**Why Nurturing Creativity in Kids is so Important**

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By Ben Michaelis, Ph.D.

Recent academic studies have shown that American kids are no longer as creative as they once were.  This should not come as a shock to anyone, as we live in an era obsessed with numbers, data, and test scores, especially as they apply to our kids and their education.  Seeing the decline in creativity should make us concerned about our children’s capacities to innovate, problem-solve, and navigate new and unfamiliar situations.  What should parents, educators, and professionals do to help bring back our children’s natural creativity?

*Where has all of the creativity gone?*

American society has become intensely focused on a narrow definition of success (i.e., making-money), and our educational system has evolved to help our kids attain these goals.  Although making a living is important, we have moved too far in the direction of keeping our kids focused on the “prize,” and as a result, they have lost the ability to use their imagination.  By defining the goal as getting into top colleges and universities, we have de-emphasized non-linear and non-traditional ways of thinking.  Innovation, unless it is in the service of higher test scores is subtly discouraged.

The point of creativity is the joy of the*process* rather than the product of discovery.  We are all born with the will and ability to create, to express our uniqueness in a way that allows us to connect with those around us.  The lack of this connection can lead to many forms of emotional and behavioral problems such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and drug or alcohol abuse that are, unfortunately, becoming all to common in children and adolescents.

The other culprit is the addiction to, and overconsumption of, media, such as videogames and smart phones.  Video games can be fun and terrific for developing hand-eye coordination but they need to be balanced with other activities.  When we overemphasize consumption and under-emphasize production we reduce a child’s ability to think creatively.  Creativity is a muscle that we all have, and like all muscles, if you don’t use it, you lose it.

*Getting it Back*

In order to move from passive consumption to active innovation, we need to expand our definition of creativity beyond the arts and expose kids to imaginative processes and the joy of invention.  As parents, educators, and leaders of the next generation, it is important to emphasize the joy of creativity and instill in our children the sense that there is something important they can personally share with the world. Getting kids (and adults) to share their individual messages allows them to feel more connected with themselves and those around them.  This promotes feelings of self-confidence and self-worth that are the key to emotional well-being and healthy social development.  Moreover, creativity is where ingenuity and innovation lead to greater things in the world of art, science and technology.  Getting kids to focus on the products of their imagination is vital to their individual mental health and to the world at large.

*Promote Curiosity and Imagination*

Inspire your kids to think in new and unconventional ways by bringing them into different environments and interesting situations. Introduce new foods at the dinner table; explore new cultures through reading or family outings to a cultural museum.  Have your children spend time with their grandparents and ask them to reflect on the differences between their lives and the experiences of older generations.  Encourage a dialogue between your children and older family members about discoveries or innovations that changed their lives or ways of thinking.

*Don’t Just Problem Solve, Process Solve!*

Another way to bring creativity into your children’s lives is to get them to enjoy the process of problem solving.  Prompting kids to generate ideas in order to solve a puzzle gets them to engage with their thought processes and broadens their ways of thinking.  Demonstrate how you might go about problem solving and you will instill in them the joy that comes from imagining solutions to a problem.  Remember: It is the *process,* not the product of problem solving that is important.  If your child has difficulty coming up with the solution, that is part of the point of the exercise.  Praise them for their effort rather than only for arriving at a correct answer.

You can also encourage creative thought by asking your children to consider everyday problems. There is a genius in the design of things we see and use everyday. Ask your kids to consider why form and function fit so well in certain products.  Encourage them to consider why the iPhone is just the right size, or why manhole covers are round.  Read riddles to your children and try to figure them out together, one step at a time. Inspire your kids by getting them to consider how skyscrapers are able to stand so tall, why bridges work, or what makes airplanes fly.  In short, get your kids away from consuming the ideas of others and nudge them towards wondering about, and producing, ideas and solutions of their own.

*Make Creativity a part of every day*

Although we all have hectic lives, there are a myriad of ways to bring the creative process into everyday activities in order to get your kids to think outside the box.  Being silly and playful with them is a great start, but actually producing something is even better.  This is because the process of actually bringing the idea from inspiration to production is where they can really begin to see how creative process works.  The effort that we supply when we actually make things helps us to learn new and innovative techniques for thinking.

When you create with your kids and model creative thinking just for the sake of inventiveness, you inspire them to do the same.  Maybe it’s developing a new recipe for scrambled eggs in the morning, or a sandwich for lunch.  Perhaps it’s writing a short story about the day.  Anything that gets the imagination going can inspire your kids to think about the world in a different way.

Bringing creativity into your life and your kids lives is not only useful for helping to lead richer and more interesting lives, its also a lot more fun when you are living a creative life.

For more suggestions and ideas for creative interaction, [**click here.**](http://www.drbenmichaelis.com/)

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**Útržky myšlienok:**

<http://voices.yahoo.com/how-cultivate-creativity-children-6464784.html>

Everyone has a seed of creativity somewhere inside them. As parents and educators we are detectives of sorts, searching for those seeds of potential in children. ...

Children do not need to be on the same task, at the same time or learning at the same rate as their older siblings did or even as other students in their class. [Daily practice](http://www.exquisite-minds.com/gifted-resources-lessons-and-curriculum/) needs to look different from child to child because children learn differently. As teachers and parents we have to be willing to go above and beyond, if we expect children to do the same. When we are enthused, they are enthused. When we are motivated, they are motivated.

[Creativity](http://www.exquisite-minds.com/creative-learning/) can contribute to solving almost any problem; it's not why something can't be done, it'show it can be done. It's helping diminish the student's anxiety about being different, allowing them to develop their creativity, identify their competencies and forge self-confidence without constant need for outside validation. Children's learning comes through discovery, making personal connections, integrating new information and creative application.

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