
An Out of School Enrichment Guide for Parents with a Focus on Holistic Wellness

DMV PAL x L.O.V.E. YOUth ™
× Michelle Collins, LCMFT
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Who We Are

DMV PAL is a non-profit based in Washington, DC, focused on kids and keeping kids safe by connecting them with local law enforcement officers. By giving participants a safe way to engage with cops, PAL helps to build relationships between kids and cops, showing kids that not all cops are bad, while also allowing law enforcement officials to get to know the kids in their communities. Beyond bridging the divide with their local police officers, PAL also provides an enriching after school program. DMV PAL’s model and programming centers around the L.O.V.E. YOUth concept, striving to ensure all youth have the tools necessary to lead, overcome, value and empower not only themselves, but the world around them.

Michelle Collins, LCMFT is a licensed individual, couple, and family therapist in Baltimore, MD offering therapeutic services and counseling.

Our Current Reality

The COVID-19 outbreak has resulted in millions of students from around the world being out of school. We at DMV PAL/L.O.V.E. YOUth understand just how essential it is for youth to have access to not only core academic subjects, but life skills for their continued success. School may currently be on pause, but learning does not have to stop. We encourage you to use this simple, but effective guide with your child in an effort to keep them engaged physically, mentally, and emotionally.
Challenge your child to an in-house scavenger hunt. (This is the perfect opportunity to share with one another & encourage healthy communication.)

Is there a family heirloom to discover?
Is there a throwback picture to discover?
Is there a repair to be made?
(Bonus Challenge: Ask them to research how-to & actually repair it!)
Is there a junk room/drawer that hides things to be seen or recycled?
(Bonus Challenge & Double Win for you: Ask them to help you organize it!)

2. Challenge your child to a community scavenger hunt. (If your environment allows the opportunity to step outside for fresh air, this is the perfect time to get out and experience nature, while still practicing social distance of course.)

What is the capital of your state?
Do you have a state bird or flower?
What’s a bizarre fact about your city/town/state?
What’s your community’s claim to fame?
Visit a special landmark in your neighborhood*
Walk, bike, or scoot to try a new route to a favorite spot (park, library.)*
*(Only If you do not have a shelter in place order!)*

Our world is so big and there still remains so much that is undiscovered. Even though you may currently be spending more time in the house than usual, it doesn’t mean that discovery isn’t possible. We have a few ideas to keep your child’s mind curious and their sights set in search of something new.
3. Challenge your child to an interpersonal scavenger hunt. (This encourages your child to discover what’s inside of them. Perhaps one of the most important discoveries they (and you!) will ever have.)

If you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be?
What is your dream job?
Name the title of the movie telling your life story.
What is the soundtrack of your life?
What instrument would you play if you were in a band?
How do you handle change?
What makes you feel most at peace?

4. Challenge your child to a creativity scavenger hunt. (This gets the creative juices flowing during a time when it may be easy to feel uninspired.)

Listen to a song from a new genre.
Name a book on the list of forbidden books.
Learn how to say “hello” & “thank you” in a new language.
Research what a haiku is and write one describing your day.
What happened on this day in history? Draw the front page of a newspaper depicting this.
The possibilities are endless when it comes to this activity. We recommend either creating a brief list of items/things you want your child to discover or giving them the power to discover freely. Allowing your child to discover freely will challenge them to look for something new while exploring familiar spaces. Take time and talk with your child about what they discovered during their search.

Reflection is important as they attempt to get used to what is happening around them. All of us, especially kids, are having a hard time adjusting to this new normal. Just like it may be new for you to be home with them all day, it’s unfamiliar territory for them as well. It’s equally, if not more, important for children to express their needs during this time. At the end of the day, be sure to ask them what they discovered they needed more of today.

What did you discover you need?

Asking this question will allow you and your student to work together in an effort to make sure this time at home is most effective.

Ex: You discovered a lot of cool things about our house and the community today. What are some things you discovered you need, you like, or could possibly do without?

Your student may need:
- more structure
- more frequent breaks
- more hands-on activities
- an outdoor activity that still incorporates responsible social distancing
- more naptime
- a FaceTime call with their friend
- effective methods on creating boundaries from the media during this time
Siri, what's the weather like today?

Just like the weather, our feelings and moods can be diverse and change often.

There are a lot of things we can’t control and Mother Nature is one of them. With technology at our fingertips, it’s easy to figure out if we need to grab our umbrella or our sunscreen for a day out. We encourage you to use the descriptions and chart attached to check in at least 3-4x/week.

Weather Descriptions:

*Snow*: Feeling a little cold and disconnected. May change with right gear.

*Rain*: Feeling Sad

*Hail*: Feeling overwhelmed

*Stormy (thunder & lightning)*: Feeling angry

*Windy*: Feelings are up and down; changing swiftly and often

*Sunny*: Feeling good & in a great mood (Positive Vibes Only)

*Rainbow*: It’s A Vibe, Feeling lucky!

*Partly Cloudy*: The sun is shining now and alls good, but not sure how they’ll feel if the sun disappears

*Cloudy with a chance of rain*: Not feeling terrible, but not the best. Need extra support to ensure it doesn’t rain on them late)

*Foggy*: Can’t describe feeling, not sure what’s going on, wants to focus on the here and now.
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One of the biggest keys to success while your child is out of school is implementing a schedule that works for the entire household. It doesn’t have to look like the norm, which is ideal. Providing both yourself and your child structure during this time can help to combat stress and to tackle things on your list in a productive and realistic manner. There’s nothing too small or big to add to the list, so don’t forget that pillow fight or that exam your child has to study for. Remember, this is trial and error so your schedule may need a bit of tweaking based on the needs of your family.

Be sure to give yourself grace when you don’t follow your schedule perfectly, because like life, things change & we must adapt.

8am-9ish: Breakfast
9am-9:30ish: Morning check in on how they’re feeling, Do a weather chart, Name a goal they have for the day
9:30am-11:30ish: School packets, Instruction etc.
11:30am- Noonish: Snack time, Perfect time for you to see where your child’s productivity level is. Maybe even listen/watch a new artist on youtube to decompress (NPR Tiny Desk’s are awesome! But be sure to watch for explicit lyrics.)
Noonish -2pm: Instruction, Schoolwork

2pm-2:30ish: Lunch
2:30pm-3:30ish: Documentary watch/ Podcast listen/ Read along
3:30-4ish: Reflective writing on above
4pm-4:30ish: Share writing & thoughts on above
4:30-5ish: Hop on Youtube & learn a new dance, can we say competition?
5pm-6ish: Decompress time alone for student and parent
6pm-7ish: Dinner time - Phone Free Zone - See table topics below
7pm: Weather check in

Wrap-Up Questions to consider: What was your favorite thing about today? What's one word you would use to describe it? Did you accomplish the goal you set at the beginning of the day?
This day in age, so much of our lives consists of digital technology, it’s almost as if the art of face to face communication is lost. These questions are great for getting the conversation started and keeping it interesting!

1. What is your rose and thorn of the day? (Also can do pit or peak - fun way to say high and low. Must start with thorn/pit and end with rose/peak to end on positive note.)
2. Would you rather wear your shoes on the wrong feet or wear your pants backwards?
3. If you could create a swimming pool of your favorite food/drink, what would it be?
4. Would you rather go to space or the bottom of the ocean?
5. If you could change one rule our family has, what would you change?
6. What’s one thing you wish you were an expert at?

Pro Tip: Take turns & answer the questions yourself, too!

5. If you could eat one food everyday, what would it be?
6. What is the best gift you’ve ever given? Received? What made them so special?
7. Would you want superpowers? What would they be? Would you use them for good or to be the villain?
8. If you had to give all of your toys/electronics/games away, who would you give them to?
9. What three words would you use to describe yourself?
**Reporting Live from the Living Room Studio**

*News Report*

This activity is great for younger and older children alike who want to express themselves in a different way. Challenge your child to create and perform news reports based on their feelings and thoughts about what’s going on in the world. This can be a great family activity as you all can incorporate different segments like weather, world news, travel, etc.

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**No movies? No problem. At Home Theater**

Have your family submit random topics (I won $1,000,000, I woke up invisible, I was sucked into a comic book, etc.) and create small skits from these. If you have a larger family then this is an ideal group activity. Brainstorm with the students on how they’ll build this theme, help them create a skit, and build a ‘set’ with items you have in the house. The best part is that you have an opportunity to see your child’s creativity flourish front row center.

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**Fortune Teller**

*Hands on Fun*

Use fortune teller template attached to have each family member create their own handheld ‘fortune teller’ origami. Once origami is completed, write on each of the four inner flaps something that you want to come true the following day. Encourage some of the options to be realistic, ie. like have a dance-off with sibling, Facetime play date with friend, a pretty day with the sun shining, as opposed to something that cannot happen due to social distancing protocol, like “go to school.” Once everyone has their fortune for the day, collect all and when redistributing tomorrow, ensure everyone has someone else’s fortune teller, for a sense of surprise and discovery.
12 STEPS TO FOLDING A PAPER FORTUNE TELLER
It's so easy to feel overwhelmed and uber stressed during this time. Remind your child that there are countless ways they can care for their mental wellness. Here are just a few activities we happen to love!

**Physical Activity**
Ideas: running, yoga, boxing, YouTube workouts, riding a bike
See next page for more!

**Hobbies**
Ideas: journaling/poetry, reading, video games, taking fun pictures, drawing and listening to music

**Social Activity**
Ideas: watching TV with a family member, making a new friend at school (video messaging while out of school), hosting a virtual Netflix Party with friends, writing a letter to a family member or friend

**Everyday Activities**
Ideas: enjoying a good meal with family, taking a mindful shower, engaging in healthy sleep habits, taking social media breaks, and deep breathing

Ask your child to revisit 3–5 ways they care for their mental wellness and how they will implement it into their regular schedule.
get up & get moving!

**Did You Know?**

Exercise helps flush bacteria out of our lungs & airways, which reduces your chance of getting a cold, flu or other illness.

Exercise also causes change in antibodies & white blood cells (the cells that fight disease!)

Don't let Netflix ask you "are you still watching?" four times! Times like these give us the perfect chance to start a little workout routine, or stay on track, if the gym is closed. Check out these At-Home workouts you can do!

10 of each: jumping jacks, push ups, couch squats, couch tricep dips x 3 rounds

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**#BackpackChallenge:**

Fill your backpack up with books & supplies for the following workout! The heavier the bag, the tougher it is!

**Workout #1:**
- 10 Squats,
- 10 Jumping Jacks, 10 Backpack Front Raises, 10 Backpack Curls x 4-5 rounds

**Workout #2:**
- 10 Shoulder Taps, 20-Second Plank, 10 Push-ups, 10 Curb/Step/Box Jumps x 4-5 rounds

**Workout #3:**
- 10 Typewriters Right Foot Leads, 10 Typewriters Left Foot Leads, 6 Single Leg Curb Jumps (each leg), 6 Lateral Curb Jumps (each side) x 4-5 rounds

Tag #DMVPALBackpackChallenge

Pro Tip: These workouts can even be modified for during commercial breaks! Let's keep moving and remember to #STAYHOME

Property of DMV PAL
Sometimes when we are upset, we forget to breathe! Or, we take short, shallow breaths (like a dog panting) that don’t give our bodies the oxygen we need. To help ourselves feel relaxed and calm, we can practice belly breathing. Belly breathing is a unique type of breathing that can be helpful when experiencing feelings of anger, sadness, or even excitement. The purpose of this breath is to send “feel good” signals to your brain so that whatever big feeling may be overwhelming your body, you can take some space back by belly breathing.

Belly breathing is when you breathe in slowly and deeply (counting to 5 in your head) as your belly and lungs fill up with air (you can watch your belly stick out as you breathe in!). Then you let the air out, EVEN SLOWER (count to 6) and watch your belly go back in as the air is slowly pushed out. Pay attention to the air as it moves in and out of your body as you count.

How To:
Have your child sit in a chair with their feet on the ground, hands in lap, and eyes closed. If they struggle with closing their eyes, don’t force it. Try to have them engage in belly breathing for 1 minute straight; if they seem engaged, keep it going for as long as 3-5 minutes. You may also want to play rain sounds or nature sounds, as silence can be triggering for some (and then lead to behavior issues or lack of engagement).

Recite "Breathe In, 1,2,3,4,5. Breathe Out, 1,2,3,4,5,6" aloud, as your child may struggle to stay focused to do this on their own. Once complete, ask them to blink their eyes open slowly.

Pro Tip: Have your child do the count down and you practice your own breathing. This shows your child that you’re engaged and that you also see the benefit in this skill.

Follow up Questions:
How does your body feel now? What was that like for you? Was it hard to focus on your breath?
So, we learned that mental wellness is a state of well-being in which we realize our own abilities, how we cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and are able to make a contribution to our community.

**Up for a challenge?**

Based on what your student just experienced and learned, challenge them to use this to help the world and our community. You may currently be in the house, but we all have a huge responsibility to help others. While we are all dealing with the Covid-19 outbreak, our respective communities may have unique needs during this time. How will we step up to the plate and do our part?

**Give these a try:**

*Blue Sky an idea for how you can help your community*

Is there a unique way you can help crowdsource resources for those in your town? Do you have a service that you’re able to offer to those in need? Can you use your research skills to compile a guide for students who are currently out of school and in need of engaging activities? Can you create a virtual tutoring lab or share a skill that helps people with needs that are not currently being met?
**Draw or Paint**

Art has been known to give us all the feels. Maybe now is the time for you to pull out your paint or crayons and put them to paper. Is there a way you can use your creative talents to inform people about how to stay safe during this outbreak? Maybe you’d like to create a comic book about your adventures while out of school and how you’re staying busy. Maybe you’re creating a series of works that displays how you’re currently seeing the world based on what is going on.

**Create a flyer to hang in your window**

Feeling cut off from the rest of the world? This is the perfect time to create an attention catching flyer for those in your house or maybe even in your greater community. Maybe you’re the older sibling and you’re doing your part to keep order in the house. Think a colorful flyer on the fridge about teamwork could help? Want to share an encouraging tip you read today? Post it to your mailbox for others to see if they happen to drive or walk by.
Share information via a rap/ dance on TikTok

Who says we have to do things the old fashioned way? Now is the time to really show off your skills for good. You may be rapping about the importance of sharpening life skills, like discipline and hard work, or maybe you’re dropping a few bars on why getting sleep is still essential. You may even decide to flex for good and teach other kids how you help around the house while staying active. Maybe you’re displaying resilience by continuing to practice that Renegade, no matter how long it takes.

Write

Maybe you have a way with words and can thoughtfully convey what is happening around you and how you’re remaining cool, calm and balanced. This may be the perfect time to start that daily newsletter to friends and family via email (with parent’s permission, of course!) or maybe you can write and perform morning announcements for your household. Maybe you will spend time writing a short book about all of this with illustrations from your younger brother. This could be a great opportunity to openly voice your concern about some of the issues you have identified in your community. People are ready to see what you have to say!
No Pressure

Whatever your student decides, encourage them to have fun with it and be true to them. We understand that being at home can be a big change for everyone right now. We encourage you to use this time not only for your own wellbeing, but those around you.

Parent/guardian/responsible adult, you are doing a great job! We recommend giving these exercises a try yourself. From belly breathing to "news reporting," don't forget about yourself, ROCKSTAR!

Teamwork makes the dream work. At the end of the day, we are ALL in this together.
We hope this love offering has been beneficial & that these activities help you and your family find your balance during this time. Stay calm, cool and collected!

COVID-19 has put a wrench in all of our plans and our new normal may look different than usual, but we can do this!

We want to see you in action.

Follow & tag us @dmvpal on all social media platforms
Instagram/TikTok/Twitter/Facebook

Use the hashtag #DMVPALChallenge

To keep in touch with DMV PAL & L.O.V.E. YOUth, visit www.dmvpal.org or email info@dmvpal.org

For more information on services offered by Michelle Collins, LCMFT, visit www.michellecollinslcmft.com