**Emory Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) Program**

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**Special Time during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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Whether you are new to PCIT or a seasoned graduate, it can be challenging to incorporate Special Time into your family’s schedule. Special Time, the 5 minute interval of child-led play in which you practice the PRIDE\* skills, is best conducted at about the same time every day, with no other distractions, in a room with a few carefully chosen toys. Ideally, Special Time becomes one of your family’s cherished routines. However, with schools closed and many of us working from home, the routines that give children a sense of structure and safety are disrupted. Even worse, parents are under stress as we struggle to find childcare, or figure out how to telecommute while keeping the children entertained or busy at home. Finally, young children may be anxious or confused about what they’ve heard about COVID-19 from friends, family, or the media. So now they need Special Time more than ever!

What are some activities you can do for Special Time during this period of social distancing? Particularly if your child has grown bored with the toys at home? Below are 12 ideas. Some of these activities are more vulnerable to parent commands than others, so choose carefully!

1. Blow bubbles (store-bought), or make bubbles with liquid dishwashing soap
2. Draw with sidewalk chalk, and play hopscotch or other outside games
3. Play games of aiming, tossing/catching, or building (e.g., stick house) outside
4. Prepare, plant, and decorate (rocks, shells) a garden (radishes, lettuce, beans, and some herbs are ideal at this time of year)
5. Explore nature or collect specimens (give your child some containers and “tools,” and follow as s/he shows you various plants, insects, and animals)
6. Build a fort with chairs, blankets, tape, empty boxes, etc. Add a flashlight when it’s finished!
7. No-fuss crafts:
	1. use magic marker to color popsicle sticks, then glue them together to make a box or photo frame
	2. paint rocks or flowerpots, or use magic markers to decorate a box
	3. string shells or beads together to make necklaces, bracelets, key chains
8. Activities with office supplies:
	1. Make a ball out of rubber bands or a necklace from paper clips
	2. Draw or color on sticky notes, then connect them to one another
	3. Make paper airplanes, put a paper clip on the nose, and fly them
9. Combine old toys (e.g., cars, marbles, play-doh) with new materials, such as popsicle sticks, masking tape, cardboard from empty boxes
10. Gather some “costumes” (scarves, t-shirts), put on some music or assemble some home-made drums (buckets or pots and a wooden spoon), and get ready to give labeled praises for creative outfits, beats, and dance moves!
11. Outside mud kitchen: Combine dirt and rocks with a bucket of water, some bowls or plates, cookie cutters, and utensils, and follow your child’s lead in making mud cakes, pies, and cookies!
12. Bathtub play with cups, toy boats, plastic toys, etc.

\*PRIDE = Praise, Reflect, Imitate, Describe, Enthusiasm