

Rain Invites Special Playtimes

by Sylvia W. Lee

Persistent rain often creates a hard-to-shake-off case of cabin fever, especially when there isn't any other outlet for your child's energy. Seize the moment and create some special play times at home. The following suggestions may lead to your own ideas:

- **Set the alarm of a battery-operated clock or timer** to a few minutes ahead of the current 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 child find it. Then reset it and have him hide it for you.

- **Take a walk round your house**, or, if it's not raining at the time, in your neighborhood with your child and a tape recorder. Tape familiar sounds such as household appliances, familiar voices, animal sounds, vehicle sounds, etc. Have your child listen to the sounds and identify what she hears.

- **Invite a few friends over for a toy and/or book exchange.** If your child is old enough to understand the activity, explain what will be taking place. Have your child select what he wants to trade from items that he has outgrown or no longer wants. 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 newspapers for pictures.

- **Write a letter to a relative or friend.** Have your child dictate what she 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 Aunt Kris about our neighbor's new dog? What do you want to tell Erin about the book we just read?" She could also draw pictures to accompany the letter.

- **Tape a large sheet of paper to a wall or on the floor** and have your child draw pictures or a mural, or have him lie on the paper so you can draw an outline of him which he 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 744-4100.

- **Inflate a balloon** and see how long you and your child can keep it in the air by lightly tapping on it. Keep small pieces of broken or deflated balloons out of reach from infants and toddlers who are still putting everything into their mouth.

- **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., pretend you're putting on your boots and begin hiking (stomp, stomp), then walking through tall grass (swish, swoosh), crossing a stream (splish, splash), slipping and falling in (eeks! brrr!), passing through the forest of tall trees (whoosh, swoosh), climbing over rocks (umph, oomph), going up a hill (huff, puff, pant, pant), finding an unexpected blueberry patch (yum, yum), etc.

Whatever you decide to do, your child will be delighted you took time from your day's list of things to have fun. Long-lasting memories are created from times like this.

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