

MARCH 2020



A NOTE FROM BETTER BEGINNINGS PROGRAM MANAGER, DAWN JEFFREY



### *Parents and Families,*

What a month it has been. It is no doubt the COVID-19 outbreak has faced us with many challenges. I want to assure you that we, at **Better Beginnings**, are always focused on the **health and safety** of your child and family first. We are also dedicated to your child's **education**, and we are determined to help you make it a priority, even amidst the challenge. **We are in this together.**

With school and center closures, you're probably looking for ways to enhance your child's learning at home. One of the best ways children learn is through play. **Learning through play** brings your child social, emotional and intellectual benefits such as:

- **cooperation** skills
- **expression** of feelings
- **problem-solving** skills
- **creative** thinking
- **coping** skills

No worries! We've got you covered. Our **Family Resource Library** is full of We plenty of resources to make learning from home **easy** and **fun**. In this issue of *The Buzz*, we've highlighted some of our favorites to get you started. Check them out below!

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[EARTH DAY RESOURCE | RAINSTORM IN A JAR](#)

## SPRING INTO ACTION AND LEARN!

### The Sunflower Jar

The most important element of any experiment is a caring adult. This activity is appropriate for a child who has exchanged asking "why" for asking "how." "How do plants grow? How do plants in the woods get started? How do the stores get all that food?"

Place wet paper towels in a glass jar. Paper towel should be placed loosely, not packed down.  
Position 4-6 seeds against the insides of the jar so they can be seen. The number of seeds depends on the size of your jar. The sprouts will need room for roots.  
Place your sunflower jar in a window for light.  
Water daily with a spray bottle or sprinkle water lightly with your hands. Keep the towels a moist place for the seeds.  
In a few days sprouts from the seeds will appear. Then come roots. When the sprouts have two leaves and are two inches tall, you can plant them in a pot.

**What do children learn from the activity?**

- How materials absorb water
- What plants need to grow
- Plants are delicate when they are young
- Measurement

**Materials:**  
Glass jar or smooth plastic container  
Paper towels  
Water  
Packet of seeds

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April is just around the corner, which means **Earth Day** and **Arbor Day** are near! So, next month is all about science.

Try these [Science Activities](#) found in our [Family Resource Library](#) today!

Our [Sunflower Jar](#) resource is perfect for your curious scientist. It answers questions like "How do plants grow?" and "What do they eat?"

## DID YOU KNOW....?

### APRIL IS AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH.

**Autism Awareness Month** is a time to honor children with Autism. So, wear **blue**, create



with **blue**, play with blue and even cook with **blue**. No matter how you do it, it's time to **Light it Up Blue!**

## SENSORY PLAY

You can also check out these [sensory friendly resources](#) from our [Family Resource Library](#). Engage your child's mind through play.

**SENSORY PLAY**

All of the SENSORY SAND in these photos is non-toxic and made from whole wheat flour and vegetable oil.

Double your baby's pleasure with a bumpy ball and taste-safe sand.

Sensory sand looks and plays much like sand. It can be molded, but crumbles easily.

Finding buried shells on Shell Island is a great activity for 3- and 4-year olds. They can also use the shells to decorate the "beach."

Play is a child's work. It is critical to their development. Play helps them develop new skills and explore their imagination.

Sensory play is often called messy play—for a good reason. There is so much to discover. One needs to spread out sometimes.

What parent hasn't seen their baby play with their food? It's squishy and fun to spread all over the high chair table. Give a toddler a big bowl of spaghetti and the freedom to play. The pasta becomes an experiment in touch, texture and gravity. Touch is a fundamental sense, right up there with taste.

Taste is a major factor for babies and young toddlers. It's true that at this stage, almost everything goes into a child's mouth.

**Choose play things carefully.** Make sure anything you put in front of your baby is taste-safe. Be aware of choking hazards. Always check the recommended age on purchased toys. Safety first!

Shell Island is an activity for children over 3 years of age.

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Get the recipe for sensory sand and more ideas for sensory play on the next page.

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**SENSORY PLAY**

**Sensory Sand**

**Uncooked Taste-safe Playdough**

**Ingredients**

- 1 cup salt
- 2 cups flour
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 cup cold water
- 3-5 drops food coloring (optional)

**Directions**

**Step 1:** In bowl, mix salt and flour.

**Step 2:** Add food coloring to water to make a bright color. (Optional)

**Step 3:** Add water to dry ingredients.

**Step 4:** Mix in oil and knead until smooth. Sprinkle on more flour if it's too sticky.

**Step 5:** Remove from bowl and let the fun begin!

**Step 6:** Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Make about a softball-sized dough ball.

Prep work is a fun, quiet sensory party for little ones. Make playdough with your preschooler to get lessons in math, science and reading while you have a treat. [Learn more about playdough here.](#)

**Crushed Crackers**

Crushed crackers are great for sensory play. Put them on the high chair tray with or without accessories. Baby will play his own way.

Parental Participation Don't miss out on the fun!

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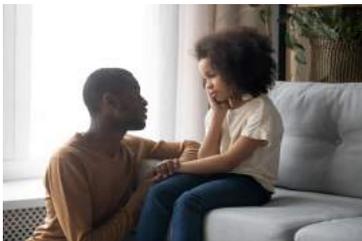
Always supervise your playing little ones.

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Find more Play is Learning Resources here.

## TIPS FROM THE CDC FOR TALKING ABOUT COVID-19



Stay calm and confident.



Remind them you want to answer their questions.



Avoid language that might blame others and lead to **stigma**



Monitor what your child engages in on television, radio and online.



Only discuss the facts.



Encourage habits like hand-washing.

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE.](#)

## What is **Better Beginnings**?



What is Better Beginnings? We help providers across the state provide your kiddos with **quality** child care and **early education**. We also connect families to learning resources that can enhance your child's development **outside of the classroom**.

[Visit our website to learn more.](#)

OR check us out on **social media**.



Better Beginnings is Arkansas's quality rating improvement system for child care, early education and school-age programs that have gone above and beyond the state minimum requirements. Better Beginnings is administered by the Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education.

