

## **Why Creativity in Young Children is Important**

As we adjust to life in changing times, where every day presents new ideas and new challenges, I wanted to share a piece written by my colleague and friend Marcy DeJonge, a 4-H Extension Assistant working with UNL Extension in Harlan & Furnas Counties.

Creativity is more than art and music. Creativity supports mental growth by involving measurement, equality, balance, shape, spatial relationships, and problem solving. Using creativity, children gain sensory perception, verbal skills, and hand-eye coordination. Creativity provides opportunities for experimenting, imagination, freedom of expression, and learning how to cope with feelings. Promoting creative thinking can elevate children to become the adults who make a difference in our world with creative, problem solving skills.

### **Encouraging creativity**

Letting children have the freedom to make mistakes and respecting their ideas will allow them to learn to think and solve problems in creative ways. Children are encouraged to use creativity by making choices instead of having choices made for them. Creating a stimulating environment can enhance creative problem solving. Leaving time for play and fantasy can lead to creative thought. Independence should be encouraged but with reasonable limits. Seeing others in different cultures will encourage respect for the choices others make. Encourage brainstorming. Take on problems as a group. Encourage children to build on and expand their skills. Encourage children to come up with more than one answer to a problem.

### **Barriers to creativity**

Creativity can seem irritating because creative people tend to work outside the rules. Give creative space – freedom to make mistakes and respect for multiple ideas. If a reward is not expected, there is more creativity and enjoyment. Peer pressure and be observed during the creative process can discourage creativity.

### **10 Tips for Supporting Creativity**

1. Don't be afraid of messes.
2. Encourage experimentation.
3. Be specific in your questions about your child's art.
4. Don't compare your art with theirs – it can be discouraging.
5. Embrace your child's art without making suggestions for changes.
6. Emphasize the process of creativity, not just the finished art project.
7. Give children the independence and control they need to create.
8. Regularly schedule long, uninterrupted periods of play.
9. Share in children's excitement about discoveries.
10. Display children's artwork and stories.

Source: Marcy DeJonge, UNL Extension Harlan-Furnas Counties, County Extension Assistant

References:

Sara Gable, University of Missouri State Extension Specialist, Human Development.

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/20/06/understanding-creativity> Emily Boudreau June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

*Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at University of Nebraska–Lincoln cooperating with Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture*

Continuing the conversation on encouraging our youth to identify healthy and safe ways to communicate, engage in creative experiences, and stay connected, Buffalo County 4-H encourages you to check out the Buffalo County 4-H social media channels.

Check out our Facebook to stay updated on local and statewide 4-H activities:

<https://www.facebook.com/BuffaloCountyNebraska4H/>

As always, please reach out to your local Nebraska Extension office in Buffalo County with any youth development questions, comments or concerns.

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