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### Creativity at Home: A Creative Mindset Guide for Parents

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Creativity at Home:  
A Creative Mindset Guide for Parents  
by  
Sara Smith

An Abstract of a Project  
in  
Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Master of Science

April 2017

Buffalo State  
State University of New York  
Department of Creative Studies

## ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

## Creativity at Home: A Creative Mindset Guide for Parents

Parents are a child's first teacher, and the environment they provide is the child's first learning environment. Fostering creative thinking in children requires a creative mindset at home. This project describes the development of a series of web-based pieces geared toward parents to encourage a creative mindset at home that will translate into creative thinking and behavior in themselves and their children. Together these pieces serve as a guide with practical tools, resources, and activities centered around 12 themes honed from top research in creativity and child success. This guide aims to help parents provide a creatively minded home that supports and extends children's natural creative behavior as well as their learning and growth.

*Keywords:* parenting, creative mindset, children, learning

  
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Signature

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April 24, 2017  
Date

Buffalo State  
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A Project in  
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Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers  
Associate Professor  
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April 24, 2017



Sara Smith  
Graduate Student

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## Acknowledgements

When you have a baby and a toddler and you suddenly decide that in mere days you are starting a master's program and need to fly 700 miles away for two weeks, it cannot be done alone. Thank you to my husband, Benjamin Smith, who said, "OK!" and helped make it happen – and not just for those weeks in Buffalo but for all that we squeezed out of life together the last two years so that I could do this.

Thank you to my mother, Sara Myers, and my sister, Leigh Fransen, without whom I could not have completed this program. Leigh, I hereby bestow upon you honorary course credit for all the hours you spent with my children so that I could go to class.

To my advisers, Sue Keller-Mathers and Cyndi Burnett, thank you for the wealth of knowledge you generously share, the enthusiastic encouragement you always provide, and the feedback that continually pushes me to improve. And to the whole of the faculty at the ICSC, you have demonstrated what fostering a growth mindset in education looks like, which has changed me in profound ways. You have unlocked something inside me, and I am forever grateful.

Finally, my heart's deepest gratitude for my children, Elijah and Rebecca. You two are my greatest source of inspiration for this project and in life. I hope that watching your mom pour her heart into something is worth the time you gave me. I am so excited to continue exploring our creativity together as you grow.

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## SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

### Purpose and Description of Project

I have two young children and have been a teacher of preschool, 1st grade, and 3rd grade. My teaching experience and my work in my Master of Science in creativity have combined to direct my passion toward how learning and creativity interconnect. I am a part of a self-directed learning community in my city and have co-created a cooperative for early childhood learning that focuses on creativity, curiosity, and exploration. I have come to see that in the early years of a person's life, the important aspects of creativity are more in the mindset and attitude that comes with living creatively rather than in promoting deliberate processes like Creative Problem Solving (CPS). It is my desire via this project to share with other parents how they can foster a creative mindset in themselves as parents and in their children as they grow.

In *Creativity is Forever*, Davis (2004) calls creativity a “way of living and perceiving” (p. 2). My goal is to help people approach parenting with this creative mindset, perceive their children as creative, and interact with their children in ways that nurture that creativity. Much of this creative attitude, I believe, comes from the affective skills laid out in the Thinking Skills Model of CPS (Puccio, Mance, & Murdock, 2011) and Torrance and Safter's (1999) creativity skills. I also believe that many of these skills come fairly naturally to children, and that the environment, which includes their interactions with those closest to them, can make a huge difference in whether those skills stay with them through their life. There are also important aspects of success and creativity like growth mindset, grit, motivation, and community (Tough, 2012) that add to the skills above and are just as vital.

This project will provide parents with a concise, consistent, curated way to learn about creativity principles and incorporate them into everyday life within their families. It will serve as a weekly “pick-me-up” for those who are striving to parent with a creative attitude and instill a creative attitude in their children so they can face the week with a creative mindset.

Personally, this project will be an opportunity for me to bring my knowledge of creativity and my skills in writing and condensing information together. It will allow me to put content out into the world on a regular basis and demonstrate my interests and skills. It will also help me to develop my specific voice in the creativity world.

As a tertiary piece, this project can serve as the basis for forming a community around creativity ideals. I will be creating and releasing engaging, informative content on a regular schedule. In my experience, online communities grow best around consistent, quality content. When there is something to come together and talk about each week, it brings people back into the community at regular intervals to interact and form relationships with the community in general and with other individuals in the community.

In working on this project, I will be using the specific skills of information gathering, divergent thinking, and “highlighting the essence” with regularity. I have several goals for myself during this project:

1. Help parents to see the connection between living with a creative mindset and life-long learning.
2. Develop my voice, including improving my personal storytelling skills as they pertain to content I’m delivering - I know stories help people connect to content, so I want to practice this skill.

3. Employ my creativity in how I present ideas that come from other thinkers.
4. Gather experiences and notice creativity everywhere so that I can help others do the same.

### **Rationale for Selection**

I will be writing 12 practical/informational pieces, each on a different creativity-related theme, one for each month of the year. I wanted to do something written because writing is something that I both enjoy and want to improve. This is a way to “fail fast and often” because I’ll be writing concise pieces that can receive immediate feedback. I also know that people learn through and respond to anecdotes, so this is something I want to push myself to improve on. I have decided to focus my audience for this project on parents because of how salient it is to my personal everyday life right now as a parent of five-year-old and a three-year-old. I also feel like I use my own creative strengths best when writing and parenting, so this pairing is a way to stretch my skills within an area of comfort and motivation.

I am excited about boiling down what I know about creativity, learning, and parenting into accessible, fun pieces that can be immediately useful to parents of any background. I think most parents have an awareness of the importance of creativity, but lack strong ideas for how they can foster it or what all it entails. As a parent of young children, it is easy to get caught up in everyday life and lose focus on even the things you have deemed important to your parenting and relationship with your child. Having an interesting, easily digestible reminder of creativity goals can make a big difference to parents. It is also part of my passion to provide practically applicable information. All the

theories in the world don't help a parent in the trenches of young childhood without help distilling the information into a useful guide.

## SECTION TWO: PERTINENT LITERATURE AND RESOURCES

This project is focused around the child by way of their most influential relationship, that of the one they have with their parents. The goal is to support creativity and life-long learning, which go hand-in-hand. Because of this, the literature upon which this project is based covers three avenues: creativity concepts, children and learning, and parenting. In addition, resources for creative nonfiction writing and children's literature were also reviewed.

### Creativity Concepts

These creativity resources focus on the underlying skills and associated behaviors and beliefs that are conducive to creativity. It is these skills, behaviors, and beliefs that make up the creative mindset that is so important for a child's most influential environment, the home.

Hennessey, B. A. (2010). The creativity-motivation connection. In J. C. Kaufman & R. J. Sternberg (Eds.). *The Cambridge handbook of creativity* (pp. 342-365). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Intrinsic motivation is related to both learning and creativity. As Hennessey explains, most rewards and other extrinsic motivators have been shown over years of research to harm intrinsic motivation and reduce creative behavior and lower creative output. At the same time, rewarding and otherwise extrinsically motivating children has been a go-to tactic of schools and parents for decades. It is important to understand both the possibly detrimental effects extrinsic motivation can have on creativity and how positive it can be to nurture and foster a child's natural interests based on the motivation research this article covers.

Puccio, G.J., Mance, M., Switalski, L., & Reali, P. (2012). *Creativity rising*. Buffalo, NY: ICSC Press.

The affective skills laid out in the Thinking Skills Model of CPS are the underlying means for developing a creative outlook on life. More than the process itself or a creative product, I believe parents need to be focusing on these underlying skills when they parent because they get at that creative “living and perceiving” that Davis (2004, p. 2) talks about. I will also draw from CPS for tools and information that are most relevant to the everyday needs of a parent with young children. Specifically, the divergent thinking rules this book outlines are foundational to the creative mindset. Because each of the stages of CPS is associated with an affective skill, instilling these skills in children from the time they are small sets them up for successfully solving problems with a creative lens throughout their lives.

Torrance, E. P., & Safter, H. T. (1999). *Making the creative leap beyond*. Buffalo, NY: Creative Education Foundation Press.

Torrance and Safter distilled 18 creative skills from the extensive research Torrance did on creative people. The skills introduced in this book are, I believe, among the most tangible ways to get at the creative attitude and lifestyle. The authors also make sure to reveal that the skills necessary for creativity are ones that require practice and often guidance. They provide evidence and examples for each of the skills, including specific research about what fosters and hinders each skill. For example, for the skill “keep open,” they review research that shows that time pressure and an attitude of frustration contribute to premature closure. Because much of Torrance’s research was

conducted with children, this book provides extensive data and information regarding the creativity skills and their development in children.

Torrance, E. P. (2002). *The manifesto: A guide to developing a creative career*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Torrance's Manifesto provides insight into what makes for creative achievement throughout life. While the title sounds prescriptive, the book is actually descriptive in nature, highlighting decades of Torrance's longitudinal research related to creativity and the qualities and experiences he uncovered in the participants. He breaks down the most important aspects of what it means and what it takes to be a "Beyonders," including the actual manifesto, a seven-point list revealing what creative achievers do:

1. Don't be afraid to fall in love with something and pursue it with intensity.
2. Know, understand, take pride in, practice, develop, exploit, and enjoy your greatest strengths.
3. Learn to free yourself from the expectations of others and to walk away from the games they impose on you. Free yourself to play your own game.
4. Find a great teacher or mentor who will help you.
5. Don't waste energy trying to be well-rounded.
6. Do what you love and can do well.
7. Learn the skills of interdependence. (p. 10-11)

### **Children and Learning**

Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.

and



Dweck, C. (2015). Carol Dweck revisits the 'growth mindset'. *Education Week*, 35(5), 20-4.

Understanding Dweck's work on mindset should be a requirement for all parents. There is a lot about school and other environments that children find themselves in that seems to counteract the vital development of a growth mindset. I struggled with this as a child into my adulthood, and understanding this concept and how it related to much of my life was an important realization I made while in my studies at Buffalo State.

Dweck refers to two mindsets: a growth mindset and a fixed mindset. A person with a growth mindset believes that their abilities, intelligence, and creativity can be improved through effort. Someone with a fixed mindset believes that they have a certain amount of intelligence or creative ability and nothing can change it. Through her research, Dweck found a growth mindset to be a deciding factor in learning, success, achievement, perseverance and resilience.

Several years after releasing her book, Dweck reflected on her work and how it was being used especially in schools in an article in *Education Week*. She had noticed that with the growing popularity of her work came many misconceptions. She set the record straight in this article with several points, as follows. Instilling a growth mindset doesn't come about simply by praising effort when no learning is occurring; it is about accurately assessing the learning and striving for improvement through effort. A growth mindset cannot just be talked about, it must be reflected in the culture and practices of the classroom. Finally, a growth mindset is not a permanent and pervasive state of mind. Everyone falls into the behaviors and thought patterns of a fixed mindset sometimes. We

need to be aware of this and what sorts of experiences lead us into fixed mindset thinking in order to cultivate a growth mindset.

Gray, P. (2015). *Free to learn: Why unleashing the instinct to play will make our children happier, more self-reliant, and better students for life*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

This book is not just about play; it completely turns the idea of education on its head. Instead of coming at a child with a prescribed curriculum and strict timeline based entirely on factors outside of the child and then extrinsically motivating them to do the work, Peter Gray describes coming at learning from an individual, strengths, and interest-based perspective. He describes the importance of autonomy for learners and the unfortunate side-effects of standardized schooling, including the undermining of critical thinking and reduced diversity of knowledge and skills. He introduces play as the antidote because it is associated with creative thinking, it is based on intrinsic motivation, and it is how children learn naturally. This book reveals just how vital it is to our learning and development to know ourselves, let our interests and motivations guide us, and allow play as a serious method of growth.

Kemple, K. M., & Nissenberg, S. A. (2000). Nurturing creativity in early childhood education: Families are part of it. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 28(1), 67-71. doi:10.1023/A:1009555805909

In this article, Kemple and Nissenberg discuss the importance of the family in the creative development of children. The family environment and parenting style of the parents both contribute to a child's creativity. The authors review research that shows a positive association between creativity and parents that provide autonomy and a

psychologically safe environment for the children to explore. Creativity seems to be hindered by coercive and controlling parenting styles, but nurtured by styles that allow children to make decisions, try new things, and take some risks. This is echoed by Russ and Fiorelli (2010), who give evidence for the positive influence autonomy, expression of feelings, support combined with challenge, and flexible family rules have on creativity in children.

Tough, P. (2012). *How children succeed: Grit, curiosity, and the hidden power of character*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Tough, P. (2016). *Helping children succeed: What works and why*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Both of these books include a walk through literature on what builds the necessary character in children for them to be successful. Tough explains the achievement gap in terms of the non-cognitive skills that drive success like optimism, curiosity, and perseverance. He also reveals the importance of these skills being embedded into the child's environment, not just taught like a subject. Grit, curiosity, and other soft skills need to permeate their lives and be a part of their everyday experience. This happens through their relationships with their parents. He also touches on motivation and how it is increased when it comes from meaning and autonomy and not external rewards.

Tough also goes into research by Camille Farrington on older children's perseverance. This researcher found four beliefs that governed a student's gritty behavior. If they believed that they belonged, their effort increased their ability, that they could succeed, and that the work was personally meaningful, they were more perseverant. In

addition to echoing what research shows on growth mindset, motivation, and grit, the belonging piece fits with Torrance's (2002) skill of interdependence being part of what makes for a Beyonder.

### **Parenting**

Faber, A., & Mazlish, E. (2012). *How to talk so kids will listen & listen so kids will talk*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Faber and Mazlish provide a straightforward and practical guide for parents from a perspective that allows for parenting from a relationship standpoint, not one of control or coercion. Because evidence shows that children's creativity is best nurtured when they are not being coerced or controlled, this book and the ideas that I have used from it in my parenting and teaching are a natural fit with my project. This book beautifully reflects what I consider to be a creative mindset in parenting and even includes a problem-solving strategy that mirrors Creative Problem Solving.

While some of the tools in the book are simply creative ways to get through hard parenting moments, such as engaging cooperation by writing a humorous note, others involve major paradigm shifts. For example, there is a section on "freeing children from playing roles," which requires challenging assumptions and helping a child to see outside of constraints that they have long believed to have a hold on them. Additionally, this book brings practical application to ideas like encouraging autonomy and understanding one's own feelings, which are aspects of the strengths-based approach to learning that I promote.

Kohn, A. (2005). *Unconditional parenting: Moving from rewards and punishments to love and reason*. New York, NY: Atria Books.

Just like the notion that education needs a creative paradigm shift, there are aspects of parenting that have been “the way it’s always been done” that need reconsideration. Kohn does this by showing the pitfalls of using punishments, bribes, and rewards to try to control children as a parenting strategy. Even parents that want to instill responsibility and independence often choose behaviors that create the message that a child is incapable of making decisions and being responsible. Kohn argues that some common parenting behaviors actually tell our children that we only love them conditionally, which causes anxiety and low self-worth. We can, however, parent with love and provide boundaries while maintaining a positive “unconditional” relationship. He explains the importance of the ways we talk to our children and how the greater goal of making sure our children feel loved and worthy of love should always be on our minds. Kohn even points out how attempts at “positive reinforcement,” like constant praise, can have the opposite effect we want it to. Kids are put in a consistent state of being judged in a way that they can interpret as conditional acceptance and love.

Much like Faber and Mazlish, I think Kohn’s point is that parenting needs to be about the relationship a parent has with their child, not about a parent trying to control their child. Children need to be seen as their own people and be provided with environments that allow them to see their own worth in the world. Kohn addresses the idea of inflated self-esteem/narcissism coming from parenting that is not tough enough on kids and makes an argument for why this false self-esteem is really a symptom of conditional parenting.

I want to include the ideas in these two parenting books and the general approach of parenting from an authentic relationship perspective because I think it is a way to form

the psychologically safe environment creativity needs to flourish. It is hard to nurture curiosity, playfulness, dreaming, a growth mindset, and all the other aspects of a creative mindset if the home is run by way of coercion.

### **Creative Nonfiction Writing**

Because one of my goals for this project was to work on my storytelling through anecdotes, I did some reading on creative nonfiction writing. In my project I am operating under the constraint that my stories must be short enough to include in an easily consumable web-based piece, but I want them to be engaging nonetheless.

Miller, B., & Paola, S. (2012). *Tell it slant: Creating, refining, and publishing creative nonfiction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

The authors of this book give a wealth of information on the technique of writing nonfiction creatively. I focused my interest on the chapter about the “basics of good writing in any form” (p. 163) since my medium is fairly specific. First the authors praise the use of scene writing over expository writing. Often in academic circles, expository writing is used in which events are summarized with little detail. Scene writing, however, involves re-creating an experience through details and sensory description. Specificity and detail must be used because “we want to enter into events and uncover their meanings for ourselves” (p. 168). The authors also demonstrate the need for varying sentence structure and paying attention to the rhythm of the words and sentences in a story. Throughout a paragraph, sentences must start differently and vary in length and voice. Dialogue and metaphor are also covered as valuable aspects of good scene writing. Although I am aware of many of these rules of writing, it is helpful to keep these in mind as I work on my storytelling for this project.

### Other Works

In addition to the above sources, I will be gleaming information from many other influential thinkers and their works. Each theme I write about will include tidbits and related ideas from the works listed in the bibliography below. Many of these will also be listed as recommended resources for parents in my pieces.

Brown, B. (2012). *Daring greatly: How the courage to be vulnerable transforms the way we live, love, parent, and lead*. New York, NY: Penguin Random House.

Brown, S. (2009). *Play: How it shapes the brain, opens the imagination, and invigorates the soul*. New York, NY: Penguin Group.

Burnett, C., & Dawson-Globus, M. (2015). *My sandwich is a spaceship*. Buffalo, NY: ICSC Press.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1991). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York, NY: HarperPerennial.

Davis, G. A. (2004). *Creativity is forever* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Pub.

Deci, Edward L, Ryan, R. (2009). Intrinsic motivation: definition and directions. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 8(2), 225–237.  
<https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.1020>

Duckworth, A. (2016). *Grit: The power of passion and perseverance*. New York, NY: Scribner.

Gotlieb, R., Jahner, E., Immordino-Yang, M. H., & Kaufman, S. B. (2016). How social-emotional imagination facilitates deep learning and creativity in the classroom. In R. A. Beghetto & J. C. Kaufman (Eds.). *Nurturing creativity in the classroom* (2nd Ed.) (n.p.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

- Kaufman, S. B., & Gregoire, C. (2015). *Wired to create: Unraveling the mysteries of the creative mind*. New York, NY: Penguin Random House.
- Langer, E. J. (2014). *Mindfulness: 25th anniversary edition*. Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press.
- Leonard, K., & Yorton, T. (2015). *Yes, and: How improvisation reverses "no, but" thinking and improves creativity and collaboration--lessons from the second city*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Luna, T., & Renninger, L. (2015). *Surprise: Embrace the unpredictable and engineer the unexpected*. New York, NY: Penguin Group.
- Miller, B., Vehar, J., Firestien, R., Thurber, S., & Nielsen, D. (2011). *Creativity unbound: An introduction to creative process* (5th ed.). Evanston, IL: FourSight LLC.
- Nielsen, D. & Thurber, S. (2016). *The secret of the highly creative thinker: How to make connections others don't*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: BIS Publishers.
- Puccio, G., Mance, M., & Murdock, M. C. (2011). *Creative leadership: Skills that drive change*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Russ, S., & Fiorelli, J. (2010). Developmental approaches to creativity. In J. C. Kaufman & R. J. Sternberg (Eds.). *The Cambridge handbook of creativity* (pp. 233-249). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Ryan, R., & Deci, E. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>
- Torrance, E. P., & Safter, H. T. (1990). *The incubation model of teaching: Getting beyond the aha!*. Buffalo, NY: Bearly Limited.



### **Pertinent Children's Literature**

Part of this project involves compiling some children's literature that reflects the creative mindset. Children learn so much not only through stories and books but also through the act of sharing reading time with their parents. Each book was chosen for its engaging qualities as well as its fit with one of the creativity themes of this project.

#### **Dreaming**

The combination of these two books allows for dreaming to be modeled and then practiced.

Engle, M. (2015). *Drum dream girl*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Goodhart, P. (2012) *You choose*. Tulsa, OK: Kane Miller.

#### **Thinking in Possibilities**

These books engage the reader in possibility thinking right from the start and inspire continued flexible thinking even after the book is read.

Portis, A. (2006). *Not a box*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Portis, A. (2008). *Not a stick*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

#### **Playfulness**

Even parents that do not feel playfulness is their strength can't help but be playful when reading these.

Cotter, B. (2013). *Don't push the button*. Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks

Jabberwocky.

Novak, B.J. (2014). *The book with no pictures*. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers.

Robinson, H. (2005). *Mixed up fairy tales*. London: Hachette Children's Books.

### **Curiosity**

These books celebrate curiosity. The first shows what it looks like and can lead to; the second is an invitation for the reader to be curious while reading.

Beaty, A. (2016). *Ada Twist, scientist*. New York, NY: Abrams Books for Young Readers.

Goodhart, P. (2014). *Just imagine*. Tulsa, OK: Kane Miller.

### **Self-Efficacy**

In each of these books, a mistake is made and must be overcome or seen as a stepping-stone to something great.

Beaty, A. (2013). *Rosie Revere, engineer*. New York, NY: Abrams Books for Young Readers.

Hutchins, H.J. (2015). *Snap!* New York, NY: Annick Press.

Saltzberg, B. (2010). *Beautiful oops!* New York, NY: Workman Publishers.

Spires, A. (2014). *The most magnificent thing*. Toronto: Kids Can Press.

### **Motivation**

Both of these stories show what amazing things can come from a person that is driven towards something specific and follows that interest.

Beaty, A. (2007). *Iggy Peck, architect*. New York, NY: Abrams Books for Young Readers.

Brown, P. (2009). *The curious garden*. New York, NY: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.

### **Making Connections**

This funny story encourages the reader to make connections and then shows what happens when the main character does not make those connections.

Jeffers, O. (2011). *Stuck*. New York, NY: Philomel Books.

### **Openness**

Staying open and breaking out of habits of the mind are necessary skills for creativity. The characters in both of these books demonstrate these skills, and the results are fun and lovely.

Reynolds, P. (2012). *Sky color*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick.

Reynolds, P. (2014). *Going places*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

### **Embracing the Unknown**

Within the pages of these books, readers are invited to tolerate ambiguity, join a character in embracing the unknown, and enjoy surprise.

Arnold, T. (2012). *No jumping on the bed*. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers.

Long, L. (2015). *Little tree*. New York, NY: Philomel Books.

Tullet, H. (2012). *The game in the dark*. New York, NY: Phaidon Press.

### **Seeing Another Way**

Seeing another way opens up possibility in all three of these books.

Reynolds, P. (2003). *The dot*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

Tullet, H. (2011). *Press here*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books.

Yamada, K. (2016). *What do you do with a problem?* Seattle, WA: Compendium Kids.

### **Mindfulness**

These books encourage the reader to use the senses to slow down and notice.

Isadora, R. (2016). *I hear a pickle*. New York, NY: Nancy Paulsen Books.

Tullet, H. (2011). *The game of let's go*. New York, NY: Phaidon Press.

### **Interdependence**

Interdependence is modeled in these stories through the characters coming together and giving what they have for the good of the community.

Brown, M. (1947). *Stone soup*. New York, NY: Scribner.

Leonna, L. (1967). *Frederick*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

## **SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN**

### **Plan to Achieve Goals and Outcomes**

#### **Visioning**

My goal for this project is to have the 12 themed pieces written, designed, and ready for dissemination. I would also like to have a plan set for the follow-up weekly emails/posts for each theme and a plan for how to market the product to gain readership.

#### **Divergent/Convergent thinking**

For the 12 overarching themes, I will generate subordinate topics, ideas, anecdotes, resources, tips, questions, and considerations and then converge and organize those how I'd like to include them throughout the month. Once the pieces are written, I will converge on highlights to release as teasers during marketing.

#### **Interdependence**

I plan to work with Cyndi Burnett, Ismet Mamnoon, Matt Woodruff, Lina Pugsley and other colleagues with work focusing on creativity and parenting. Together we will administrate a Facebook page for parents through which we can share our materials and promote community.

#### **Tactical thinking**

I will need to find a program for designing each piece and one for disseminating the pieces. I will need to research how people prefer to get content and what avenues I can use to get it to them.

#### **Results**

The results will be 12 researched, written, and designed informational pieces so that, when launched, users will receive an email or other notification at the beginning of

each month that introduces a theme for the month and includes information, a story related to the theme, some specific tips and practical applications, ideas for incorporating the theme into their lives, and suggestions for readings or videos to watch. Each email will be different, but will be organized with a nod to the *Torrance Incubation Model* by heightening anticipation upfront, deepening expectations through content, and providing links and resources for extending the learning in each one (Torrance & Safter, 1990).

As a part of this project, a plan will also be made for follow-ups each week of the month so that parents can sign up to a sort of “crash course” on creative thinking that will hit their inbox or social media each Monday morning.

### Project Timeline

Table 1

#### *Project Timeline*

Week	Activity	Hours
Jan. 30-Feb. 5	Start communication with resource people, get feedback on concept paper, finish draft of concept paper	10 hours
Feb. 6 –12	Finalize concept paper, feedback on themes, diverge on sub-topics for themes, order book resources, Skype meeting with 690	10 hours
Feb. 13-19	Complete adopt-a-project, complete template, draw up feedback form	10 hours
Feb. 20-26	Research/write/design 2 theme pieces, get feedback	10 hours
Feb. 27-Mar. 5	Research/write/design 2 theme pieces, get feedback	10 hours
Mar. 6-12	Skype meeting 690, Write up/finalize sections I-III	10 hours
Mar. 13-19	Research/write/design 3 theme pieces, get feedback	15 hours
Mar. 20-26	Research/write/design 3 theme pieces, get feedback	15 hours
Mar. 27-Apr. 2	Research/write/design 2 theme pieces, get feedback	10 hours
Apr. 3 – 9	Skype meeting 690- Write sections 4-6, continue to get feedback	10 hours
Apr. 10-16	Organize info for weekly follow-ups, get feedback	10 hours
Apr. 17-24	Final write up revisions	10 hours
May 1-7	Prepare/give final presentation, upload to DC	4 hours

### **Evaluation Plan**

I plan to have a soft launch of the main theme pieces with some parent friends in order to get feedback. As they are developed, I will send the completed pieces to this small focus group with a feedback guide that includes my specific learning goals. I will gather quotes and anecdotes from these soft launch users that can help inform how I'm doing.

I will feel successful if I can make the pieces pack a punch. This means they will not be long, heavy, or overwhelming, but they will spark motivation and have concrete, actionable pieces. They will be clear, convey the intended meaning, highlight the essence of the theme, and promote action. At the same time, I want them to be accurate and not fall prey to oversimplification, as often happens when psychological research becomes popular. I want a lay-person to be able to read one of these pieces, talk to their friends about it, and put the idea into action in some meaningful way in their life.



## **SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES**

For this project, I have completed 12 informational pieces aimed towards parents wishing to cultivate creativity at home. The pieces are each centered around a creativity-related theme that together paint a broad picture of a creative mindset.

In my process, one of the first things I did was to generate a list of possible themes. I wanted 12 so that I would have one for each month of the year. The themes came from a few resources including the Thinking Skills Model of CPS (Puccio, Mance, & Murdock, 2011), Torrance and Safer's (1999) creative skills, and important research from other sources that focus on learning and success.

The affective skills, diverging rules, and other CPS tools were my starting point for the creative mindset. The affective skills of the Thinking Skills Model (Puccio, Mance, & Murdock, 2011) are:

1. Curiosity
2. Dreaming
3. Sensing gaps
4. Playfulness
5. Avoiding premature closure
6. Sensitivity to environment
7. Tolerance for risk
8. Openness to novelty
9. Tolerance for ambiguity
10. Tolerance for complexity
11. Mindfulness

The creativity skills provided by Torrance and Safter (1999) are as follows:

1. The problem
2. Be original
3. Be flexible
4. Produce and consider many alternatives
5. Be aware of emotions
6. Elaborate-but not excessively
7. Combine and synthesize
8. Highlight the essence
9. Put your ideas in context
10. Keep open
11. Visualize it richly and colorfully
12. Make it swing! Make it ring!
13. Look at it another way
14. Enjoy and use fantasy
15. Visualize the inside
16. Breakthrough-expand the boundaries
17. Let humor flow and use it
18. Get glimpses of the future

The third resource for themes was Paul Tough's *How Children Succeed* (2012). In this book, Tough discusses a collaboration between psychologists and educators that settled on seven character strengths that are most correlated to life satisfaction and achievement. These strengths are:

1. Grit
2. Self-control
3. Zest
4. Social intelligence
5. Gratitude
6. Optimism
7. Curiosity (p. 76)

I also pulled from other researchers listed in the pertinent resources section for some creativity concepts because of their importance to me personally and my high motivation to share particular information with parents. Specifically, I pulled from Dweck (2006) for growth mindset, Hennessey (2010) for motivation, Csikszentmihalyi (2009) for flow, Brown (2012) for vulnerability, Luna and Renninger (2015) for surprise, and Torrance (2002) for interdependence. Clearly there is some overlap between all the concepts I reviewed, so I thought about which overlaps were most distinct to me and started combining some of them. The combinations that were strongest from my point of view are displayed in Table 2, which also reveals the themes I chose.

Table 2

*Creativity Concepts Organized by Theme and Originating Source*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Thinking Skills Model CPS</b>	<b>Torrance &amp; Safter Creativity Skills</b>	<b>Character Strengths</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Dreaming</b>	Dreaming	Get glimpses of the future		
<b>Thinking in Possibilities</b>	Rules for diverging	Produce and consider many alternatives		
<b>Playfulness</b>	Playfulness	Let humor flow		
<b>Curiosity</b>	Curiosity		Curiosity	
<b>Self-efficacy</b>	Risk-taking		Grit, Optimism	Growth mindset
<b>Motivation</b>			Zest	Intrinsic motivation, Flow
<b>Connections</b>		Combine and synthesize		
<b>Openness</b>	Openness to novelty, Avoiding premature closure	Keep open, Expand the boundaries		
<b>Embracing the Unknown</b>	Tolerance for ambiguity, Tolerance for risk			Vulnerability, Surprise
<b>Seeing it Another Way</b>	Problems as questions	Look at it another way, Be flexible, Be original		
<b>Mindfulness</b>	Sensing gaps, Sensitivity to environment, Mindfulness	Be aware of emotions	Gratitude	
<b>Interdependence</b>			Social intelligence	Interdependence

It is clear from this list that I did not incorporate all of the concepts from my resources into my project. This list reflects what is most important to me to relay to parents, but certainly not an all-encompassing project.

After settling on the themes, I needed to diverge on the quotes, anecdotes, tools, resources and other information I wanted to include in each piece. This was actually mostly work that I did along the way of completing the pieces as I ran into interesting material and was inspired during the process.

Each piece I created can stand alone, and at the same time adds to the others to complete the fullness of a creative mindset from my perspective. Because I will be sharing these on the internet, it was important to make sure that anyone who discovered any one of the pieces individually would be able to get something out of it and also know where to go for more information. It was also important to make the pieces consistent in look and feel so that it is clear they are connected. All of the pieces have similar layouts and the same main title, with separate subtitles, content, pictures, and color scheme.

When creating the first piece, I ran into my first big roadblock. I am not a designer, and I am limited in my resources. My first attempt was to use my word processor to create the piece, and I was unhappy with the look. I reached out to my sounding board partner who directed me to an online program that was just what I needed. Once I plugged my information into a pre-designed but flexible template, the design work was smooth sailing. Figure 1 represents a side-by-side comparison of my first attempt and the second iteration with the help of a program. Just like my project suggests, knowing my strengths and reaching out for help when I needed to operate outside of those strengths allowed me to be more successful.

## DREAMING

Envisioning our lives and the world as we want them to be is the first step toward making positive change towards that future.



“One of the most powerful wellsprings of creative energy, outstanding accomplishment, and self-fulfillment seems to be falling in love with something - your dreams, your image of the future.” - E. Paul Torrance, creativity researcher

Dreaming allows us to:

Think big

Have something to work towards

Imagine the impossible as possible

Earlier this year, my family's schedule got more demanding in a short amount of time, and the transition wasn't easy. When I could tell it was wearing on my son, I decided to try something. On Sunday I told my son all the things that were coming up that week and then told him Saturday was "Nothing Day," and that he could decide what we did and didn't do - we had no commitments, nothing that had to be done. All week he talked about Nothing Day and thought about what he wanted it to look like. When the day came, we stayed in pajamas all morning, we watched a movie, and we ate our meals outside. He got to dream up a day, and then we made it happen.

Dreaming is conjuring images of that which does not (yet) exist.

It is hard for kids to think far into the future, but they can practice dreaming on smaller scales. Their rich fantasy play is practice in dreaming, as is planning a day like Nothing Day.

**Activity: Storyboarding**

This is great for adults and children alike!

Fold or otherwise section a paper into 6-8 boxes. Write an "I wish" vision for the future in the last box and draw a picture of what it would look like and feel like. Then in the first box, draw where you are now. Then think about what would need to happen to get from the first box to that last box and fill in the in-between boxes with actions that could help to get you closer to your vision.



**Resources**



You and your child get to talk about all kinds of things they dream up when reading this book.



This story is an example of a young girl who falls in love with the vision of her future and sees it through.

## Creative Mindset: Dreaming

Creativity at Home

Dreaming is conjuring images of that which does not yet exist. It is seeing our hopes as possible. Envisioning our lives and the world as we want them to be is the first step toward making positive change towards that future.

**E. PAUL TORRANCE, Ph.D. CREATIVITY RESEARCHER:**

"One of the most powerful wellsprings of creative energy, outstanding accomplishment, and self-fulfillment seems to be falling in love with something - your dreams, your image of the future."

From The Manifesto: A Guide to Developing a Creative Career



**Dreaming allows us to:**

Think big - We can get out of the daily drudge and imagine the larger arc of ourselves in the world.

Have something to work towards - Creating a vision of our hopes gives us the opportunity to think about how to get to that future.

Imagine the impossible as possible - Every major breakthrough once seemed impossible. It takes a dreamer to believe it is so to make it happen.

**DREAMING IN ACTION**

Earlier this year, my family's schedule got more demanding in a short amount of time, and my son was getting overwhelmed. Finally, a free day with no commitments was on the horizon. We decided to officially declare this day "Nothing Day," and make it all about what my 3 year old wanted to do. All week he thought about what he wanted his day to look like and feel like. When the day came or last, he got to see his vision through. We stayed in pajamas all morning, we watched a movie, and ate our meals outside. This in charge on "Nothing Day, Mommy!" he told me, with a hundred year old. This period of envisioning the future, and then seeing it through gave him the opportunity to see himself as capable of making his imagination's reality.

It is hard for kids to think far into the future, but they can practice dreaming on smaller scales. Their rich fantasy play is practice in dreaming, as is planning their own day.

**One simple way to encourage dreaming...**

Providing down time without screens and with a few open-ended materials is one of the best ways to encourage dreaming and imagination.

Free, unstructured play time gives children the opportunity to imagine things as they'd like them to be.

Then allowing for a little freedom by not stepping in right away when they are bored makes them to dream something up and then act on it.

**Activity: Storyboarding**

This is great for adults and children alike!

Fold or otherwise section a piece of paper into 6-8 boxes. Write an "I wish" vision for the future in the last box and draw a picture of what it would look like and feel like. Then in the first box, draw where you are now. Then think about what would need to happen to get from the first box to that last box and fill in the in-between boxes with actions that could help to get you closer to your vision.

**RESOURCES**



You and your child get to talk about all kinds of things they dream up when reading this book.



This story is an example of a young girl who falls in love with the vision of her future and sees it through.



**COME TALK!**

Join us at Parenting for Creativity  
(facebook.com/parentingforcreativity)  
to discuss language in dreaming with our kids!

created by Sara Smith  
www.dreamupworld.com

designed by Piktachart

Figure 1. Side-by-side comparison of first two iterations of dreaming piece.

Note: First attempt on left; revised attempt with new program on right.

In discussing my project with my academic adviser, she was inspired to connect me with some other creativity educators with material for parents. Within a couple weeks, the group of us had a video conference call in which we shared our work and passions and generated ideas for collaboration. From that call was born a Facebook group called Parenting for Creativity for which we are all administrators. Our goal is to share our work in this space together and develop a community around creativity and parenting. Each of my pieces points to this group as a place to go to discuss, ask questions, and connect with others on the topic.

The *Torrance Incubation Model* (Torrance & Safter, 1990) inspired the flow of each of my pieces. Each piece opens with a short description of the theme and a quote from a researcher or influential thinker. This is the “heightening anticipation” aspect. Then, as the reader scrolls, their expectations are deepened through more in-depth information, a story that highlights the theme, and ideas for incorporating the theme into their lives. Finally, they are provided with a way to extend their learning through resources provided and also a link to connect with others to discuss the theme more.

Once I had all the sections written for a piece, I sent it out to a small group of parents for feedback. These parents come from a variety of levels of awareness of creativity principles. I asked for feedback specific to my learning goals in addition to general reflections. Below are the questions I provided for feedback and examples of feedback I got that helped me to improve my pieces.

1. First impression?
2. Is the story/anecdote interesting?
3. Does the story encompass the theme and help you understand it better?

4. From your perspective, does this piece demonstrate a connection between creativity and learning?
5. Is there something in here that is new to you?
6. Are you motivated to try something you saw here? Why or why not?
7. What part(s) might you talk with others about?
8. Please list anything additional you wish were included or areas for improvement.



Table 3

## Samples of Feedback and Action Taken

Feedback	Action Taken
Parents are sensitive to being told things that might make it sound like they aren't doing something right. Soften words like "children need" to "children can benefit from..."	Adjusted tone to feel less instructive
Make the resources for parents clearer than just "for parents" title.	Changed title to "Further reading for parents"
Reduce repetitive statements in short paragraphs to improve flow. Adjust some awkward statements.	Reworded as suggested
Dreaming anecdote needs a more impactful ending.	Adjusted the ending with added dialogue
Links to more information would be helpful.	Added links for quotes, resources, blog, Facebook group and made top photo a link back to the blog
The very visual "rules" section of the possibilities piece is engaging and breaks up the longer paragraphs around it.	Added large scale, visual sections to other pieces
Change the order of bullet points in self-efficacy piece to be more impactful for parents.	Decided to leave the order to match the other side and have the most impactful statement as the last one the parents read in that section
To make it more friendly to parents, change title of quotes to something that captures attention instead of the quote author.	Pulled part of each quote to serve as the title and put quote author at the bottom
Change the opening picture for curiosity so that it is more relatable.	Changed photo

The pieces that I have created represent a year of content. Because one will go out every month, there will be several weeks for parents to really reflect on each theme, incorporate it into their lives, and engage in the Facebook community around the theme. Table 4 organizes follow-up topics that I will use to continue to engage readers in the theme throughout the month, both on my website and on the Parenting for Creativity Facebook page. See Appendix A to view each of the 12 creative mindset pieces. It is my hope that over the course of the year parents will be able to find lasting ways to support each aspect of the creative mindset that I offer through these pieces.

Table 4

## Follow-up Topics for Each Theme

Theme	Follow-up Topics
Dreaming	Modeling dreaming as parents Incubation Default Mode Network Imagining new endings to stories
Thinking in Possibilities	Bloom's taxonomy Problem finding Ideas like marbles Idea system
Playfulness	Quote book Humor Recognizing the value in play experiences
Curiosity	Wonder book Curiosity about others Curiosity about self
Self-Efficacy	Locus of control Elijah ice-skating Hope
Motivation	Flow Personal strengths Modeling passion and motivation Unconditional parenting Kids' noodle game
Making Connections	Remote Associations Test Modeling making connections Conceptual combination
Openness	Freedom from others' "games" Advantages of childhood for openness Extended effort principle Freeing children from playing a role
Embracing the Unknown	Ambiguous project Mad libs Modeling risk-taking and tolerating ambiguity
Seeing It Another Way	Theory of Mind Elijah looking at planes Pretend play
Mindfulness	Pitfalls of mindlessness The medium is the message Boredom as a function of mindlessness
Interdependence	Win-win mentality Collaboration tools Problem of "other" thinking

## **SECTION FIVE: KEY LEARNINGS**

### **Process Preference**

The first thing that I recognized while working on this project is that I like to jump ahead when doing creative work. When I first learned about CPS, I was unsure of my own preference within the process. However, as I have had CPS in my awareness for the past couple years, I have recognized that indeed my preference is in implementing. This manifests itself into wanting to dive right into a project. I have noticed that the way I deal with this is by allowing myself to start on some parts of the implementation of the final product in order to maintain motivation for the research and development aspects. If I can visually see the end point, I am actually quite motivated to read, research, tweak, and iterate. I do really need to get my hands on that end product to build my enthusiasm, though. An example of this is when I was working on some of my pieces, if I hit a rut, I would make the templates for the pieces coming down the line. Seeing those unfinished pieces gave me a boost to keep working. Although someone with a preference for clarifying might have done all the reading and research up front, I found that it did really work for me to do it along the way. It gave me a variety of activities to choose from when it was time to work and allowed me to periodically go add to that final product to see it coming together – which, again, was vital for my motivation.

One result of this particular quirk of my process is that sometimes I start to create something I never use. For example, I started a second piece in my word processor before I discovered the online program I ended up using, even though I knew I was unhappy with how the first one looked. Had I not felt the need to keep pushing ahead, I may not have done this, but I am okay with this consequence, as it does not outweigh the

motivational advantages I get from doing it this way. I do plan to be mindful of this in the future, however, so that I am sure I am aware of the fact that I may experience this consequence.

### **My Manifestation of the Creative Mindset**

Because of the nature of my project, I was able to reflect on myself and how I work in relation to the creative mindset as I have defined it within my project. Each theme gave me the opportunity to see how I live out that theme in my parenting and beyond. I also got to think of each theme in relation to my experience with it now versus before I started studying creativity or even as a child. There were a few specific learnings that presented themselves this way.

### **Growth Mindset**

In this project and throughout my studies, I have recognized that I struggle with the growth mindset. It has become clear to me that I operated as a child and young adult under a fixed mindset much of the time. I had the opportunity to reflect on this more as I completed the piece I wrote on self-efficacy. I think the fact that I was labeled Gifted and Talented in elementary school, and put in special classes and schools as a result, hindered my creative growth. I know that even today focus on creativity in schools is often housed within gifted and talented programs, and I personally find this to be counter-intuitive. I am now able to recognize and head off fixed mindset thinking in myself, and I practiced this when receiving feedback on my pieces. I have also noticed that my son is very much like me in personality, and therefore I am determined to teach him a growth mindset. I think in many ways I wrote this project for myself.

### **Embracing the Unknown**

My piece on embracing the unknown includes information on surprise, uncertainty, and vulnerability. This is another area that I am working on in my own life. I think it is also an important topic for parents, especially mothers, of young children. Learning how to parent happens on the job, and there is no ease-in to it. It is a vulnerable place to be. It is often uncomfortable and confusing, and I am sometimes left wondering whether I'm doing it right. I think many parents feel this way. Parenthood throws you directly into ambiguity and you have to stay there a long time as your children grow and change in ways you can't predict. The vulnerability aspect is proving to be very helpful to me now as well in my growth as a mother and human, recognizing the need for emotional exposure and how that relates to risk-taking and connections in relationships. Reading *Daring Greatly* by Brené Brown (2012) was valuable for me, and I plan to read and discuss it with my group of friends.

### **Thinking in Possibilities**

This particular piece was one of my favorites to create. I think this is because of how pivotal the information was to me when I learned it. I love new ideas and generating possibilities, but because of my struggles with risk-taking and self-efficacy in the past, I had never really enjoyed the freedom of possibility thinking before starting my master's degree in creativity. This skill holds a dear spot in my heart because of the freedom I felt when I first learned it, so it is a delight to me to share with others. I have also recognized that this skill is the one I see most easily in myself with regards to my parenting. If I need my kids to do something, most days I can come up with about a thousand ways to engage their cooperation to get it done. This is also a big part of what makes parenting fun for me. I hope that I was able to effectively share that in my project.

### **Recognizing and Documenting Creativity**

It is a skill all on its own to be aware of and recognize creativity in general. I have sharpened my abilities in this area, but want to continue to hone the skill. As a teacher, I am well aware of the struggles to assess and keep track of learning, and during this project I was reminded of that. When I am parenting and one of my children displays an act of creativity, I delight and revel in it, but I don't always document it. In the hubbub of parenting and all that entails (and teaching, for that matter!) it is easy to let things fly past my awareness and then get lost. When reviewing my memories for anecdotes to include in my pieces, I sometimes got frustrated that I was sure multiple experiences existed, but I was having trouble drawing them up. This is an area I want to continue to grow. I want to make it a point to notice, reflect upon, and document creativity that I see every day.

### **Learning through Reflection**

I have recognized that I tend to discount the importance of reflecting on something that I've done. In the course of this project, I found myself at first unmotivated by the requirement to write up my plans, process, and outcomes. I just wanted to do the project. This is perhaps my implementation preference showing again. However, many times in the years of this program, I have been required to make a reflection upon my work, and I always find that I learn something more through the act of reflection. Upon writing one of the above paragraphs, I even went back and added a section to one of my pieces. I must recognize that although it feels like it will be redundant for me to go back and write about the work I've just completed, it is worthwhile. Taking the time to think deeply and metacognitively about my work allows me to learn more deeply and discover things I may not otherwise have discovered.

## **SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION**

### **Conclusion**

This project is a culmination of so much of what I have been studying for the last two years and also of my experiences in life thus far. As I have grown and become a student, teacher, and parent, I am seeing how everything is connected and how my experiences build upon each other to create the trajectory of my growth. At the beginning of the semester, as I contemplated what my project would be, I worried about what could do justice to all I have learned. I originally shied away from doing something that was about teaching or parenting because I wanted to reflect all the newness of what I had learned. However, I realized that shutting myself out to certain topics or personal experiences was not going to authentically demonstrate who or where I am in this moment. Now that my project is complete, I can recognize how this project reflects me as a child, as a mother, as a teacher, and as a student. It demonstrates both where I've been and where I am now. It also hints at where I'm headed, although some of that remains in ambiguity. This project is a culmination, but also very much a beginning.

### **Next Steps**

Now that I have 12 completed pieces, I can focus on how I will disseminate them. I learned while working on the project that my current website cannot house the pieces, so I am working on changing website hosts in order to be able to accommodate my pieces in blog form. My main mode of dissemination, however, will be the Parenting for Creativity Facebook page that I administrate along with some of my creativity colleagues. I plan to post one per month for a year and have follow-up posts each week that allow readers to dig deeper and to connect with each other through each theme.



As a parent and educator, I am going to continue to be mindful of my own creative mindset and how I can feed it and support it while also continuing to find ways to nurture it in others. I plan to collect more stories of my own that relate to creativity, but also to talk with others and gather their stories as well. I hope to be able to do this in my daily life, and also through the Parenting for Creativity Facebook group. As part of this step, I want to continue to build my community locally and online – a community that provides strong connections between people and encourages the creative mindset and growing creatively. These pieces I have created have the advantage of being pieces I can build upon and even take apart and expand on through other avenues, for while I see these pieces as a culmination of many things, in many ways they only scratch the surface of what I would like to share with others.

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## Appendix A: Creative Mindset Pieces

Each piece is shown as two parts, side-by-side for the sake of space. Each one is actually one scrollable, unbroken, responsive piece complete with links.

# Creative Mindset: Dreaming

Creativity at Home

Dreaming is conjuring images of that which does not (yet) exist. It is seeing our hopes as possible. Envisioning our lives and the world as we want them to be is the first step toward making positive change towards that future.

## A Wellspring of Creative Energy...

"One of the most powerful wellsprings of creative energy, outstanding accomplishment, and self-fulfillment seems to be falling in love with something - your dreams, your image of the future."

-from The Manifesto: A Guide to Developing a Creative Career by E. Paul Torrance, Ph.D

## Dreaming allows us to:

- Think big – We can get out of the daily details and imagine the larger arc of ourselves in the world.
- Have something to work towards – Creating a vision of our hopes gives us the opportunity to think about how to get to that future.
- Imagine the impossible as possible – Every major breakthrough once seemed impossible. It takes a dreamer to believe it is so to make it happen.

## DREAMING IN ACTION

Earlier this year, my family's schedule got more demanding in a short amount of time, and my son was getting overwhelmed. Finally, a free day with no commitments was on the horizon. We decided to officially dub this day "Elijah Day," and make it all about what my 5 year-old wanted to do. All week he thought about what he wanted his day to look like and feel like. When the day came at last, he got to see his vision through; we stayed in pajamas all morning, we watched a movie, and we ate our meals outside. "I'm in charge on Elijah Day, Mommy!" he told me, with a twinkle in his eye. This practice of envisioning the future and then seeing it through gave him the opportunity to see himself as capable of making his imaginations a reality.

It is hard for kids to think far into the future, but they can practice dreaming on smaller scales. Their rich fantasy play is practice in dreaming, as is planning their own day.

## One simple way to encourage dreaming...

Providing down time without screens and with a few open-ended materials is one of the best ways to encourage dreaming and imagination.

Free, unstructured play time gives children the opportunity to imagine things as they'd like them to be.

Even allowing for a little boredom by not stepping in right away when they are bored invites them to dream something up and then act on it.

## Activity: Storyboarding

This is great for adults and children alike!

Fold or otherwise section a paper into 6-8 boxes. Write an "I wish" vision for the future in the last box and draw a picture of what it would look like and feel like. Then in the first box, draw where you are now. Then think about what would need to happen to get from the first box to that last box and fill in the in between boxes with actions that could help to get you closer to your vision.

## RESOURCES

You and your child get to talk about all kinds of things they dream up when reading this book.

This story is an example of a young girl who falls in love with the vision of her future and sees it through.

## COME TALK!

Join us at Parenting for Creativity ([facebook.com/parentingforcreativity](https://facebook.com/parentingforcreativity)) to discuss engaging in dreaming with our kids!

created by Sara Smith  
[www.dreamupward.com](http://www.dreamupward.com)

Figure A1. Dreaming piece.

# Thinking in Possibilities

Creativity at Home

When we think in possibilities, we reach for many, varied ideas and alternatives. We explore with our minds, not just settling on the first thing that comes to us. This skill makes us more flexible thinkers. Practicing coming up with many ideas makes it more likely to find a truly creative one and to get "unstuck" when we run into an obstacle.

## Imagination and Hope...


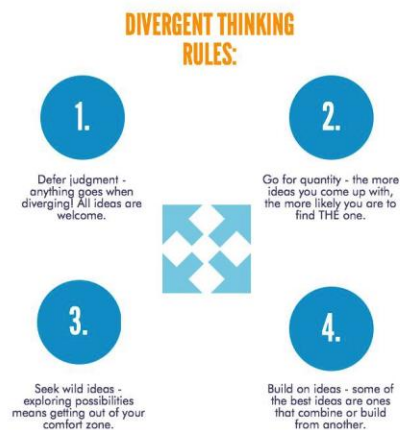
"Imagination is tied up with hope. If we can get kids in the mindset that, whenever they reach a road block, there are multiple responses to the problem, we will set them up for greater resilience and greater perseverance."

-Scott Barry Kaufman, Ph.D.

## Divergent Thinking

Possibility thinking is also called "divergent thinking."

Divergent thinking is when you come up with as many ideas as you can BEFORE you narrow them down to the best ones. When thinking divergently, there are 4 rules that help us to stay in possibility thinking and not narrow our thinking too quickly.

For more information, see the book *Creativity Rising* by Puccio, Marne, Switalski & Reali

## POSSIBILITY THINKING IN ACTION

When my son was just three he loved to drum, and he would drum with anything he could get his hands on. One day we were at a coffee shop and he saw a container of coffee stirrers, the perfect little drumsticks, and shouted, "I want one of those!" Instead of just saying, "say please," and getting it for him, I tried a statement I had just learned in a creativity course at the International Center for Studies in Creativity. I asked him, "What might be all the ways you could get one of those?" Unexpectedly, he immediately engaged. "A chair! A stool!" I chimed in with some silly ideas like training a monkey. Finally, he got up to try to jump and reach the container, and when he did, something neither he nor I had thought of happened. A boy just a couple years older saw him and grabbed a stick for him. He beamed.

We now regularly practice possibility thinking using "What might be all the..." because every time we do, it reinforces that whether you are dealing with a problem or working towards a goal, there are always alternative ideas and new possibilities.

### Try it out:

What might be all the...?

These are the magic words of possibility thinking. When your child is frustrated about something they are having trouble with, try responding with this question starter.

In fact, it works wonders for parents too! A good chunk of my parenting experience is coming up with answers to "What might be all the ways to engage cooperation from my children?"

When kids regularly engage in possibility thinking, they learn to work through frustration and seek ways to make things happen as opposed to assuming they can't be done. It also engages their imagination to consider what might be.

### Activity: Possibility thinking games

Time in the car is a great time for divergent thinking games. Together name all the possibilities you can for why there's a shoe in the highway, or how your daughter got that scratch on her elbow, or how you could get to your destination faster. Remember to defer judgment and go for wild ideas! This is the time to play with your imagination.

## RESOURCES



Not a Stick and Not a Box by Antoinette Paris - These books are simple but so much fun and perfect for practicing possibility thinking. What are all the things a stick or box could be?

For parents and older kids - **LiSTEN**: An idea journal is a fun way to practice divergent thinking on a number of topics. It is available on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/LisTen-idea-journal-Sara-Smith/dp/1537075314/>

## COME CHAT!

Join us at Parenting for Creativity ([facebook.com/parentingforcreativity](https://facebook.com/parentingforcreativity)) to engage in possibility thinking around our harder parenting moments and to discuss more about fostering possibility thinking in our kids.


Created by Sara Smith  
[dreamupward.com](http://dreamupward.com)

Figure A2. Thinking in Possibilities piece.




Creativity at Home

# Creative Mindset: Playfulness



When we can be playful and light-hearted, we approach things in creative ways by making broader associations. Playfulness draws out our possibility thinking and humor - and a positive mood is associated with creative insight.



## A Playful State of Mind...

"Learning, creativity, and problem solving are facilitated by anything that promotes a playful state of mind."

-from Free to Learn by Peter Gray, Ph.D

## Learning through play


Play is well understood to be a conduit for learning. It is how children explore the laws of social interaction and nature. Play is how they develop skills in collaboration, negotiation, and discovery.

When children engage in open-ended play together, they not only learn, but practice creating and sharing new ideas.



## PLAY IS...

- ENGAGING
- SELF-CHOSEN
- PROCESS-ORIENTED
- INTRINSICALLY MOTIVATED



Playfulness and humor come from making new and often unexpected connections and associations. These new ways of thinking are the cornerstone of creative output. In play and jest, there is no one right way, just as there is no one right way when we are being creative. When we aren't being serious, we are getting serious practice in the creative mindset!

## PLAYFULNESS IN ACTION

One evening I was doing bedtime routine with my two children. As usual, it felt like trying to get minoceroses to perform a ballet. They wanted to be doing anything but bedtime routine. I was getting frustrated, so before I lost my temper, I stepped out of the room. I was annoyed with the kids and myself, so when I came back in, I decided to be someone else. I turned on an accent and introduced myself as British mommy (or mummy, as they say). The accent was atrocious, but my kids loved it and started playing along. We got one thing done, and then I became southern mama, and we got the next step done. The kids were having so much fun and started requesting all kinds of mummies. It was fun, but I was still wearing out. Little did I know, my husband had been overhearing our little game, and just when he knew I was spent, he barged into the kids' bedroom wearing one of my stretchy dresses and shouted, "How about HAIRY mommy?!" The kids screamed with delight, and we all laughed heartily. Then he helped me get them tucked into bed. We all got a little practice in approaching an annoying task with a playful, creative attitude.

### Try it out!

#### Dealing with hard parenting moments playfully

**Brushing teeth:**  
Turn the lights low and let the child hold a flashlight while you brush.

**Play dentist and invite them to sit down for a cleaning** (this one has the added benefit of making dentist visits less scary.)

**Clean up time:**  
The clean-up basket becomes a hungry monster that makes non-norm noises when it's fed.

**Play the Imperial March from Star Wars and "prepare the Millennium Falcon for battle" by putting everything in its place before Darth Vader comes.**

**Older children:**  
Send a funny text or meme that explains what they need to do.

**Pretend to be a radio host interviewing your child about how they plan to accomplish the day's tasks.**

### Activities:

There are so many ways to be playful, and children come by it naturally, so try to engage in their chosen free play every once in a while without thinking about an end goal or purpose other than play.

Instigate a game of making funny faces at each other at the dinner table.

When in the car, play a funny noises guessing game/ make a sound and have your child guess what it's supposed to be (an angry pig with his foot stuck in the mud?)

## RESOURCES



Mixed Up Fairy Tales by Hilary Robinson lets you play with the classic fairy tales you know to make silly new stories.



Don't Push the Button by Bill Cotter is both playful and interactive.



The Book With No Pictures by B.J. Novak is funny and requires the reader to be playful!

Further reading for parents:

Play by Stuart Brown is a research-based book on what play is and its importance in our lives.

Free to Learn by Peter Gray discusses play as the basis for learning.

## COME CHAT!

Join us at Parenting for Creativity ([facebook.com/parentingforcreativity](https://facebook.com/parentingforcreativity)) to share our playful parenting moments.

Created by Sara Smith  
[dreamupward.com](https://dreamupward.com)

Figure A3. Playfulness piece.

Creativity at Home

# Creative Mindset: Curiosity



Curiosity is vital for the creative mindset. We must wonder about the world in order to develop new thinking about it. Opportunities for curiosity and wonder are all around us, but we often overlook them. Engaging in questioning allows us to practice the skill of curiosity.

## The Starting Point is Curiosity...

"The hallmark of originality is rejecting the default and exploring whether a better option exists. I've spent more than a decade studying this, and it turns out to be far less difficult than I expected. The starting point is curiosity."

from *Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World* by Adam Grant, Ph.D





## Curiosity looks like...

Why?  
What if?  
I wonder...  
How would things be different if...?

The skill of curiosity is tied to life-long learning. If we never lose our ability to wonder about things, we will always be driven to find answers and then continue asking questions! Curiosity is a prerequisite for deep learning.

## Responding to Curiosity

Children are famous for driving their parents up the wall with their curious questions. One way to encourage curiosity and autonomy at once is to answer their questions by simply restating them. "Why DO the birds fly in a V shape?" This allows them to think more deeply about their question, venture a hypothesis about it, and maybe even figure out a way to discover the answer.

When it makes sense, and your child is old enough, show them how to find the answers to their queries. Help them locate and contact experts and demonstrate how to use search engines on the internet and analyze the results for good sources.



## CURIOSITY IN ACTION

When I was in first grade, I remember a boy who was kind of all over the place. He was talkative and silly, and I realize looking back that we were probably seated at the same table so that I could be a 'good influence' on him. I was quiet and shy and always did what I was told.

One day the boy enthusiastically got up to share his show and tell. He was elated about whatever he was going to show us, and I could see it in the smile stretched across his face and the way he bounced around. Then, in a flurry, he revealed from behind his back - a piece of toilet paper. This boy, in all his exuberance and curiosity, had just discovered that each square of toilet paper was really TWO pieces of toilet paper stuck together, and he was thrilled at his discovery. He had wondered about something, explored it, learned something, and it fit up all kinds of ideas in his head.

I remember feeling a bit embarrassed for him as he gushed about toilet paper, but my teacher graciously responded to his presentation. I now realize that this boy, despite being a handful for the teacher, had a delightfully busy, curious, and enthusiastic mind. And I occasionally try to remind myself to be a little more like him.

## Activity:

Get curious yourself! Modeling curiosity is one of the best ways to encourage it. Ask your child questions like:

- "If you could be any animal, which would you be?"
- "If you had two extra arms, what would you use them for?"
- "What if gravity suddenly turned off - what do you think would happen?"
- "What do you think the world would be like if everyone were flat?"
- "How would things be different if we never had to sleep?"
- "What if our house were a giant balloon?"

## RESOURCES



*Just Imagine* by Nick Sharratt and Pipp Goodhart engages your curiosity about all sorts of scenarios and encourages conversation.



*Ada Twist, Scientist* by Andrea Beaty is a delightful rhyming book about a most curious girl.

## THE WONDER OF CURIOSITY



Curiosity is being interested and engaged with the world.



It leads us to new and varied experiences.



Engaging with ideas, emotions, and art and experiencing new things makes for creative thinking.

Children are wildly curious right from the beginning. Providing a richness of experience that engages their senses brings out their curiosity. A change of scenery, smelling the spices you're cooking with, or feeling the mud with bare feet all invite wonder.

## COME TALK!

Join us at Parenting for Creativity ([facebook.com/parentingforcreativity](https://facebook.com/parentingforcreativity)) to discuss keeping curiosity alive!

created by Sara Smith  
[www.dreamupward.com](http://www.dreamupward.com)

Figure A4. Curiosity piece.



## Creative Mindset: Self-Efficacy

Creativity at Home

Self-efficacy means believing in oneself. One of the most important contributors to success and achievement is feeling capable, even in the face of failure or mistakes. This requires perseverance, resilience, and an understanding that we can improve with effort. A person with a creative mindset believes that their goals are possible because they can work hard enough to reach them.

### Intrigued by Mistakes...

"If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is to teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, and keep on learning. That way, their children don't have to be slaves of praise. They will have a lifelong way to build and repair their own confidence."  
-Carol Dweck, Ph.D.

Because creativity involves making something new, it requires a certain amount of risk-taking. A person needs to be willing to venture into new territory to make something creative happen, and that means facing the possibility of failure. The way a person thinks about their abilities and effort makes a big difference in their path.

Growth Mindset	vs.	Fixed Mindset
The belief that our knowledge, abilities and creativity can improve with effort is called a 'growth mindset.'		Alternatively, those with a 'fixed mindset' believe that intelligence and ability are permanent traits set in stone.
A growth mindset understands that mistakes demonstrate an opportunity to improve.		A fixed mindset sees mistakes as evidence of incapability.
A growth mindset says, "When something is hard for me, I'm learning."		A fixed mindset says, "When something is hard for me, it's because I'm not smart or good enough, so I shouldn't try hard things."

Those with a growth mindset have higher life satisfaction and creative achievement. They seek out challenges and enjoy stretching themselves and expending effort to reach a goal.

## GROWTH AND GRIT

growth

grit

Self-efficacy comes from understanding that we are capable of making things happen in our lives, including that we can and must learn and grow through effort.

People with growth mindsets are "gritty." They are resilient in the face of setbacks, they maintain passion and self-discipline, and they engage in the deliberate practice necessary to develop expertise. Psychologist Angela Duckworth defines grit as "passion and perseverance for long term goals."

Pushing through frustration and maintaining a sense of capability leads to success and well-being. And knowing that hard work leads to learning contributes to life-long learning.

SUCCESS

## SELF-EFFICACY IN ACTION: 30 Mistakes

My son decided he wanted to learn to cook his own eggs for breakfast when he was four. In the past he had struggled with frustration when working on something difficult, and he had always declined offers to crack eggs during baking, afraid he'd do it wrong. So I tried something I learned from a mentor: I pulled up a stool to the counter and told my son, "I will teach you to cook scrambled eggs, but there is one major thing to remember: you have 30 mistakes you get to make. Learning something new can be hard, and making mistakes is part of it. If you use your 30 mistakes, you get 30 more." A smile spread across his face. Suddenly, he wasn't afraid to crack an egg, and he successfully cooked his very own eggs that morning. When he used a mistake, we laughed and worked together to get back on track. For the next several weeks, my son continued to cook eggs every morning and decided he was the official egg chef in the house.

The manifestation of a creative attitude and growth mindset made a huge difference in my son's ability to learn a new skill. We now refer to our 30 mistakes a lot in our house!

### Try it out:

Share your own mistakes and what you learn from them and ask questions like, "What mistake did you make today that you learned from?"

Be your child's memory for times when they struggled with something and grew as a result. ("When you were learning to walk, you fell down so many times, but each time you learned something new about walking.")

Provide process feedback to help kids learn when they make a mistake. ("When you set the block on edge of your tower, the tower fell over!") Remind them that you love watching them learn and figure things out.

### Activity: Making Mistakes

Read *Beautiful Oops!* by Barney Saltzberg together and then make your own beautiful oops. Spill some paint and turn it into a masterpiece or used torn paper to create something new and interesting. Start talking about mistakes and how they are a part of learning and getting better, and how sometimes they can even be beautiful.

## RESOURCES

The Most Magnificent Thing by Ashley Spires is about a grumpy girl who, after many failures, finally makes a magnificent thing.

Snap! by Hazel Hutchins tells the story of a boy whose crayon breaks, and it opens a whole new world of creativity.

Further reading for parents:  
Mindset: The New Psychology of Success by Carol Dweck  
Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance by Angela Duckworth

## CONNECT WITH US!

Join us at Parenting for Creativity  
([facebook.com/parentingforcreativity](https://facebook.com/parentingforcreativity))  
to discuss self-efficacy and growing a growth mindset in our children!

Created by Sara Smith  
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Figure A5. Self-efficacy piece.



## Creative Mindset: Motivation

Creativity at Home

A person's motivation to do something is one of the most important factors in accomplishing it. When we work on something that interests us, that we are motivated towards, that is meaningful to us, and that we feel comes from our own volition, we are more productive and creative, and we learn more.

### Giving Kids the Power to Follow their Interests

To draw out a child's internal motivation, a little autonomy makes a big difference.

If a child feels like they are being forced or controlled, they often lose any desire to take part in the activity at hand.

When we allow kids the freedom to make choices, we see what interests them and gives them passion. We also show them that we understand that they are individuals with their own strengths and goals.

### Most Likely to be Creative...

"More than three decades of research have shown that people are most likely to be creative when they're intrinsically motivated by the interest, enjoyment, satisfaction, and challenge of the work itself."

-Teresa Amabile, Ph.D

### TRY IT

Capitalize on your child's intrinsic motivation by giving them freedom to make decisions regularly. This can look like giving them a choice about when or how they do something that you need done, but it can also mean they help decide the meals for the week, they choose how their toys are organized, and they decide the family activity on Sunday.

Encourage trying new activities and having varied experiences. When your child expresses interest in something, help them find opportunities for growing their understanding of it and their connections to resources and people that can help them.

Show interest in their passion without being the expert. Give them the room to discover.

### RESOURCES




Iggy Peck: Architect by Andrea Beaty and The Curious Garden by Peter Brown are two stories that follow young boys as they follow their passions.

### COME TALK!

Join us at Parenting for Creativity ([facebook.com/parentingforcreativity](https://facebook.com/parentingforcreativity)) to talk about fostering our children's intrinsic motivation.

created by Sara Smith  
[www.dreamupward.com](http://www.dreamupward.com)

Figure A6. Motivation piece.

## Creative Mindset: Making Connections

Creativity at Home

A hallmark of creative thinking is making connections. Finding a way to combine or connect two separate objects or concepts leads to new and sometimes breakthrough ideas.

### Synthesize New Things...

"Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something... they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That's because they were able to connect experiences they've had and synthesize new things."  
-Steve Jobs

### Kid Connections

Children are often masters of creative combinations and connections. If you've ever opened your pantry to find it has become a hiding spot for dolls or put on your shoe to discover it is actually a cave for a small plastic animal, these are examples of connection-making at work - taking things that don't seem to go together and combining them in new ways.

### CONNECTIONS COME FROM EXPERIENCES

A new experience becomes part of our arsenal of knowledge to draw from.

The new ideas that result from our connections bring about new experiences and discoveries.

The more there is to draw from, the more connections we can make.

The more connections we make, the more creative our thinking, because we can make connections others might not.

### Experiences

New experiences don't have to be wild or extravagant. Anything that allows a child to see something in a different way or understand it more is worthwhile. Disassembling a flower, watching planes take off at the airport, taking apart a broken clock, exploring an instrument, or building with milk jugs can all be simple but valuable new experiences for a child that can help them make new connections.

## CONNECTIONS IN ACTION

My kids were playing with the hose in the back yard one day, watching the water run down the hill. This particular day they were interested in making a fountain like the ones we occasionally watch at the shopping center across the street. They wanted to splash in it together without having to hold the hose, but when they set it on the ground, the water just spread out and soaked into the soil.

So my five-year-old started searching the yard for something that could help him solve his problem. He found a brick. Could this help him in his quest? What about the brick was useful? How might he combine the hose and brick to make a fountain? He turned off the hose and got to work. He was able to make connections between things he had seen and what he knew about water and the hose from all the other times he'd played - and, sure enough, he made a fountain.

### Playing with Combinations

What could you do with a car with no wheels?  
What might a fish use a shoe for?  
How could you use a cardboard box to make you faster?  
How are an ant and a lightbulb alike?  
In what ways might a rubber band make breakfast more fun?

### Activity: Connections in Play

You can encourage creative connections by inserting something unusual into an activity. Put some socks in the bin with the building blocks or add some forks to the art supplies. This will make your children start to think about how these items can be combined and used together to make something novel.

### RESOURCES

Story Cubes is a storytelling game all based on the connections you make between the pictures on the dice. You can also make your own storytelling game by painting pictures on rocks and arranging them for a new story each time!

Stuck by Oliver Jeffers is a story in which a boy fails to make even the most common of connections in order to solve a problem and hilarity ensues.

Further reading for parents:  
The Secret of the Highly Creative Thinker: How to Make Connections Others Don't by Dorte Nielsen and Sarah Thurber

### COME CHAT!

Join us at Parenting for Creativity ([facebook.com/parentingforcreativity](https://facebook.com/parentingforcreativity)) to share our creative connections.

Created by Sara Smith  
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Figure A7. Making Connections piece.





Common barriers to creativity sometimes creep up and create blocks in our thinking. Remaining open to new ideas is like opening a window to let in the fresh air. To do this, we have to force ourselves out of imagined impediments that shut down creative thinking.



### Creativity is...

"Creativity is the ability to modify self-imposed constraints."

-Ackoff & Vergara, creativity researchers

New ideas can seem outrageous at first and often get shut down immediately. Like an alligator snapping at a sudden movement, it's almost second nature to reject ideas that are outside the norm. We have to practice staying open in order to allow novel ideas to have room to breathe and develop, so their value can become apparent.



## BARRIERS TO CREATIVITY

These are some of the common barriers to creativity. Recognizing these barriers in our thinking can help us to stay open.

### habit

Habit makes us want to keep the status quo because it's what we're used to. Recognizing what we think or say out of habit opens us up to positive change.

### making assumptions

Assumptions can be barriers if we don't recognize when we are operating under one. Challenging assumptions allows us to see things differently for a moment.

### focusing on the negative

Sometimes we only think about what won't work about an idea. If we can evaluate things in an affirmative manner, we can see the positive in any idea and go from there.

## YES: A Powerful Word

Children hear "no" a lot as they test things out and learn to live in the world. The more we can say "yes," the more open an environment we're creating. Sometimes we say "no" out of habit or one of the other barriers. And sometimes, it's all in the language we choose. "No, not until you clean up the puzzle pieces" means the same thing as "Yes, as soon as the puzzle pieces are taken care of." The latter maintains a feeling of openness.

The number 1 rule of improvisation is called "Yes, and..." It means being open to what the co-creator says and then building on it. This rule is based on mutual respect. We can do this at home too, after all, you are co-creating an experience with your children. "You want to wear shorts in 40 degree weather? Yes, and... let's put some leggings on underneath for warmth."

Try paying attention to how often you say yes versus no. Creativity needs an environment that feels open to exploration, new ideas, and even mistakes. Limits and boundaries are important, too. Seek out a balance that sets limits, yes, and... also feels open to possibility.



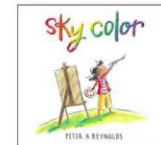
"Yes and" behavior and staying open with our children strengthens our relationship with them. They feel respected and know that their parents can be trusted with their thoughts and ideas.

In turn, it allows our children to learn how to be open and respectful when they hear a new idea from someone else.

## Try: Redefining Problems

It is easy to shut down and become closed off to new ideas when we run into a problem. Sometimes finding new ways to describe a problem can open doors in our minds. For example, if we say, "How can I get my kids to brush their teeth?" we might come up with some ideas. Then, if we change some of the wording to "How can I improve our morning routine?" we open ourselves to a whole new set of ideas. This works for kids, too. "How can I keep my tower from falling?" "What can I add to my tower to make it more sturdy?" and "How can my structure be improved?" can each draw out different thinking to solve the same problem.

## RESOURCES



Going Places by Paul and Peter Reynolds and Sky Color, also by Peter, both demonstrate how leaving behind assumptions and self-imposed constraints can lead to something wonderful.

Further reading for parents:  
How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk by Faber and Mazlish  
Yes, And: How Improvisation Reverses "No, But" Thinking and Improves Creativity and Collaboration by Kelly Leonard and Tom Yorton



## CONNECT WITH US!

Join us at Parenting for Creativity  
([facebook.com/parentingforcreativity](https://facebook.com/parentingforcreativity))  
to discuss staying open in our parenting!

Creativity at Home  
Created by Sara Smith  
[dreamupward.com](http://dreamupward.com)

Figure A8. Openness piece.

Creativity at Home

Creative Mindset:  
Embracing the Unknown

Uncertainty can be one of the hardest things to face, but it is necessary for creativity. When we are doing creative work, we are in uncharted territory, so we must practice embracing the unknown in order to reap the benefits of new thinking.

Avoiding uncertainty...

"Thanks to our desire to avoid uncertainty and prevent bad surprises many of us select the dull and demotivating sure thing (like dead-end jobs and relationships) over fulfilling but uncertainty-ridden options (like following our dreams)... But...when we are open, we connect more deeply with others... We learn. And we experience life more fully."

from *Surprise* by Tania Luna and Lee Ann Renninger, Ph.D (see Resources for Parents below)

In creativity literature, embracing the unknown is often called "tolerating ambiguity." Avoiding ambiguity leads to avoiding creativity because in creativity there's no one right answer or definitive outcome known from the start. Creativity is messy, complex, and requires wading through a lot of uncertainty to come out the other side with something new.

TRY IT

Much of tolerating ambiguity and embracing the unknown is in how you frame situations. Is it a scary uncertainty or an exciting adventure? Is it a failure or a chance to try something new? With practice, we can find the adventure even in the things that make us uneasy.

Practice getting out of your comfort zone as a family, whatever that may look like. Maybe it means trying a new sport together or doing a good deed for a stranger.

Resist the need for certainty and allow for not knowing. Draw a picture with your child in which you don't talk about it, but you trade the paper back and forth, each adding something to it on your turn. Neither of you knows how it will turn out or what's coming next!

RESOURCES

*Little Tree* by Loren Long is about a tree who learns that change is the only way to grow, so it must take a chance.

*No Jumping on the Bed* by Tedd Arnold has an ambiguous ending that is good for discussion and leaves you wondering.

*The Game in the Dark* by Herve Tullet is a book full of little surprises that only appear with a light in the dark.

Further reading for parents:  
*Surprise: Embrace the Unpredictable and Engineer the Unexpected* by Tania Luna and LeeAnn Renninger, PhD  
*Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Changes the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead* by Brené Brown

PAJAMA SURPRISE

A couple times a year, at completely random intervals, we do something in my house called Pajama Surprise. It's a tradition from my mother-in-law that holds a dear spot in my husband's memory, plus it injects a little surprise into our everyday and helps the kids practice embracing the unknown.

It usually comes about when my husband and I are itching to break some rules. We get the kids all ready for bed, just like normal, except maybe a little early. We turn out the lights, say our goodnights, and leave the room. Our excitement building, my husband and I wait outside the door until we are practically bursting, then we dash back into the room shouting "Pajama Surprise!" The first time we did this was met with utter bewilderment, but now the kids know this means we are going on a special nighttime date. It's a run to a coffee shop for a sweet treat or a stop at an outdoor, evening summer concert. Whatever it is, the kids absolutely adore it, and I'll admit, we adults do, too. A little surprise can go a long way.

Vulnerability

Often one reason we have trouble with ambiguity and the unknown is that it puts us in a place of vulnerability. This can be uncomfortable because we tend to think of vulnerability as weakness.

If, however we can show our children that vulnerability means being open to experiences, our feelings, and the feelings of others, they can better reap the benefits of vulnerability:

- stronger connections with others
- more opportunities to learn
- more willingness to step out and try something creative.

Accepting Emotions

One way to allow for vulnerability is to talk to kids about their feelings and accept those emotions, even when they are negative.

When we let kids know it is okay to feel fear, anger, and sadness in addition to positive feelings, they learn to trust and accept themselves even in a vulnerable state.

"You're feeling really angry right now."

"That must have been so disappointing."

And instead of "Don't cry" or "Don't be sad," try "It hurts when..."

COME TALK!

Join us at Parenting for Creativity  
([facebook.com/parentingforcreativity](https://facebook.com/parentingforcreativity))  
to talk about how we can embrace the unknown in our families.

created by Sara Smith  
[www.dreamupward.com](http://www.dreamupward.com)

Figure A9. Embracing the Unknown piece.



## Creative Mindset: Seeing It Another Way

Creativity at Home

The power to see something in a new way is a key to creativity. Many things have an immediately apparent purpose, but if we can flex our thinking into seeing things with new eyes, we can come up with infinite new ideas and solutions to problems.

### Perceiving Differently...

"The creative person is able to return repeatedly to a commonplace object or situation and perceive it in different and exciting ways."

-from Making the Creative Leap Beyond by E. Paul Torrance and H. Tammy Safer

To make life easier, our brains categorize things. However, sometimes that means that we view objects in rigid ways, missing creative ideas. Practice seeing ordinary things with new eyes. Perhaps that spoon actually makes a great hair accessory!

### Empathy


Seeing things another way includes seeing from the perspective of others.

Our relationships and creative problem-solving skills are both improved when we can see from another viewpoint.

When thinking about solutions to big problems, consider how someone different than you might approach the problem. Seeing it from their perspective can help to break through boundaries and come up with a larger variety of ideas.

### Try It

Out and About



If your shoes could talk, what would they say?

When Reading



Discuss the different characters and their perspectives on what is happening.

In Play



What other way could we use this object?

## Problems as Questions

One important way to see things differently is to view and state our problems as questions.

Instead of "I never have enough time," we can ask, "How might I be more efficient at work?" or "How to make quality family time?"

Stating our problems as questions puts us in problem-solving mode and opens us up to many options.


### SEEING IT ANOTHER WAY

A few weeks ago, my little boy drew a picture on a large piece of paper. He called it an obstacle course and asked me to come try it out. He described the pieces, telling me just what I needed to avoid: "This is fire, so don't step on it" and "Here's a mess you can't walk through." So, interested, I stepped up to the paper. My first instinct was to jump over the parts I wasn't supposed to touch, but apparently that was a no-go, according to my son. I tried going around, standing on my tip-toes and just walking through as fast as I could. Each one failed. Finally, exasperated at my lack of seeing what was clear to him, he walked me through the course. "See this jug here? Fill it with the water from here and you can spray out the fire. Then build a bridge to walk over the water. Shine a light on the darkness, and then clean up the mess to get to the finish line!" How could I have missed seeing it this way? I had only seen it as a 2D picture that I couldn't interact with. At least I had him to show me how to see it another way.


### Activity:

Sit down together and draw a tree from many perspectives. What would it look like to a bird in the sky? How about an ant on the ground? What about a caterpillar on a leaf? Or a squirrel in the hollow? This is a fun way to recognize that anything can be seen from multiple points of view.


### RESOURCES



The dot by Peter Reynolds shows how seeing a dot differently turns a dejected girl into an artist.



What Do You Do With a Problem? by Kobi Yamada is an inspiring book about how a problem can be an opportunity.



Press Here by Hervé Tullet is an example of a book that came from the author seeing books in another way.

## COME TALK!

Join us at Parenting for Creativity ([facebook.com/parentingforcreativity](https://www.facebook.com/parentingforcreativity)) to talk about ways to "see it another way."

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Figure A10. Seeing it Another Way piece.

# Creative Mindset: Mindfulness

Creativity at Home

Mindfulness has been shown to have a number of advantages for well-being, and it also can serve our creativity. Mindfulness is about paying attention, especially to context and variability. Mindfulness allows us to see new uses for objects, recognize the complexity of others, and disrupt habitual thought patterns that block creative thinking.

## Gratitude

Mindfulness is also related to optimism and gratitude. Being aware of all of the advantages and pleasures in life that we experience has positive effects on our well-being.

With your children, verbalize things you are grateful for regularly. At dinner or before bed are perfect times to make these reflections.

## Mindless 'Creativity'

Recently my son found an instructional book about learning to draw vehicles. He was diligently drawing car after car, following each step. Then he decided to switch to drawing a truck. He followed the first three steps, which happened to be the same as the steps for a car and then automatically did the next step for a car. That step was not part of the drawing for a truck, but I recognized that he had become mindless in his process. The step-by-step, repetitive process he had been performing left no room for creativity and his brain disengaged - automatically churning out the exact same thing it had before.

If this can happen so easily to my son, how often do we as adults disengage from tasks or activities only to miss the opportunity to make it creative?

## Noticing Wonders

"To be mindful is to be present, noticing all the wonders that we didn't realize were right in front of us."

-From Mindfulness by Ellen Langer, Ph.D

An important aspect of creativity is being sensitive to the environment and noticing needs within that environment. When we pay attention to what is happening around us, we are more likely to come up with creative ideas that improve our experience.

## Activity:

Like "I Spy" play a game of "I notice" where you take note of the things around you and how they are alike and different. Example: "I notice that tree has pointy leaves and the one across the street has round leaves."

## RESOURCES

The Game of Let's Go by Hervé Tuller is a calming book in which you have to slow down and pay attention with eyes closed in order to "read" it.

I Hear a Pickle by Rachel Isadora takes you through each of the senses, reminding you to notice the characteristics of everything.

## CONNECT WITH US!

Join us at Parenting for Creativity ([facebook.com/parentingforcreativity](https://facebook.com/parentingforcreativity)) to share ways we incorporate mindfulness into our parenting.

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Figure A11. Mindfulness piece.





## Creative Mindset: Interdependence

Creativity at Home

In our increasingly connected world, we must be able to collaborate and utilize each other's strengths. Creativity does not happen in a vacuum. We need each other to make great things happen.

### Belonging

"Feeling part of a community of learners is a powerful motivator. Students with a strong sense of academic belonging see themselves as members of not only a social community, but an intellectual community. They tend to interpret setbacks and difficulty in their studies as a normal part of learning..."

Camille Farrington, PhD




Encouraging children to recognize the strengths in themselves enhances their motivation and self-efficacy.

Recognizing the strengths in others encourages acceptance of differences and promotes collaboration and synergy.

Talk with your children about the strengths their friends and relatives bring to their lives. Help them to build a habit of noticing the positives others bring into situations.

### Interdependence in Action

In our house, we've been working on noticing and verbalizing others' strengths. One morning with my kids, we found a huge insect on our ceiling. Not wanting it to eventually drop onto our heads, I devised a plan for removing it that ended up being pretty tricky. I was able to finally knock it down and take care of it while my kids decided to wait around the corner.

When my husband got home that evening, I heard from the other room my son exuberantly talking to his dad. "She was AMAZING!" he announced, and then continued to recount the entire experience.

It's not a strength I was aware of in myself, but I'm glad my son saw it.

### Finding Mentors

When a child becomes interested or curious about something, finding an expert or mentor can be highly beneficial. Not only do they get to learn in depth from someone who is experienced, they learn the value of connecting with others about their passions. They see people as valuable resources. They open doors to collaboration.

A parent or general education teacher can only take a specific interest a child has so far, if it's not their strength. An expert in the field can be a key to unlock a world for a learner.



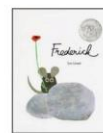
### TRY IT

Make it a point to meet and interact with new people in your community. As a family, talk about how everyone contributes to the community in their own way. There is something to learn from everyone you meet.

After a collaborative activity, reflect with your children about who helped with what parts, how each person added to the project, and how each person's strengths were displayed.

Collaboration requires social intelligence. When playing or working together, encourage children to notice others' emotions and adjust accordingly.

### RESOURCES



Frederick by Leo Lionni is about a mouse who has an unexpected and very useful way to help his fellow mice through the winter.



The story of Stone Soup is a classic tale that demonstrates how collaboration can make things better.

Further reading for parents:

The Manifesto: A Guide to Developing a Creative Career by E. Paul Torrance  
Helping Children Succeed: What Works and Why by Paul Tough



### COME TALK!

Join us at Parenting for Creativity ([facebook.com/parentingforcreativity](https://www.facebook.com/parentingforcreativity)) to talk about how we can recognize and utilize the strengths of others and practice interdependence.

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[www.dreamupward.com](http://www.dreamupward.com)

Figure A12. Interdependence piece.

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I hereby grant permission to the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State College to place a digital copy of my master's project, Creativity at Home: A Creative Mindset Guide for Parents, as an online resource.

  
Sara Smith

April 24, 2017  
Date