

FOSTERING CREATIVITY

QUESTION: What can I do to help foster my child's creativity?

ANSWER: Most children are naturally creative; all they need is some encouragement. The right kind of motivation and praise from the parents can go a long way toward fostering a child's creativity.

A young child is naturally curious and eager to learn. His/her ideas are original, creative and full of energy. As a child moves through the elementary years, some of that creativity may diminish as he/she feels the pressure to achieve and meet expectations. However, parents may continue to foster creativity in the home by providing the right environment and encouragement.

- * Provide an abundance of materials for children. Begin with the basics of paper and pencils. All types of art supplies should be made available, including crayons, paints, clay, paste, markers, yarn, cloth, pipe cleaners, cotton balls, old magazines, newspapers, and scissors.
- * Allow the opportunity for exploration. Children explore through books, games, toys, and activities. A stimulating environment allows for an expression of creative talents.
- * Encourage your child to be self-reliant. Do not plan all his/her activities, time, and creative projects. Sometimes it is helpful to provide a beginning point for a project and let the child be responsible for its' completion.
- * Teach your child that it is okay to make mistakes. We all learn from mistakes.
- * Listen to your child. Creative expression can be evident in the types of questions a child asks and in the ideas he/she presents. Provide support and show an interest in what your child says and does.
- * Expect appropriate conduct and establish specific standards of discipline. What some people consider creative behavior may actually be disruptive behavior.
- * Provide an opportunity for your child to experience a variety of activities. Encourage reading, writing, sports, music, and artistic endeavors. A variety of activities and experiences will establish a background from which the child may expand his/her abilities.
- * Recognize children for their achievements. Children will take pride in their accomplishments and continue to improve when parents display their support.
- * Allow children to make their own choices and seek alternative solutions to problems.