

## Darci Lewis' Ten Tips for At-Home Play:

As we look ahead to the coming weeks, we will have lots of home time for children and families. Here are a few ways you can set yourself up for success--keeping your children engaged, exploring, and allowing you to enjoy time at home and with your child.

1--**Set up an "Outdoor Kitchen."** Grab some large tupperware containers or metal bowls, measuring cups, wooden spoons, and other kitchen items that you are ready to part with. Find an outdoor space (yard or balcony), and invite your child to use these items as part of their dramatic play. Add water, and long periods of exploration and creativity will flow. Leave this area set-up for the duration of your time at home. Add items along the way (rocks, corks, shells, and other household treasures), for added creativity!

2--**Make homemade "play dough."** It's really easy to do, and the only out of the ordinary item needed is cream of tartar, which you can get in the spice section of the grocery store. Here is a simple recipe:

### **Ingredients**

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup water
- 2 tsp cream of tartar
- 1/3 cup salt
- 1 TBS vegetable oil
- food coloring

**Instructions:** Mix together all the ingredients, except the food coloring, in a medium saucepan. Cook over low/medium heat, stirring. Once it begins to thicken, add the food coloring. Continue stirring until the mixture is much thicker and begins to gather around the spoon. Once the dough is not wet, remove and put onto wax paper or a plate to cool. After cooling (30 minutes) knead playdough for a few seconds. PLAY! Store in an airtight container. *(double or triple recipe for larger quantities).*

3-**Flashlight Play**--Young children love the magic of light play. Gather your flashlights, lay on the floor of a darkened room, and look up! Have flashlight races and make shadow puppets on the wall. Flashlight dance parties are always a good time and help to get everyone moving and burn off some energy!

4-**Sink Play/Bubble Bath**--Set your child up at the kitchen sink and have them "do the dishes." A trickle of water, spoons, small cups, and sponges, are great sensory fun. Additionally, a bubble bath can linger and be quite enjoyable at any time of day. Let your child relax and linger longer than usual in the tub!

5-**Collaging**--Cutting and gluing are favorite activities for kids. Paper, yarn, ribbon, feathers--the possibilities are endless! Junk mail, old envelopes--these household items are waiting to be

torn up, cut up, and re purposed by your child. Child-safe scissors, a little elmer's glue, a glue paintbrush, tape, and a piece of cardboard--collage time awaits!

**6-Icy Treasures**---Gather up some small items--bouncy balls, small dinosaurs, marbles, matchbox cars--put them in a bin of water, and freeze. Then let your child bang and chissel way (using spoons, sticks, etc), discovering the many icy treasures!

**7-Obstacle Course/Fort Play**--Have your child help, and gather blankets and pillows from around your house. Create an obstacle course, where they are challenged--crawl, jump, stomp, spin roll--all the way through! Then bring over a few kitchen chairs and build a fort where they can read, relax, and be transported to a far off land!

**8-Cooking**--Kids love to cook! From buttering toast, to sprinkling granola on yogurt, cutting up vegetables, and baking cookies, all cooking is good cooking for kids. Choose small and manageable ways for your child to get engaged in the kitchen--here is a great recipe to begin: <https://cookieandkate.com/healthy-banana-muffins-recipe/> Also, have some meals be "appetizer style (lots of little bites)" and have a picnic on the living room floor.

**9-Dress-Up**--Search through your closets and drawers--pull out scarves, hats, vests, and costume jewelry. Create a new and exciting dress-up area and watch your child at work! Imaginative play is so significant in the life of children and dressing up brings opportunity for them to travel to a whole new world.

**10-Family Photos**--Get out your family photo albums (and even your wedding video). Tell your child stories about the people, places, and things they see. Real photos are magical--connecting children to moments in time.