

I could never have imagined I would share our July newsletter during a pandemic. I mourn for those who have lost lives and livelihoods. I feel for and respect all our parents who work hard to keep their children's education moving forward.



I am proud of how Mindstretch stepped up to help our parents and community. Within a week of lockdown, we initiated our **Outreach Programme**. This included regular **Check In** with parents and children, and four expertly crafted **Activity Sheets** every week.

**Since lockdown began, Mindstretch has produced and circulated 65 Activity Sheets tailored to our scholars.**

I thank our Teachers for their contributions to Mindstretch Outreach. I, in turn, have kept all my Mindstretch Teachers and Teacher Aides employed through lockdown. Others in our community have helped Mindstretch: I am most grateful for the kindness of Pinelands Methodist Church and Wellspring International.

Now we are welcoming our children back to school, under stringent safety standards.

- ▶ Our staff are certified in **Covid-19 Back2School Health & Safety**.
- ▶ We adhere to a strict **Covid-19 Health & Hygiene Protocol** that conforms with government legislation and scientific guidance.

As one epidemiologist has written: "With a young child, I think the developmental risks outweigh the risk of getting sick with Covid." (John C. Nelson, Precision for Medicine; reported in the New York Times, June 8) I appreciate that not everyone feels this way. We will accommodate our parents' return plans as best we can.

I hope you enjoy these articles focused on **Getting Physical** and also **Safe Interactions with Dogs** as we venture back into public places. Perhaps you will join the **Rainbow in the Window** movement and make your own declaration of solidarity?

Thank you, and I wish you all good health,  
Jennifer

*Mindstretch Founder and Preschool Principal*



**ALL Mindstretch Employees are Covid-19 Health & Safety Certified**



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## Getting Physical

Modern lifestyles mean that young children are increasingly at risk of being overweight. This can be especially so for a child with low muscle tone, poor motor planning, behavioural issues and/or decreased attention. Still, all children like to run, jump and play. It is good for their health and brings social and emotional benefits too. With patient guidance, we can get our children moving. This is why one of our four weekly Remote Outreach activity sheets has focused on PHYSICAL Activity.

**THREE BASIC RULES** will help ensure success:

- ✓ Cater to the child’s strengths: Choose appropriate activities and/or modify the ‘rules’.
- ✓ Break it down so the child can understand how to complete a task.
- ✓ Practice how to do it.

This **‘SIMON SAYS’ EXAMPLE** shows how:

In ‘Simon Says’, one player is ‘Simon’ and stands before the group and tells them an action to perform. Nobody knows what action Simon will call next. This can be hard for children with ASD, who do best with predictability and knowing what to expect. The anxiety the child may feel about what is coming next may defocus them from the instruction. They end up being ‘out’ before they have a chance.

If you don’t know the game, click here for the rules:

### Simon Says Game Instructions

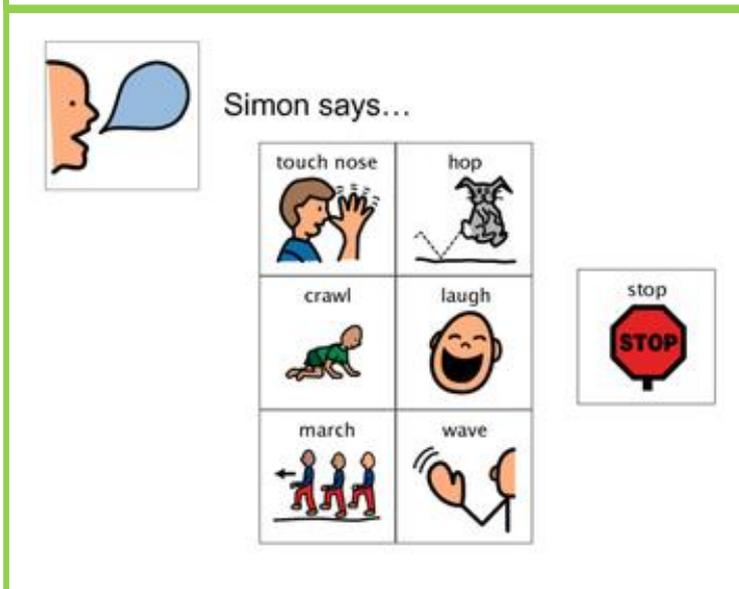
These **ADAPTATIONS** will help a child **SUCCEED**:

**1. Limit the actions.** Give Simon a specific list of actions to choose from, and provide a visual aid of those same actions to the child who might struggle. The actions might be provided in the order in which they will come up, allowing a child to know exactly which movement will come next. Or keep it to a *short* list from which Simon can choose, narrowing the options and so giving the child (who has the same list) a better idea of what is to come, even if they do not know exactly what Simon will say.

**2. Modify the rules.** Remove the ‘Simon says’ rule (i.e. if Simon doesn’t say “Simon Says” and you do the action, you’re out) and focus only the actions being performed. This removes the pressure of getting ‘out’.

**3. Practice with the child.** Do this before they play with peers. Be sure to take turns. Your child will find it funny (and reassuring) if you also mess up and perform a wrong action. Use the practice to get physical or to focus on desired behaviours such as sitting down, putting on a coat, waving, etc. Let the child express any anxieties or ask questions (to the best of their ability) before they play with others.

**4. Be covid-aware.** ‘Simon Says’ allows for appropriate social distancing. Perhaps work this ‘distance rule’ into the very first action.



## Safe Interactions with Dogs

Dogs are popular in South Africa. Even if you do not have one, you are sure to meet one. These 8 rules will help you do so safely.

- 1. Greet the PERSON first:** Dogs zero in on their owners' emotions. If a dog sees its owner is okay with you, it will be more relaxed with you.
- 2. Approach a dog SLOWLY and QUIETLY:** Never run at a dog! And do not scream or squeal, even if it's in delight. Use a soft, calm voice.
- 3. CHECK with the OWNER first:** Ask the owner's permission before you approach their dog.
- 4. AVOID EYE contact:** Dogs have their own code and personalities. Dominant dogs may see eye contact as a challenge or an attempt to dominate. Keep your eyes averted at first.
- 5. Don't CROWD a dog:** Don't bend over a dog. It may feel cornered. Keep a distance and give the dog space to move back or away. If there are several of you, do not all crowd around the dog but rather take turns saying hello.
- 6. Introduce yourself with a slightly CLOSED FIST, palm down:** Once you have spent a little time near the dog, and if it seems relaxed, then bring your slightly balled fist toward the dog's nose for it to smell. A slightly balled fist is smaller and less intimidating than a hand with fingers extended.
- 7. Only TOUCH the dog's neck, chest or shoulder:** If you wish to pet a dog after the introductions above, touch it lightly with the back of your open hand on its shoulder, neck or chest.
- 8. When a dog has had enough, let it go:** Let the dog decide how long the interaction should last. If it moves away, let it go. Do not reach toward a dog that has backed away from you.



Perhaps draw this friendly pup for your child while they watch, or let them try it themselves. Have them colour it in. Chat about dogs and how to greet them. We want our children to be cautious with dogs but not afraid.



A slightly balled fist is smaller and so less intimidating to a dog than a hand with fingers extended.

- Dogs are the most popular pet globally, owned by 33% of pet owners. Cats are second at 23%.
- The most popular dog breeds:
  1. Labrador Retrievers
  2. German Shepherds
  3. Golden Retrievers.

## Rainbow in the Window

The 'Rainbow in the Window' movement has spread around the globe! Through the rainbow art they post in their windows, children send encouragement and support from a distance.

It helps our children understand that everyone has to 'play' the don't touch and stay away from busy places game. They get to see that no kids are playing with their friends like they used to. It is important that a child knows it is not just them. It is also important they know things are going to be okay. Some of the window rainbows include phrases like 'We're okay'.

Perhaps make your own rainbow and put it somewhere visible?



## Mindstretch Preschool Remote Outreach

Please accept my heartfelt appreciation for kindly sending the materials to help my son. I simply cannot thank you enough!

*Yvonne*

These work sheets are amazing. Please know that I am following even if I don't respond, and we really appreciate the Outreach. We try to do all activities.

*Thandie*

This is really very comprehensive. I honestly cannot think anybody can do more given the current conditions. I applaud you for being so proactive.

*Emese*

### We are always **PREPARED** to **HELP**

Our Remote Outreach Programme launched the day lockdown extended into term time.

- ▶ We circulated our first Activity Sheet within 3 days, and continued with 4 sheets per week for 11 weeks.
- ▶ We have shared 65 unique Activity Sheets tailored to the profile of our scholars.
- ▶ We checked in with our families weekly.

### We work to be part of the **SOLUTION**

## We Welcome Your Feedback

- Email [jen@mindstretch.co.za](mailto:jen@mindstretch.co.za) with comments or suggestions, and please follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/mindstretch.co.za) (@mindstretch.co.za)
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