A young girl with dark hair is lying on her back on a lush green lawn. She is wearing a vibrant red dress with a gold-colored bodice and a full, flowing skirt. She is holding a long, thin stick in her right hand, which is positioned near a large, round bouquet of yellow flowers. The bouquet is resting on the grass next to her. The girl is looking up at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a dense, green lawn with some scattered dry leaves and small yellow flowers.

THEIR MOMENT IN THE SUN

The time our kids spend outdoors is more precious than ever. Forest schoolers *Dan Westall* and *Naomi Walmsley* present their lockdown guide to connecting with nature

School's out. Or rather, the school children are in. At home, climbing the walls, telling you, "We're bored." If, like us, you're running out of ideas, help is at hand. In normal times, Dan Westall and Naomi Walmsley are experts in making the most of our natural world. They run forest courses for children and believe that every child should be able to light a fire safely and have at least 10 uses for a stick by the age of 10.

Sadly, these are not normal times, so we've asked Dan and Naomi to adapt some of their favourite forest school projects for your children to attempt on their own or with other family members in the garden. If you don't have your own green space, most of these can work indoors, on a balcony or on the front drive. As we go to press, families are still permitted to exercise once a day while observing social distancing. Use your daily dose of fresh air to collect natural materials and complete these projects at home.



BOTANICAL INTERACTIVE ART

Art exists everywhere you look and it's easy to create your own outdoor collage by collecting natural materials. Wouldn't it be fun to make the art and be part of it too? This activity inspires you to create a botanical masterpiece and then step right into it! You can be as silly or surreal as you like, all in the comfort of your own backyard.

Age Any

Time Any

Tools Your imagination

Materials Anything from sticks and stones to leaves and seeds

Forage around in your chosen location. At the moment that's likely to be your garden, your patio or your mum's hanging baskets (just make sure you ask her permission!). Take a look at the nature to hand. Find an appropriate place to create your artwork in your garden or indoors.

Start to collect materials for your botanical masterpiece. You could use pebbles, small rocks, sticks, leaves, bark, dandelions, daisies, leaves and anything else you come across.

This is really now all down to you and your imagination. Play with creating illusions with size. We had fun creating hats and umbrellas to lie next to so that we would become part of the artwork.

More ideas

- Use small sticks for the outlines and then fill in with leaves and flowers.
- Create a self-portrait and lie next to it.
- Make a pair of wings and then "fly" away with them.
- Make a cup and teapot and lie down next to it to pour a cuppa.
- Make a big piece of cake and lie down next to it to take a giant bite.
- Make an oversized spider and lie beside it in a running-away position.



BUILD A SHEET DEN

Making indoor sheet forts, cushion slides and blanket castles to hide in is a favourite pastime for many children, but why stick to making them indoors? Pack your sheets into a bag and head out into the fresh air.

Age Any

Time 10+ minutes

Tools Scissors, tent pegs (optional)

Materials Old large bedding sheets, string, rope, small stones/books, gaffer tape (optional)

Step 1 Attach a piece of tape (on both sides) to each corner of the sheet. With a pair of scissors, carefully cut a small hole through the tape. You can use these holes with tent pegs later on, if using.

Step 2 Use fabric pens or acrylic paint pens to create your own designs on your sheets before you build your den.

The tent

Find two trees or posts that are close together. Tie a length of rope between them at about chest height. Ask a grown-up if you need help with the knots. Now drape the sheet over the rope to form a tent shape. You can peg down the corners using stones or books. Alternatively, use tent pegs.



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GOBLIN VILLAGE AND MINI DENS

We always start this activity with a story about how you don't see goblins around any longer, because their village was destroyed by a dragon (see below). After hearing it, the children suggest that we could rebuild the village — theme park, gardens and bridges galore!

Age 3-6 years

Time 15+ minutes

Tools None

Materials Natural materials such as moss, sticks, leaves and stones

Decide what to build. A post office, a house, a whole magical kingdom? Use natural materials to create tiny dens. Add leaves on sticks for miniature trees, pebbles lined up as bridges, moss for roofs and more. You can use small teddies or other toys as a guide for size.

The story of the goblin village

"Have you ever seen a goblin? No? Well, that's because they no longer come

here. Here, where we stand, there used to be a goblin village. It had houses that were joined by epic bridges and magic gardens. It had sweet shops and dancehalls where goblins would gather at the end of every day for a good old boogie! But then one day a dragon, a very friendly but really quite big dragon, who lived all the way up the hill, heard about these dances. He loved to dance, and desperately wanted to join in the fun.

"So, on one particularly rainy day, he put on his dancing shoes and ran down from the top of the valley to find the dancehall. But the rain had turned the ground into a muddy, sloppy mess and the dragon's shoes were meant only for dancing, not for running, so he slipped all the way down. He slipped past all the trees, through the forest, down the hill and landed in a heap, squashing the whole village. Not a building was left standing. The goblins had no choice but to move on, and now no one knows where they live. It's terribly sad. I wish there was some way we could help..."



HONEY BEE WATER STATION

Honey bees are like miniature superheroes. They fly at a speed of about 16 miles per hour and beat their wings 230 times a second, which is pretty amazing. They also help many flowers, fruits and vegetables to grow, so are hugely important for life on earth. This simple water station takes minutes to assemble, but will help these amazing creatures to survive.

Age Any

Time 5 minutes

Tools Acrylic paint pens (optional)

Materials Smooth pebbles, a plant pot, a shallow dish or bowl (made of glass, ceramic or terracotta), fresh water

Choose a spot in the garden or on a balcony that is protected and shady. Place a plant pot upside down. This is the base of the bath. Set the shallow dish or bowl on top of the pot. Put a few pebbles in the dish. Add just enough water so that the tops of the stones are not submerged. Change the water daily and clean the bee bath out weekly.

Tip You could decorate the stones if you like. I use acrylic paint pens to make my stones colourful and inviting.

Why do bees need water?

- They use it to dilute their honey to make it the right consistency and thin out honey that has crystallised.
- Water helps with their digestion.
- They need it to keep the hive cool. They add water to the hive and fan it with their wings, cooling it down. The bee babies need it too! The nurse bees that feed the larvae need lots of water to create the right baby food (this is called royal jelly).



3D MAPS

This can be used as a craft activity or as part of a fun game. It's great for encouraging creativity and getting to know the (very local) area you are in. If you're in an urban setting, just use your imagination.

Age 3+

Time 10+ minutes

Tools None

Materials Whatever can be found on the ground: stones, twigs, leaves and so on

Step 1 Walk around your garden or local area during your daily exercise outing (or you could use Google Street View to do this virtually). Notice the big features and the small. Are there any trees that really stand out? Is there a hedge line? Is there a stream, a path or a gate? Take note of these things.

Step 2 Decide on names for the features that stick out: the wise old oak tree, the wiggly jiggly path and so on.

Step 3 Using logs, mark out an area about 3ft x 3ft (it's fine to make it smaller

if you don't have the space). Use natural materials to create a 3D map of the area within your frame. Once it is finished, share with your family, talking them through the map and its key features.

3D map game

To play this as a game in your garden or even in a room of your home, you will need two or more family members. Each person will make their own map, but not talk anyone through its features when they have finished. Each player will take turns to hide a clothes peg somewhere in the space they've mapped without the other players seeing. They will then come back and place a peg in the corresponding area of the map. The other players have to use the map to find the hidden peg, trying to decipher what all the features symbolise.



NATURE'S BOARD GAMES

Despite so many new games being invented on both board and screen, the old favourites just seem to stick around. Why not take these old games to a new level and try to recreate them using just sticks and stones?

Noughts and crosses

The classic one — if you can't find suitable stones, improvise. You just need two sets of five objects to use as counters. You can also have a portable version (pictured above).

Age 4+

Time 10 minutes, plus playing time

Tools Ruler

Materials Acrylic paint pens, 10 small, smooth pebbles, a piece of felt or leather (6in x 6in)

Step 1 Find 10 smooth, roundish stones. Decide on the symbols to paint on your

stones using acrylic paint pens. You can be traditional and paint five crosses and five circles or be creative and try ladybirds, leaves, bees or flowers. There are no rules here!

Step 2 Use a ruler to draw the grid onto the piece of felt. You need two lines running vertically and two running horizontally to make nine even boxes. Alternatively use sticks on the ground.

Snakes and ladders

The original board has 100 squares, but you do not have to make yours this big. Try to make at least 20 squares, in rows of five, that are big enough to stand in.

Age 6+

Time 20+ minutes

Tools A dice

Materials Long sticks (about 3ft long), lots of smaller sticks to create ladders and a few bright leaves to be the snakes

Step 1 Make your board with the long sticks. Then add your snakes with overlapping leaves, placing each one so that it leads from one square down to another, diagonally or straight down.

Step 2 Use the smaller sticks to add your ladders both big and small, leading from one square up to another.

Step 3 Now all that's left to do is play. Start on the first square and take turns to move by rolling a dice. If you land in a square that has a ladder in it, follow it up to the square it ends in. If you land in a square with a snake, bad news — travel back down the board. Roll a six and you get another turn.



NATURAL COLLAGES AND SCULPTURES

Nature provides some wonderful materials for making art: there are stunning colours, shapes, textures and sizes all around us. Although we can't roam free at the moment, we can find materials in our gardens and homes to make some creative art. The beauty of these pieces of artwork is that they are temporary and will be returned back to nature, sometimes even within hours! Take a photo as a reminder.

Step 1 Look around you before you decide what to make. Sometimes the materials will guide you and show you what is possible. Decide whether you want to make a 3D structure that stands proud and tall or a framed picture that sits beautifully on the ground.

Step 2 Gather your materials. It is a good idea to use only what is abundant or already on the ground. Remember: if in doubt, leave it out!

Step 3 Create a wonderful picture or sculpture by placing or building up your

materials. Use clay or mud as a glue for sticking and charcoal for drawing.

Ideas for sculptures

- Art does not always have to look like something we recognise; sometimes it is just about making something interesting, beautiful or thought-provoking.
- Make a 3D person. Perhaps you could create a self-portrait?
- Make a 3D creature: a centipede from a log with a hundred sticks for legs, a snail made from a nest of grass, or a bird made with logs, feathers and stones.

Ideas for natural collages

- Use the seasons as a guide. Divide your picture into four sections and fill them with natural materials: bright flowers for the sun, brown leaves for autumn, a daisy snowman and such like.
- Recreate a favourite holiday memory, as if your picture were a photograph.
- Create a picture of yourself or a friend.





BOTTLE FILTER

You can use this fun filter to make even the dirtiest water from a muddy puddle run clear. You'll need to search your garden or nearby park to gather a range of natural materials to make up the many layers. The filter won't remove chemicals or bacteria, however, so don't be tempted to drink the water, however clean it looks.

Age 6+

Time 20 minutes

Tools Scissors

Materials Plastic bottles, a plastic or metal container, a piece of cloth, crushed charcoal, gravel, grass, leaves, wood shavings, pine cones. You do not need all the loose materials, just a combination of small bits with some larger pieces

Step 1 Once you've gathered your materials, cut the bottom off the plastic bottle and remove the lid. Wedge the cloth into the neck of the bottle, then fill it with layers in this order: charcoal, gravel, grass and leaves, wood shavings. Make sure everything is compacted down tightly. It is important to keep the layers in this order: the large particles in the water will be filtered out first through the wood shavings, while the final layers of crushed charcoal will remove the smaller bits of debris and clean the water.

Step 2 Pour your muddy water slowly through the bottle filter into another container. Be careful not to spill it over



the edges, as this will contaminate your water. Pass it through the filter several times until it runs clear.

Tag @thetmagazine in your forest school pictures on Twitter or email them to thetmagazine@sunday-times.co.uk

Anxious kids?

During a health scare, particularly one of these proportions, it's natural to be worried. Children are generally very resilient and, in a loving and nurturing environment, will often work through problems and difficult times without needing too much additional help. These exercises will help your children explore, express and explain their worries and open up the conversation with you.

Try this relaxation exercise

- 1 Lie down on a rug or carpet and close your eyes.
- 2 Begin by breathing in through your nose. Hold your breath for a few seconds, then breathe out. Take another deep breath in through your nose. Imagine your tummy is a balloon filling with air and then, as you breathe out, imagine all the air escaping.
- 3 Stretch out your legs in front of you, pointing your toes. Stretch out your arms

either side of you, stretching all the way through to your fingertips.

4 Now start to tense all the muscles in your body. Begin with your toes. Curl them over so they're clenched. Then think about tensing the muscles all the way up your legs and through your tummy. Imagine something is about to step on your tummy and you want to make it into a hard wall.

5 Tense your arms as well, so your arms are by your sides and even your fists are clenched. Bring your shoulders up around your ears.

6 Now scrunch up your face. Push your lips together and frown down into your face so your forehead is all crinkled.

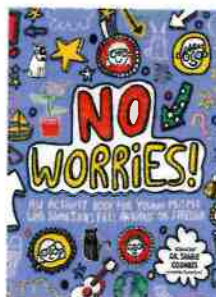
7 Make your body go limp again. Let your legs and arms go limp. Relax your shoulders by bringing them down. Imagine yourself as a floppy rag doll.

8 Take a deep breath in through your nose and breathe out again. Notice how relaxed

and calm you feel and then, when you're ready, open your eyes.

The worry jar

Make a worry jar — it can be a drawing or an actual jar. Ask someone in your family what they worry about. Together, fill up the worry jar with your worries. When you've finished, put the lid on to stop the worries getting out again.



If you're not ready to share your worries, you can do this on your own or help someone else with their worries ■

Extracted from *No Worries!* by Dr Sharie Coombes (Studio Press £9.99)