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### **Teach Children to Be Creative**

As a parent, one of the nicest gifts you can give your child is a chance to think and act creatively.

Creative thinking simply means looking at situations and seeing them differently or exploring a variety of possibilities. It means “wondering why” and being able to think of more than a single way of doing things.

Children have the ability to be creative. They are adaptable and imaginative, ready to learn, and eager to apply new knowledge. If you encourage it, they will also willingly teach themselves.

Jean Piaget, who developed the current theories about how children learn, said, “Every time we teach a child something, we keep him from inventing it himself.” Piaget was a believer in providing an environment for learning with appropriate materials and then letting children explore, touch, taste, and discover on their own.

It’s in this environment that creativity can flourish. A parent who wants a child to explore art, should give the child art materials, paper, and a comfortable spot to work, leaving the child free to draw, scribble, mix colors, make forms, design, or whatever to be creative.

On the other hand, if you give a child a box of crayons and a coloring book, the child might just color all the pictures using appropriate colors, such as green for trees and even learn to color within the lines at an early age. However, the child will not develop creativity.

Parents often say they want to teach their child to be creative, but when they sit down with their child, it ends up being a disaster. Teaching your own child can be a difficult job, so do

it the creative way by backing off and letting the child learn some things on their own. The child will probably teach you how they learn best.

Here are some tips for allowing creative minds to develop:

Ask questions that let imaginations run wild, not those that have right or wrong answers.

Try a “what would happen if?” approach.

Encourage exploration, experimentation, and curiosity. When your child asks for answers, try to give several possibilities. Don’t hesitate to say, “I’m not sure” or “Let’s explore some more.”

Let them take part in activities that promote use of imagination and fantasy. Possibilities include music, theater, art, storytelling, and 4-H day and overnight camping programs.

Loosen up your lifestyle. Spend time adding variety to your life, like taking your kids to a children’s musical, a children’s museum, cooking something unusual, or making up stories for the kids.

Research shows that creative children usually have creative parents, not because parents taught them how to be creative, but because the environment they lived in let them be creative.

If your child becomes more creative, your child may be unlike many of his/her peers, but your child will be confident, less inhibited, open to new ideas and insights, be able to entertain himself/herself, and be less self-critical.

Moreover, your child will be just the kind of adult the world needs – a creative problem solver and decision maker.

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