

◆ Special Situations

Every Child Is Creative

Children lose part of their creativity by the time they're five years old. That's what some research on young children says.

Can you do something to retain the creativity of your child's early years? Yes, you certainly can. And it costs very little in time and money.

Because a child's areas of enjoyment are so numerous, many adults get scared off. "What do I know about animals, plants, and magnets?" "I'm not good at music, dance, and art." But encouraging creativity isn't really difficult at all.



◆ Ways to Stimulate Creativity in Your Child

◆ Dance together.

Young children like to use their bodies. They like to jump, rock, dance, sway, creep, skip, and walk in funny ways using their heads, hands, legs, and arms. Let music come into your home through records, radio, television, or musical instruments, and dance along with your child.

◆ Provide the materials to make things.

Young children enjoy making things. They like to feel different materials and squeeze them through their fingers. So once in a while, provide clay, scraps of wood, colored paper, paint, and even sand or mud. It'll all wash off! Encourage your child to describe his or her creations with phrases like, "Tell me about your picture. I like the colors you used," rather than, "That's nice. What is it?"

◆ Make props available for playing "make-believe."

Children like to play make-believe. So provide puppets, grown-up clothes, and other props for creating a whole new world of magic and fantasy. Be an audience — you'll enjoy the show!

◆ Encourage your child to sing and tell stories.

Young children like to rhyme sounds and words, tell stories, and compose songs and poems. Use wait time in grocery stores, doctors' offices, and traffic jams to sing and rhyme. Allow and even encourage silly behavior. If children can't "let themselves go" when they're two, three, or four, when can they?

◆ Explore the natural environment together.

Recognize that everything is new for your child. "Everything" includes the sky, clouds, rain,

stars, and wind and extends to insects, pebbles, snowflakes, and leaves that adults seldom notice. After all, small children are often a couple of feet closer to them than we are!

◆ Provide opportunities to use all the senses.

The exciting world around them comes alive to children through their eyes, but also through sounds, tastes, and smells — and by way of their fingertips, too.

◆ Show genuine interest when playing together.

It's important to show interest when playing together to help your child retain his or hers, but make sure the interest is real. Most children, even young ones, are alert to adults *acting* as though they enjoy childhood games.

◆ Acknowledge creativity.

Emphasize that the pictures your child draws, the sounds and words he or she creates, and the body movements he or she makes are his or her very own.

◆ Give your child the freedom to be creative.

Don't set firm patterns or models for your child to follow. It isn't necessary that a preschooler color or paint within strict lines.

◆ Do things together.

Involve your child in your activities. He or she would like nothing better than to be included — whether it's cooking, auto repair, or carpentry.