

## Maintaining Connections:

### Suggestions for Parents and How The Center Can Help



- Send **“open when” letters** to your children with messages inside an envelope that they can open each day. Once they open the letter, they can add it into a scrapbook and include a photo along with it. Fun tip: is there a color or theme that your child loves? If so, provide a blank scrapbook when you send the letters, based on what they like!
- Send a **jar of written “actions”** they can do for the day - these can be chosen daily and can be documented in their journals or scrapbooks, as well!
- Send **painting materials/art materials** in **an art box**. For a “Paint & Sip” style, you can supplement the art materials with a fun video of you or a family member doing that same art activity for the child to model.
- Who doesn't love a science project? Send a **science project box** with materials to complete a surprise science activity. Your children can chart the results and also document the participation to share back to you.
- **Digital pen pals** with messages from every person in the family or extended family might be special for your children to see loved ones they miss the most! There are also similar ways to do a **distance birthday message** by creating a compilation of messages from friends and family members.
- **Send photos** of the family that your children can put into a collage as an activity. This can then be scanned to frame and mailed back to you, so you have the same photo collage at home. It can also be used to create family gift cards, notepads, mousepads, mugs, and more!
- Send ingredients to **make sensory slime or “I spy bottles”**. **“I spy bottles”** are water bottles filled with sand and small items that your children can shake until they find the object they are looking for. Another idea would be a calming bottle, with glitter, water, oil, etc.
- Send ink stamps and card stock to **create cards that your children can send via mail** to people in individuals in nursing homes, to nurses or doctors, or to anyone working on the frontlines.
- Some kids love watching videos of other kids playing with toys. Send **video clips of siblings building structures with blocks, using materials to create shapes or using play dough/putty** that your children can follow along with by working on visual sequencing, motor planning, or video modeling.
- If you or any family members play musical instruments, perhaps sending **videos of you performing** would be well-received by your children!

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- **Quarantine lip sync** has been a huge trend! For those less musically inclined, create a lip sync video to a favorite song of your child's. We can also do that on our end, too!
  - Send videos of you and your family doing simple exercises that your children can follow along with and do virtually. Yoga, stretching, dance, and other simple fitness routines are best!
  - Purchase **outdoor items for your children's residence**. Consider picnic tables, outdoor umbrellas, outdoor games, bikes, balls, outdoor speakers, props for an outdoor "movie theatre", or outdoor storage options for games and cushions, etc., that the whole house can enjoy!
  - Send **video clips or audio clips of stories being read**. Video clips would be a great way for your children to "see" you and other family members. And it might be a good project for some siblings, as well. At The Center, we can add QR codes and create a virtual library for your children once they have the videos.
  - Send **sidewalk chalk kits** with additional stencils that they can do on a mild, sunny day!
  - **Create a project together** while you are apart. Something that you can do is start the project, and then have your child finish it. Since we're in spring, you can purchase or come up with DIY style kits, like making a birdhouse, making outdoor planters, jewelry boxes, and so on. There are tons of options!
  - **Circle journal**, which is an item that can be purchased. You can send it back and forth via the mail and add into the journal anything that is relevant, such as photos, scraps representing a specific time, coloring, a response to a pre written prompt, etc.
  - Consider sending different family recipes to share with your children, that they can **create a family recipe book** out of – consider publishing as a gift for the next holiday and/or birthday!
  - **Scrapbooking activities** that you and your child can create together, even though you aren't with them in person right now. This might help to establish that missing connection through photographs and reflection. Sending pictures of fond memories to remind one other that we are all staying positive.
  - Come up with a **Virtual "Show and Tell"** of something that is special to your child in their rooms. This can be done with you or other family members, but also at the residence with peers. Staff can assist in making a video and include facts about it (whether it is a picture, stuffed animal, toy, etc.) and then your child can share with you, or another resident, sort of like a digital show and tell.
  - **Gardening**. You can video yourself planting something and we can plant the same plant/herb, and then do check-ins with you to compare the plant's growth.