



Helping Your Children Channel Their Creativity

Sometimes our children's creativity delights us. Sometimes it makes us crazy. If we help them channel their creativity, we will have more fun with them and they will lead more productive lives.

The first thing parents can do is to help their children discover their specific talents. Some children show their creativity through telling jokes, some through building with blocks, some through thinking up new possibilities. If we notice the things that delight our children, we will have a good clue about their talents.

When we comment positively on their creativity, we encourage its development. "I love the way you sing." "I enjoy the riddles you create." "I love to see the things you create."

The second challenge for parents is to help children channel their creative energy. When one child shows creativity in the way he teases his sister, it may be hard to appreciate his gift. A wise parent will find ways to celebrate the creativity while encouraging kindness. "You have a quick mind! I hope you will use your gift to appreciate your sister's goodness (or sensitivity, creativity, determination, etc.)." Parents can support their children by providing materials and books to help them learn--whether a joke book or a model rocket kit or a sewing machine.

Sometimes parents do not notice their children's creativity because it is expressed in subtle or private ways. One child may be a voracious reader. Another child may have a gift for kindness to animals. Parents do well to make an occasional inventory of the gifts they see in their children--and to make sure they are regularly acknowledging those gifts.

The third opportunity for parents is helping their children explore and further develop their creativity. Parents can discuss their children's interests with them. They can take them to the library or museums. They can hook their children up with mentors. They can provide places for talent activities in their home.

One caution for parents: It is easy to stereotype children's gifts. A child who loves experimenting may be labeled a scientist. It is possible that she loves learning or the experimenting rather than the science. Parents help their children when they allow them to explore many different expressions of their talent and creativity.

In fact, parents' own enthusiasm for learning is contagious. When parents show a passion for learning about many subjects, it helps their children see learning and creativity as a lifelong adventure.