



FALL 2017

HALDIMAND-NORFOLK HEALTH UNIT

# COMMUNICATION MATTERS

A NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS, EARLY LEARNING PROVIDERS AND CAREGIVERS OF PRESCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN.

## TURN OFF THE SCREEN and Turn Up the Fun!

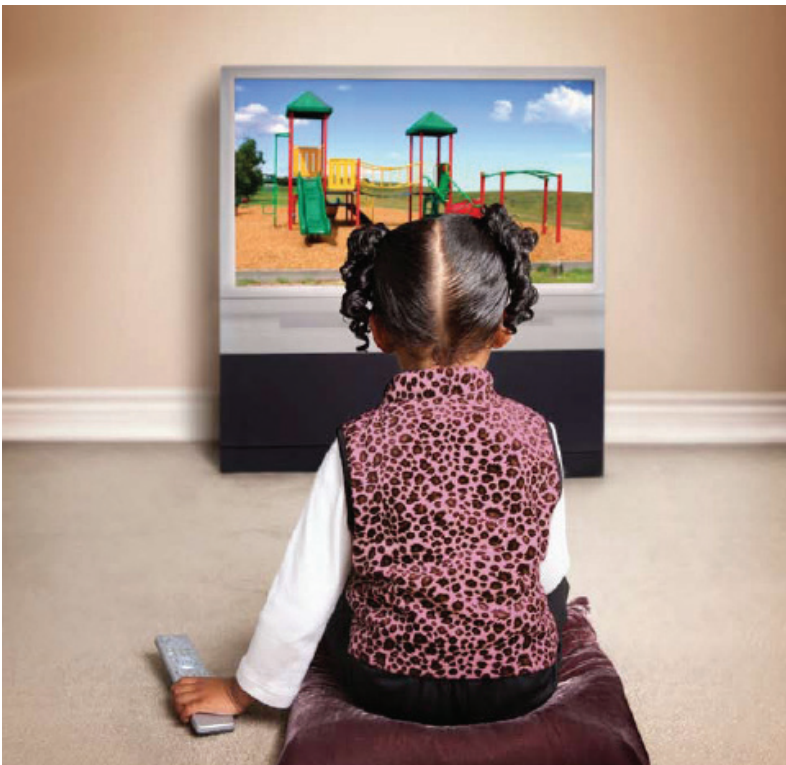
How do you balance household chores with a busy toddler, a curious preschooler or a tired school-aged child who just want your time and attention? As a parent of young children it's hard to find time to make dinner, put the laundry away or some days even shower! How does one find the time to accomplish daily tasks and still keep children engaged, learning and out of harm's way?

In this day and age televisions, phones and tablets are everywhere. Between Netflix, videos, preschool apps and you-

tube kids it's easy to pass over a screen while you scramble to fit in as many chores in a Paw Patrol episode as possible. Then the end of the day comes, the children are nestled all in bed and you flip through Facebook only to see the latest news on children and the overuse of screens in their lives and the mom-guilt kicks in. Research shows children under the age of 2 should have little to no exposure to screens throughout their day, preschoolers should have no more than one hour and young school-aged children under 2 hours. Research also recommends that parents watch WITH their children rather than using a screen

as an independent activity while you step away for other chores or a rest. But how do you limit their exposure or watch with your child and still get your work done for the day?

Here are some helpful and fun tips on screen-free activities that will keep your child busy and safe but require minimal adult support. I know what you're thinking... "my child is way too busy to sit down and read a book or colour, this would never work for him. He only stops moving when he has a phone in his hand." Yes, it is true, a lot of young children, particularly boys, like to be moving at all times. They climb, run, dump bins and leave a trail of chaos as they explore the world around them. For those particularly active children it's important that you start slowly. Handing them a crayon and turning your back will only invite disaster. Instead hand them a crayon, sit next to them and show him how fun it is to colour. Children need to be taught independent activities. Sit with them, show them how they can play on their own and then slowly remove yourself from the situation. It's important to be close by and able to jump back in at a moment's notice when your child tends to stray. Bring him back to his independent activity and then slowly step away again.





Below are some ideas of quiet, independent activities for young children. If you're finding you need a moment to yourself, give one of these ideas a try. Keep in mind you need to make sure your child is always within your sight and may only be able to engage in an independent activity for a few moments at first. As they get older you will find more time to get that laundry actually in the drawer or that much needed hot shower!

### Sensory bins

Sensory bins are a fun way for young children to explore new and interesting textures in their environment. They work great for the busy, hands-on kid that feels the need to touch everything in his environment. Simply take a tote or Tupperware container and fill it with various items such as rice, noodles, shredded paper etc. You can mix various items together or just use one item at a time. For example, one week

fill it with rice, the next week clean it out and fill it with dry oats. Let your child bury small toys in it, watch it pour through a funnel or dig with a toy shovel. If digging is too messy then provide them with a large paintbrush. Show your child how to brush the rice away to uncover treasure underneath. Your child might create some mess at first but over time he will learn to keep the mess inside the box. In the meantime place a large towel or tarp underneath for easy clean up.



### Cooking

Children love to help, especially when it comes to cooking or baking. Pull up a chair next to you (away from any unsafe hazards such as the stove or sharp knives) and let your child be a part of the action. Give him his own bowl or pot, a spoon and some dried goods such as rice, dried oats, raisins or a bit of flour. Let him add his ingredients, stir and muck while you work alongside your child preparing your meal. This might create more time with clean up; however, your child can be a part of that as well. Fill the sink with some warm soapy water and let him "wash" his dishes clean when they're done.

### Sticky wall with contact paper

Create a sticky wall using contact paper. Contact paper can be found at most dollar stores. It's clear and sticky on one side as you unroll it. Hang a large piece of contact paper on your wall close to where you will be completing your chore. Give you child pieces of paper shapes, cotton balls, large



pom poms etc and allow him to stick the items to the contact paper. At the end he will have created his very own work of art! Just always remember to be cautious of small objects that could be swallowed.

### Sort shapes/Colours

Cut out a bunch of different shapes from paper. Have your child sort them into piles according to shape. When the piles are done then mix them all up and sort them by colour.

### Books

Reading can be a favourite activity for some children. Keep a bunch of books handy near the kitchen or your favourite work space. Have your child read books while you cook, sort laundry clean up etc. If your child isn't an avid reader you can make your own books that might interest him. For example, a photo book about places he's visited, photos of grandparents and other family members or even pictures of his favourite toys cut out of a flyer. Build a fort or cozy reading nook to further peak their interest in staying in one spot, even if it's just a few moments.



### Colouring

Keep a small child size table in the kitchen. Your child can colour, cut, glue and craft while you work. Make sure you use washable markers or crayons and child safety scissors.

### Stickers

What child doesn't love stickers! Collect a pile of stickers from the local dollar store along with a small notebook. Help your child learn to take the stickers and place them in his sticker book. He can sit next to you and create a sticker masterpiece while you get some of your own work done.

### Write and wipe books

Dry erase books can be a fun way to keep little ones entertained. They can write and colour, wipe it off and then start all over again. Look for books where they can trace letters and numbers.

### Recycling fun

Reuse that old recycling before you toss it out! Kids love old boxes and plastic containers. Let them cut, colour, paint or simply pile them up and knock them over. See what they can create!

### Sink play

Kids love to splash in water. Fill the sink with warm water and bubbles and pull up a chair for your child. Let him "wash" some dishes, float a boat or hide toys under the bubbles.

### Puzzles

Find some easy puzzles that your child can learn to complete on his own. Keep them nearby for times you need a few moments to complete a task.

### Muffin tin balls

Get out a muffin tin and some small, soft, plastic balls. Have your child attempt to throw the balls into the muffin pan slots.

### Golf tee hammering

Grab a small box and some golf tees. Put some holes in the box the size of the edge of the golf tees to get them started. Let your child then use a small plastic hammer to hammer in the tees.

### Stuffed animal hide and seek

Who doesn't love a game of hide-and-seek? Keep your child busy for a few moments by hiding some stuffed toys around the house then send him out to seek them. Talk about where his friends are found – under the bed, on the table, behind the door. Use this as an opportunity to build vocabulary as well as independence.

# We are going **GREEN!**

**Our “Communication Matters” newsletter will no longer be mailed out in the spring and fall.**

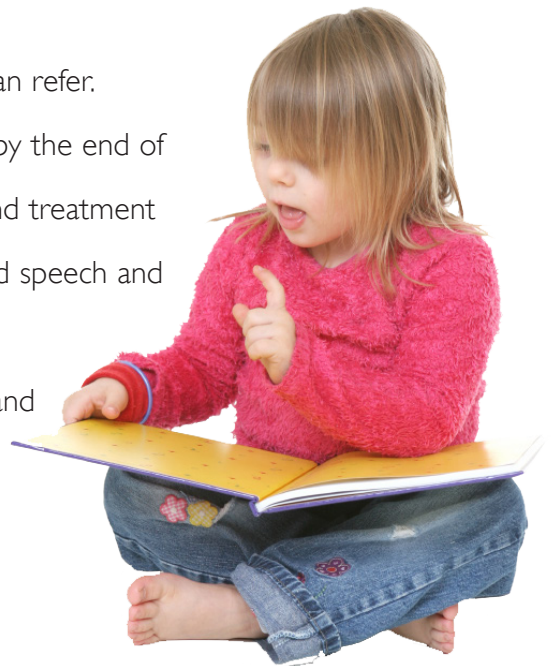
**To access it go to <https://hnhu.org/newsletters/communication-matters/> There you can sign up to receive notifications of the release of the new issues . Feel free to pick up a copy while you are here if you would like.**

## **Our services are fun, free and accessible.**

No child is too young to be seen. With parent consent, anyone can refer.

Children starting Junior Kindergarten in the fall must be referred by the end of June in the year they will start JK in order to access assessment and treatment services. As of July 1st, JK children can be referred to school-based speech and language services by speaking to the School Principal.

If you wish to refer to the Haldimand Norfolk Preschool Speech and Language Program, call the Ontario Early Years Centre today at 1-866-463-2759, or access our online form.



*Communication Matters is published biannually by the Haldimand-Norfolk Preschool Speech and Language program. It has been developed to increase awareness for services available and tips on the prevention of speech, language or hearing disorders in the preschool population. This newsletter is intended for parents, teachers and caregivers of preschool-aged children. You are invited to contact the Health Unit with your articles and ideas.*



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