

Rainy Day Activities Create Family Fun

By Sylvia W. Lee

Persistent rain, windy conditions and unpleasantly cold temperatures often lead to families being housebound. Seize the moment and create a special play time with your children whose seemingly limitless energy can't be suppressed. The following suggestions may generate other ideas of your own.

- Set the alarm of a battery-operated clock to just a few minutes ahead of the present time. Then hide it—in a closet, low cupboard, shoe or boot, clothes hamper, under a chair or pillow. Wait until it rings and have your children find it. Then reset it and have the child who found it hide it for the rest of the family.
- Invite a few friends over for a toy and/or book exchange. If your children are old enough to understand the activity, explain what will be taking place. Have your children select what they want to trade from items that they have outgrown or no longer want. Decide if the exchange will be on a permanent or a short-term basis.
- Make a scrapbook. Think of different categories such as favorite foods, toys, places to visit, clothes, etc., and look through old magazines or the newspaper for pictures.
- Write a letter to a relative or friend. Have your young children dictate what they would like to say by asking questions such as, “What do you want to tell Gram or Gramps about our trip to the zoo? What should we tell cousin Erica about the walk we took? What do you want to tell Uncle Thomas about our neighbor’s new dog? What do you want to tell Heidi about the book we just read?” They could also draw pictures to accompany the letter.
- Tape a large sheet of paper to a wall or on the floor and have your children draw pictures or a mural, or have them lie on the paper so you can draw an outline of them that they can fill in with details. Newsprint end rolls are free and may be picked up in the parking lot at International Paper, 3425 East 17th in Glenwood. The gates are open Monday through Friday, from 5 a.m. to 5 p.m.; it is not necessary to go to the office. For more information, please call 541-744-4100.
- Bring out your set of blocks for some creative block time, or if you don't have blocks, make your own! Go to <http://www.oh-pin.org/articles/pex-03-block-play-activities-for.pdf> for ideas and instructions.
- Inflate a balloon and see how long you and your children can keep it in the air by lightly tapping on it. Or place a balloon on the dining room table after you and your children choose which side of the table to stand at. Then see which team can blow it off the other team's side. Keep small pieces of broken or deflated balloons out of reach from infants and toddlers to prevent accidentally choking.

- Create a tent with blankets over chairs or a table and pretend you're camping. Organize an imaginary hike to the camp site and invent sounds of your hike; e.g., put on shoes and begin hiking (stomp, stomp), walk through tall grass (swish, swoosh), cross a stream (splish, splash), don't fall in (eeks! brrr!), through the forest of tall trees (whoosh, swoosh), over rocks (umph, oomph), up a hill (huff, puff, pant, pant), to the blueberry patch (yum, yum), etc. Arrange to have a snack or lunch in the tent with the food items you've carried in your packs.

- If you feel the walls of your house closing in on you, visit a museum or indoor play area. The Eugene-Springfield area is fortunate to have a number of places to spend an hour or two: Science Factory: Children's Museum and Planetarium, Bounce Gymnastics, Lane County Historical Society, River Road Park (Fantastic Fridays and Action Nights), and storytimes and other events at Eugene Public Library and Springfield Public Library. Or sign up for a Nearby Nature activity!

Whatever you decide to do, your children will be delighted you took time from your day's agenda to have fun. Chances are you'll enjoy the activities more than vacuuming, doing laundry, or cleaning out the refrigerator. Long-lasting memories are created from times like these.

Sylvia W. Lee staffs Birth To Three's Parent HelpLine.