

Fostering Creativity

One of the most impressive things about my daughter is her lack of inhibition when it comes to creativity. This raw unfiltered expression is very common in young children. I too want to be as free and uninhibited. Watching her has inspired me and given me something to strive toward!

At times I catch myself trying to 'control' some of her creativity, fortunately I've become more self aware of this stifling behaviour and usually catch myself. Below are some ways you can help your child expand their natural curiosity and creativity. The overall objectives are to a) focus on the process, not on a final product and b) to try to see art everywhere (as a way of life), DON'T label objects, try seeing things in terms of form, light/shadow, colour and texture.

Focus on the process, not the product Your child's *piece de resistance* may not look like much of anything to you, but her/his methods and artistic experimentation allow him to expand his creative thought process. MaryAnn Kohl, author of *Discovering Great Artists* and 15 more award-winning books about kids' art says, "Children who feel free to make mistakes and to explore and experiment will also feel free to invent, create, and find new ways to do things.". Focus on the child and the process of what they're creating. You can ask your child questions about the process, but never about the result. To a child, it doesn't matter. Just playing with the paint might be their only goal. Studies on early childhood education have also shown that creative play in the early years pays dividends in adulthood.

Freedom Allow your child the freedom to create their OWN art without giving them your expectations (or assistance). A child who creates freely learns to enjoy and benefit from art, and becomes more self-confident in their abilities to do all sorts of things (not just art). A brown blob might not be what YOU expected, but the child who created that blob is a proud and confident child indeed.

Show it off Display as much of your child's artwork as possible. Never allow your child to see you throwing away their artwork. If you can, mat or mount the work (even if it's a brown blob). Hanging her creation on the fridge, on a bulletin board or in your office is all it takes to build your child's creativity confidence.

Ideas for stirring the creativity juices Make a story board for a play. Make musical instruments. Decorate play clothes for a play. Come up with your own language, verbal and written. Felt board, make characters/objects out of felt, tell a story. Design your own game. Start a story with your children, and let them finish it. Make books from magazine clippings and let your child dictate the text (if they're too young to write). Make edible art from your food or desserts (pudding painting with food coloring is a blast). The concoction game (let children make their own concoction with their choice of ingredients and have them name it). Make art out of garbage or recyclables. Take special trips and record your experiences with photos, art, or words. Photo illustration, have them place photo(s) of themselves, friends, or family/pets in a scene that they create.

By Penelope Kuhn

penelopekuhn.com
pkuhn@accesswave.ca