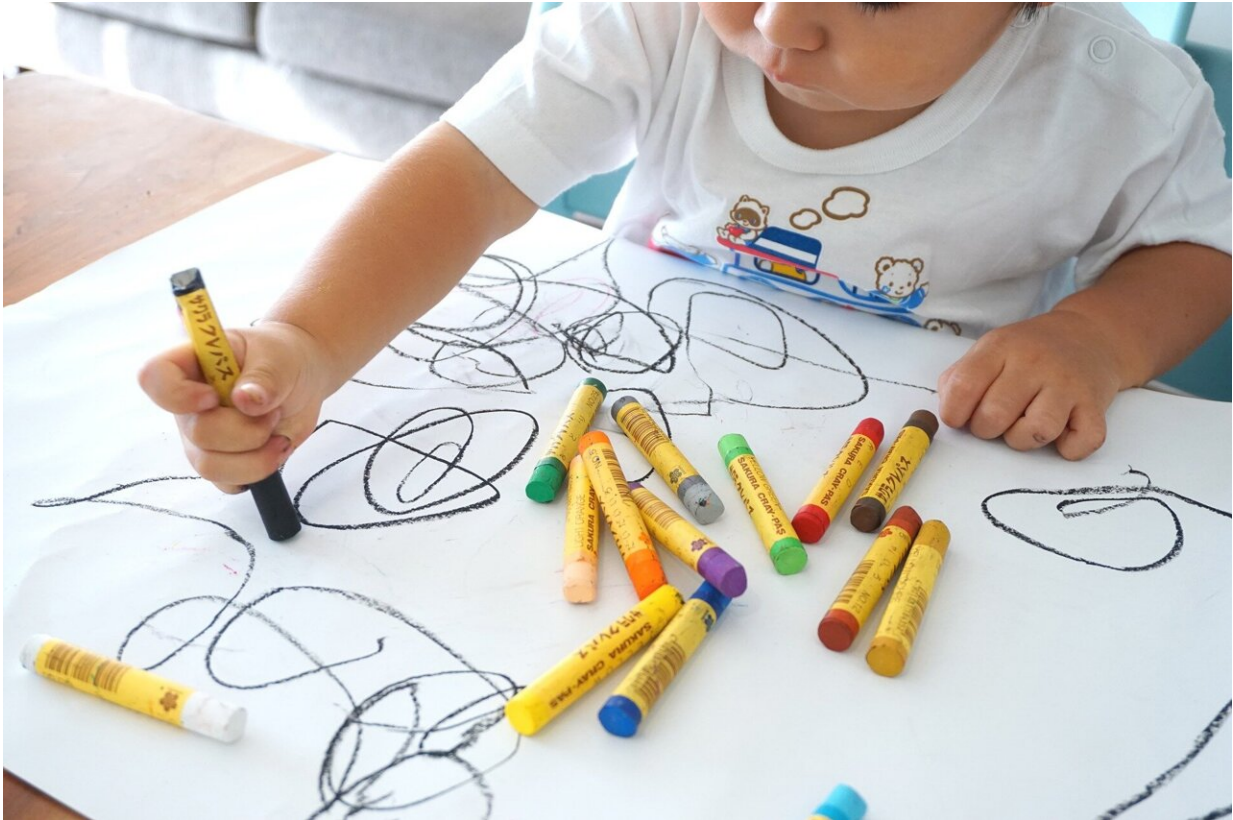


How to nurture creativity in your kids

October 22 2021, by James C. Kaufman



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Parents who want their kids to be more creative may be tempted to enroll them in arts classes or splurge on STEM-themed toys. Those things certainly can help, but as a [professor of educational psychology](#) who has [written extensively about creativity](#), I can draw on more than [70 years of creativity research](#) to make additional suggestions that are more

likely to be effective—and won't break your budget.

1. Be cautious with rewards

Some parents may be tempted to reward their [children](#) for being creative, which is traditionally defined as producing something that is [both new and useful](#). However, rewards and praise may actually [dissuade your child's intrinsic interest](#) in being creative. That's because the activity may become [associated with the reward and not the fun](#) the child naturally has doing it.

Of course, I am not saying you should not place your child's artwork on your fridge. But avoid being too general—"I love every bit of it!"—or too focused on their innate traits—"You are so creative!" Instead, [praise specific aspects](#) that you like in your child's artwork—"I love the way you made such a cute tail on that dog!" or "The way you combined colors here is pretty!"

Some rewards can be helpful. For example, for a child who loves to draw, giving them materials that they might use in their artwork is an example of a reward that will [help them stay creative](#).

It is also important to note that there are many activities—creative or otherwise—for which a child may not have a particular interest. There is no harm—and much potential benefit—in using rewards in these cases. If a child has an assignment for a creative school activity and hates doing it, there may not be any inherent passion to be dampened in the first place.

2. Encourage curiosity and new experiences

Research shows that people who are [open to new experiences and ideas](#)

are more creative than those who are more closed off. Many parents have children who naturally [seek new things](#), such as food, activities, games or playmates. In these cases, simply continue to offer opportunities and encouragement.

For those whose children may be more reticent, there are options. Although personality is theoretically stable, it is [possible to change](#) it [in subtle ways](#). For example, a study—although it was on [older adults](#)—found that [crossword or sudoku puzzles](#) can help increase openness. Childhood and adolescence is a [natural period for openness to grow](#). Encouraging curiosity and intellectual engagement is one way. Other ways might include encouraging sensible risk-taking—such as trying a new sport for a less athletic child or a new instrument for one less musically inclined—or [interest in other cultures](#). Even very simple variations on an evening routine, whether trying a new craft or board game or helping cook dinner, can help normalize novelty.

3. Help them evaluate their best ideas

What about when children are actually being creative? Most people have heard of brainstorming or other activities where [many different ideas are generated](#). Yet it is equally important to be able to [evaluate and select one's best idea](#).

Your child might think of 30 possible solutions to a problem, but their creativity will not be expressed if they select the one that's least interesting—or least actionable. If giving praise can be tricky, feedback can be even tougher. If you are too harsh, you risk [squashing your child's passion](#) for being creative. Yet if you are too soft, your child may not develop their creativity [to the fullest extent possible](#).

If your child seeks out your input—which in adults can be a [good indicator of creativity](#)—make sure to give feedback [after they have](#)

[already brainstormed](#) many possible ideas. Ideally, you can ensure your child still feels competent and focus on [feedback that connects to their past efforts](#): "I like the imagery you used in your poem; you are getting better! What other metaphors might you use in this last line?"

4. Teach them when not to be creative

Finally, [creativity isn't always the best option](#). Sometimes, straightforward solutions simply work best. If the toilet is clogged and you have a plunger, you don't need to make your own from a coat hanger and bisected rubber duck.

More notably, [some people, including teachers](#), say they like [creative people](#) but actually have negative views of creative kids without even realizing it.

If your child is in a class where their creativity is causing some blowback, such as discipline issues or lowered grades, you may want to work with your child to help them understand the best course of action. For example, if your child is prone to blurt out their ideas regardless of whether they are related to the discussion at hand, emphasize that they should [share thoughts that are directly relevant](#) to the class topic.

If, however, you get the feeling that the teacher simply does not appreciate or like your child's [creativity](#), you may want to suggest that your child keep an "idea parking lot" where they [write down their creative thoughts](#) and share them with you—or a different teacher—later in the day.

Creativity has a host of [academic](#), [professional](#) and [personal](#) benefits. With some gentle nudges, you can help your [child](#) grow and use their imagination to their heart's content.

This article is republished from [The Conversation](#) under a Creative Commons license. Read the [original article](#).

Provided by The Conversation

Citation: How to nurture creativity in your kids (2021, October 22) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-10-nurture-creativity-kids.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.