



Children and Creativity

Everybody is creative. Without creativity, we could not adapt to new situations or change the way we view the world. When people identify someone as “creative,” they mean something about the degree of creativity displayed. Not everyone will be delighted by the way a creative child thinks.

Development

The personality traits some creative children develop are often viewed by others as strange or unproductive.

Free Thinking: When creative children toy with ideas, they may appear undisciplined and lacking in goal orientation.

Gullibility: Creative children get excited about “half-baked” ideas and may not see the drawbacks or flaws that an adult would easily see.

Humour: Creative children find humour in ideas that adults consider to be very serious. This ability to question and see other perspectives may be interpreted as mocking and obnoxious.

Daydreaming: Creative children learn through fantasy and solve many of their problems through its use. Letting one’s mind wander can help the imagination form new connections but may be seen as being inattentive or spacey.

Solitude: Creative thinking develops from delicate, unformed ideas. Children need to be alone while their ideas emerge, but society’s emphasis on togetherness makes this difficult.

Activity: Ideas often come at times of “doing nothing.” But once the idea comes, the creative child will become absorbed in the activity.

What Can You Do?

Set an Example: Honour your own child-like curiosity, enthusiasm and “crazy” ideas. Keep yourself open to new experiences, share your own creative interests and take delight in the interests of your child.

Examine Your Attitudes: Children who feel loved and trusted gain the confidence to be different and the courage to create. Over-concern for societal convention or sex-role stereotypes can inhibit creativity.



Encourage Your Child: Encourage experimentation and exploration. Practise listening to your child without being judgmental. Edit, criticize and question your child’s ideas with caution. Allow for and support your child in failure. Avoid “empty praise” for everything they do and show your enthusiasm when you really feel it!

Enrich the Environment: Unstructured play materials encourage imagination and enable children to create their own ideas. Old magazines, books, newspapers, games, old clothes and discarded jewellery can be precious treasures of unlimited possibilities. Take trips. Talk with people. Provide experiences that stretch the imagination.

Structure the Environment: While it may be true that creative children’s uniqueness can cause problems, it is not true that all children with problems are creative. Rules should be as few as possible but must be clear and consistently applied with obvious consequences for misbehaviour.

Watch TV: And watch out for TV! Used responsibly, television can enhance visual imagery and imagination, and increase knowledge. However, creative people are producers of new ideas, not simply consumers of the ideas of others.

Record Ideas: Children love to paint and draw from a very early age. This is an excellent, creative, problem-solving medium. Before they begin to write, they can dictate their ideas to adults or other children. Later, encourage your child to keep a diary or journal.

Teach Creativity: The creative process never runs smoothly and children get into “bad moods” when they are frustrated. Let them know it’s okay to daydream, pretend, have imaginary friends, think things other people don’t think, and not be interested in everything that interests other children. Unlocking children’s creative potential will give them deep satisfaction and can kindle lifelong fires of artistic and intellectual enthusiasm.