

In a world where we strive for our children's academic excellence and glorify their grades and marks, creativity is often lost between the folds of goals and academic achievements. So, here's a shout out to everyone to give creativity its due. What better time to do it than during these summer holidays?

# Spark your child's creativity

BY APARNA SAMUEL BALASUNDARAM





If the question, 'What is creativity?' is posed to us, most of us would state it is something related to 'arts and crafts'. Right? However, creativity is so much more than just that!

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines creativity as, 'the ability to make new things or think of new ideas'. It means looking at the world in new ways, finding the patterns, connecting the dots and using our imagination to discover solutions and innovate. So, when we look at creativity only through the lens of art and music, we are limiting the immense potential and role of creativity in the areas of scientific understanding, research, mathematical computations and problem solving methods. The pre-requisite for all scientific and technological inventions is a creative mind. As Thomas Edison aptly said, "To invent, you need a good imagination!"

Research has also proven that encouraging our child's creative self-expressions, enhances her emotional well-being. For a child, it is an empowering experience to be engaged in a creative process and make something which is a reflection of her thoughts and feelings. Mrs Yasmin Khan, a renowned Educationist and the Principal of Paras World School, Gurgaon, says, "When children are allowed to be creative in both scholastic and co-scholastic areas, they are inspired to express themselves without any inhibition. This, in turn, helps them to become learners who are motivated, ambitious for change and confident of their capabilities."

In his theory on Multiple Intelligence, Dr Howard Gardner [Developmental Psychologist and Professor of Education at Harvard University] talks about eight different forms of intelligence we could possibly possess. While we are all familiar with the traditional concept of intelligence, Dr Gardner sheds light on the form of creative intelligence, which involves the linguistic, musical and visual-spatial intelligence types. This means being creative is a form of intelligence, which we need to recognise and encourage.

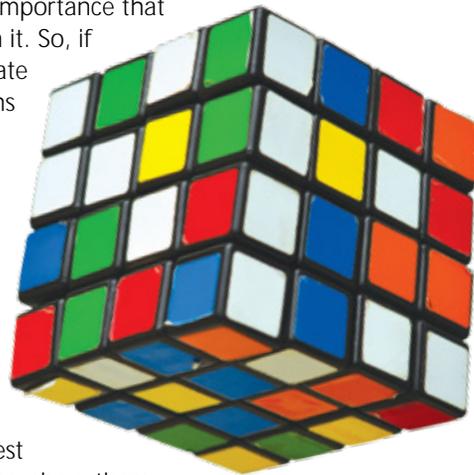
Given this more inclusive understanding of creativity, we can confidently state that as humans we are all wired for creative thinking. Creativity is in our DNA. Sure, for some it would be possible to express it in a more tangible and visible manner, especially when it comes to the more traditional ways we view creativity - as art, dance, music or writing. But, the fact remains that we are all born with the innate potential to be creative. And, we can all learn to be more creative. It requires some purposeful intent and practice.

As parents and caregivers, we can provide an environment that nurtures creativity in our children and taps their innate potential. For this, we will need to create opportunities for them to explore, experiment and question.

Here are five strategies you could try creatively!

#### VALUE CREATIVITY

You are the role model for your child. A child learns what is important depending on the importance that his family places on it. So, if you were to celebrate different expressions of creativity, your child, in all likelihood, will also see being creative as something to be valued. Apart from talking to your child about creativity, let your actions reflect it. Read about the latest scientific innovations, show them interesting apps, attend concerts, plays and art shows, see interesting TED talks together, go to museums or cook interesting fusion foods together and so on. As a family, when you invest your time and energies in being creative or appreciating other people's creativity, you are sending a message to your child - that creativity is something worth investing time and resources in.



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### ENCOURAGE DIVERGENT THINKING

Divergent thinking is a process of being able to 'divert' from the obvious or usual and look at the same thing or situation in a completely different way, and come up with multiple perspectives or solutions. For example, you could brainstorm with your child on how many ways you can reuse an empty container. Come up with a whole list and talk about it. Or, when you solve a problem, give him a positive reinforcement for it and then put that solution aside! Now, ask him to get back to the same problem, but come up with another possible solution. So, what you have taught your child is that for the same problem, you can have different workable solutions. This way, you help him start practising the art of divergent thinking and this, in turn, makes him feel more confident and encouraged to take risks and discover beyond the obvious.

An example of this would be Neeti Palta, who had the courage to pursue her creative expressions and, today, is India's leading comedienne. In a conversation with her, she said, "I think traditionally 'creativity' is

seen as an extra-curricular activity in India. Something you do in SUPW, after the traditional subjects have been studied! It's ironic, you chain yourself to your desk to get 100% to get into college, get into a corporate job and then the boss says 'think out of the box'."

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A discussion with Sweta Kanhai, Founder Artist of Estudio Divino, highlighted many benefits of the abstract form of art. It helps a child to connect with herself and her emotions, on canvas. It provides a medium for her to express through colour play, strokes and textures without possessing any knowledge of sketching or drawing. Sweta, however, cautions that sometimes parents unknowingly stifle the creativity of their children, by judging their work of art or attaching their own explanations to the child's work of art.

## CREATIVITY BOOSTERS

- **READING:** There's nothing like fiction to foster imagination and kick-start the creative drive. Encourage reading as much as possible. Allocate time for reading in your child's daily routine.
- **STORY-TELLING:** Building a good story, imagining characters and scenarios, and performing for an audience can do a lot to push the creative boundaries of your little one.
- **ROLE-PLAY AND THEATRE:** What better way to let your child explore his creative limits than through the performing arts? It makes way for some quality time for the whole family too.
- **FINE ARTS:** Fine arts, such as painting and music, are not just expressions of creative talent; they also help focus on striving for perfection. From a very young age, let your child explore and experiment in the field.
- **ARTS AND CRAFTS:** Young children are naturally drawn to arts and crafts. Your job is to make sure they pursue them in their spare time.
- **CREATIVE WRITING:** Writing is one of the best ways to help unlock the creative potential of your budding genius. Create the space for your child to express his creativity using this skill.
- **PUBLIC SPEAKING:** An extension of writing, activities like speeches, debates, moot courts, mock parliaments, etc., are a good way to keep your child's creative senses sharp and keen.
- **PROBLEM-SOLVING EXERCISES:** The need to solve a problem forces your child to think outside the box, consider what's not obvious and work a way out of seemingly impossible scenarios. What better way than this to boost creativity?



So, parents, as tempted as you might be to tell your child 'how to do it', step back. It's important for your child to know that what she has created is a finished piece and is enough! This, in turn, builds her confidence in expressing herself, as she knows she will not be negatively judged for it.

### ALLOW FREE UNSTRUCTURED PLAY

One of the most natural forms of expression for any child is play. In today's world, our children are bombarded with toys and games that are supposed to be played a certain way. They all come with rules and regulations. While there is a place for such toys, you should also give children ample time for unstructured play. Allow them to engage in self-directed play and come up with their own games or think of things they would like to do or make. Think of your own childhood days and the ways you played games – building tents with bedsheets and pillows, playing cops and robbers or making music with cooking utensils! This, of course, has one pre-requisite; all screens will have to be kept away! This is because when children are first introduced to the concept of free play, they may not know what to do and then they would get bored and inadvertently reach out for the tablet or the phone! Be strong parents and hang in there. For, given enough time, your children will come up with non-digital ways to entertain themselves!

### SPARK CREATIVITY

Along with your child, engage with the world through all your sensory faculties. Head out to a garden along with your child and a camera, and together think of all the different ways you could capture the image of the same flower or an insect! You should take turns clicking pictures

and then, share what you liked about each other's perspectives. This gets the creative juices flowing!

The more you spark your children's creativity, the more it will become a way of life for them, and even as they grow older, they will retain that creative mind-set.

Naina Sardana, a 5<sup>th</sup> grade student from Salwan Public School, Delhi candidly shares that she enjoys indulging in the creative world

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and is full of ideas, thoughts and imagination. When asked what helps her to get to that creative world, she quipped, "Sometimes, when I have nothing to do, I just pick up a book and read. That gives me inspiration to create something on my own. My mother does not help me with ideas or spellings; but, she gives me something else – her support and love."

So, parents, with the summer holidays around the corner, use this as an opportunity to try some of these strategies! Have fun as you do this!

In the wise words of Dr Seuss, "Think left and think right, and think low and think high. Oh, the things you can think up if only you try!"

We would love to hear what worked for you; do write in and share some of your creative ideas on our digital pages! 🍌



For more on this log on to [www.parentcircle.com](http://www.parentcircle.com) and check out our ClipBook called 'How to Raise a Creative Child'

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