages 3 to 12

Whether your child wants to be a ballerina for 45 minutes a day or find some calm through yoga in the middle of a very abnormal time, virtual movement classes go a long way towards helping children work off excess energy. Plus, they can even help your little ones work through tricky feelings – an added bonus during this stressful time.

BONUS IDEA: Check out resources like Cosmic Kids Yoga and Go Noodle's guided dancing YouTube channels for free videos on how to get your kids moving.

8. Family book club

Ages 7 to 12

Pick an age-appropriate book to read each week as a family. Let your children have some ownership over the project by giving them a list of books to choose from and letting them decide what discussion questions they want to guide your family book club "meeting."

You can even let older children do some research and find a project that everyone can do at home to supplement your family reading for the week, like making a recipe or doing a craft mentioned in the book! The idea is to have them read and work on supplemental activities while you're working.

7. "Thank you!" sign

Ages 18 months to 13 years

Our postal workers have been working extra hard these past two months. Why not create a "thank you" sign for them as a weekly ritual? It doesn't have to be fancy. All you need is a piece of paper, things to color with, and craft supplies of your choice. Depending on the age of your children, you can be as hands-on or hands-off as needed. Just make sure that you have a way to stick the sign on your door or mailbox.



9. Box and markers

Ages 2 to 12 years

This classic activity is fun for anyone old enough to hold a "washable" marker! All you need is a box (thank you, Amazon), and a rainbow's worth of markers. If you've got bigger boxes, you can ask your littles to decorate a time machine or a spaceship.



10. Meal planning

Ages 7 to 12

Put your older children in charge of the menu! Ask them to find a recipe, make a shopping list, and help you do some of the prep work (washing fruits and veggies, measuring seasonings, etc.). You should still plan to supervise cooking time, of course!

Not only will this occupy your children for up to an hour as they pick out recipes and search the fridge for missing ingredients; giving them ownership of their own nutrition has the added benefit of setting them up to be capable in the kitchen as they enter adulthood.

BONUS IDEA: You can print off the recipes your mini-me(s) find and start a family favorites cookbook. And if you want, you can even ask your kids to take photos during prep and mealtime to add to your book.

Taking it an hour at a time

While there's no magic spell that'll keep your children happily occupied all day, hopefully the activities on this list will buy you some uninterrupted time to get work done or watch a few NS lessons. After all, it's important to take care of yourself so that you can take care of the other people in your home. We're here to help you do that!

Log in to www.naturallyslim.com/login from your smartphone or computer to watch this week's lessons.

Not an NS participant? Visit our blog at www.naturallyslim.com for more tips and resources.