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Ever wonder what 'Creativity' really is?... and, is it possible to teach 'creativity' to children?

To answer these questions, we need to research the definition of the word. I checked several resources looking for a concrete definition for 'creativity' and found many different thoughts on the matter. Some of the more common definitions include the words: imagination, originality, productivity, problem solving, new/unusual ideas. Where many of the definitions differ, is in whether or not creativity is a 'talent' – a generic part of one's personality, or whether it is an 'intelligence' that can be taught and practiced, similar to math or reading. Talent usually refers to the aptitude one has for a certain area, whereas intelligence usually refers to one's IQ which may have nothing to do with one's ability to be original in their ideas. …..hmmmm…seems that the experts don't agree on which area 'creativity' falls into. Apparently creative intelligence and IQ do not necessarily coexist, but some experts say there is a correlation.

According children for 25 years, I've come to this conclusion: 'creativity' is both an intelligence and a talent–and, SURPRISE!, it definitely can be taught and learned. In my experience as a mother and a teacher, I've found that you will need to offer children a few things to foster their creative thinking: 1) opportunities to problem solve 2) opportunities to use their imaginations without limitation, 3) opportunities to make choices alone and in play with others, and, 4) opportunities to experiment with a variety of materials to 'create' without adult expectations.

Being intelligent and creative people themselves, my parents offered these kinds of opportunities for my brothers and me while we were growing up. Basically, we solved our own conflicts (unless someone's life was in danger), we were encouraged to use our imaginations for play, we made choices (which were sometimes NOT the best; nonetheless, we learned from our mistakes), and we always had a plethora of materials available to create with; fabric, paints, crayons, buttons, scraps, junk, dress-up clothes, etc. We had opportunities to attend dance, music and art classes. Our performances were praised and our 'creations' were always displayed in our home. As neat and tidy as my mother was, there was always a place for one of my special drawings, paintings, clay creations, or painted rocks to be prominently and proudly displayed for all to see. This was the norm at our house, and, as is often the case with parenting, I've raised my own children the same way.

When I look at the lives of my four grown children today, I see that although they are different, each one has wonderfully creative abilities. They use creativity in their schoolwork, extra-curricular activities, their careers, and in problem-solving. They use their creativity to enhance the lives of others in various ways.

Folks, the bottom line is this: If you feel creativity is important and you wish to foster creativity in your own children, it's definitely possible. Make some mud pies, dye eggs, frost cookies, build sand castles, dress up crazy, finger-paint, dance, act, color, and sing without unrealistic expectations or limitations, and intelligent/creative minds will soar!! You can also try one of the ideas below which are designed to get the entire family involved in the process of increasing creativity.

The 'Colors' Game

This game gets the creative juices flowing through thinking and sharing with the family. For this game you'll need a bag or two of Skittles or M&Ms candies. At random, give each family

member seven candies. Taking turns, they are asked to speak about the colors they have by answering the following questions:

Green: Words to describe your family
Purple: Your favorite things to do with your friends
Orange: A word which describes your personality
Red: Things you worry about
Yellow: Favorite memories
Blue: A place you'd like to travel to
Brown: Something you dream of doing/being someday

"The Story That Never Ends"

Sit in a circle with your family. At night, in a dark room, or with your eyes closed works best. The number of people involved makes no difference. One family member begins a 'make-believe' story with something like, "I once saw the strangest thing when I was camping. It was so enormous …." The person can stop the story at any time, and say the name of another family member who is to use their imagination to continue the story. The story goes on until the family decides it's done.

Other ideas for 'story starters':

… One day I went to the market to buy groceries. I saw the craziest thing in the produce section! … If I could create a new animal for the zoo, it would be a …

…Sometimes I dream of living in a place that is ___ and ____. My house would look like …

The 'Family Drawing'

All you'll need for this game is a large sheet of drawing paper and a black marker. The only communication done during this game is through your marker and the paper – NO talking!

One person starts the drawing with any kind of line–it can be long, short, curvy or straight. He/she then hands the marker to the next person who adds another line of any kind to the drawing. And on it goes….until you all nod in agreement that the drawing is finished! You may end up with a picture of 'something', or it may be an abstract design…it doesn't matter. When you're all done, you may corroboratively color in your family drawing. Be sure to display it prominently in your home for all to see!