Creativity at Home: A Creative Mindset Guide for Parents

Sara K. Smith

Advisor
Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers

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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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Dates of Approval:

April 24, 2017  ____________________________
Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers
Associate Professor
International Center for Studies in Creativity

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.


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.
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 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’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 “Beyonder,” 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**


and

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.


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.


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.


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 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.

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.


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 gleaning 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.


**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.


**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.


**Playfulness**

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


Jabberwocky.


**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.


**Self-Efficacy**

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


**Motivation**

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


**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.


**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.


**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.


**Seeing Another Way**

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


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


**Interdependence**

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


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

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

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

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 workshops 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 I was already uneasy. When I could fall asleep wearing my son, I decided to try something. On Sunday I told my son all the things that were happening the 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. (I swear 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, watched a movie, and ate our meals outside. We get to dream up a day, and then we made it happen.

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

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 the 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 Each Choose
  - You and your child get to talk about all kinds of things they drew up when reading the book.

- Drum Dream Girl
  - This story is an example of a young girl who took to love with the vision of her future and saw it through.

**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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Action Taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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…”</td>
<td>Adjusted tone to feel less instructive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make the resources for parents clearer than just “for parents” title.</td>
<td>Changed title to “Further reading for parents”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce repetitive statements in short paragraphs to improve flow. Adjust some awkward statements.</td>
<td>Reworded as suggested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreaming anecdote needs a more impactful ending.</td>
<td>Adjusted the ending with added dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links to more information would be helpful.</td>
<td>Added links for quotes, resources, blog, Facebook group and made top photo a link back to the blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The very visual “rules” section of the possibilities piece is engaging and breaks up the longer paragraphs around it.</td>
<td>Added large scale, visual sections to other pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change the order of bullet points in self-efficacy piece to be more impactful for parents.</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make it more friendly to parents, change title of quotes to something that captures attention instead of the quote author.</td>
<td>Pulled part of each quote to serve as the title and put quote author at the bottom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change the opening picture for curiosity so that it is more relatable.</td>
<td>Changed photo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

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


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.

**Figure A1.** Dreaming piece.
Figure A2. Thinking in Possibilities piece.
Figure A3. Playfulness piece.
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 curiosity allows us to practice the skill of curiosity.

**The Starting Point is Curiosity...**

“The hallmark of creativity 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...

- **What**
- **What if**
- **I wonder...**

How would things be different if...

The skill of curiosity is tied to lifelong learning. If we encourage our children to wonder about things, we will always be driven to find answers and then continue asking questions. Curiosity is a prerequisite for deep learning.

**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 mixture of experience that engages their senses builds on their curiosity. A change of scenery, smelling the spices on the counter, or feeling the mud with bare feet all ignite wonder.

**RESPONDING TO CURiosity**

Children are famous for driving their parents nuts with their curious questions. One way we encourage curiosity and understanding of ideas is to answer these questions. Rather than just answering the question, you can ask them to begin to search for answers.

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 could have been 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 share, so I could see it in his face stretched across his face and the way he launched around. Then, in a flurry, he revealed from behind his back – a piece of toilet paper. This boy, in all his eccentricity and curiosity, just discovered that each sheet of toilet paper was really just a piece of toilet paper stuck together, and he was elated to share that story. He wouldn’t stop until he had discovered everything about it, explored it, learned something, and it just sparkled in his eyes. I remember feeling a bit embarrassed for him as he laughed about toilet paper, but my teacher graciously responded to his presentation. I now realize that this boy, despite being a bit eccentric, was always full of questions, and it was an inquisitive mind. And I occasionally try to remind myself to be a little more like him.

Activity:

- Get curious yourself! Hitting curiosity is one of the best ways to encourage it. Ask your child questions like...
  - “Why?”
  - “What if?”
  - “I wonder...”

**Resources**

- [Just Imagine](http://www.justimagine.com)
- [Ada Twist, Scientist](http://www.ada-twist.com)
- [Hang in the Balance](http://www.hanginthebalance.com)

**COMETalk!**

Join us at Parenting for Creativity (facebook.com/parentingforcreativity) to discuss helping curiosity thrive.

created by Sara Smith

www.dreamsparked.com

Figure A4. Curiosity piece.
Figure A5. Self-efficacy piece.
Figure A6. Motivation piece.
**Figure A7. Making Connections piece.**
Creative Mindset: Openness

Common barriers to creativity sometimes creep up and create blocks in our thinking. Removing open doors can open many new doors. It’s important to have the right attitude. To do this, we have to reform ourselves out of existing impediments that stifle creative thinking.

Creativity is...
“Creativity is the ability to modify self-imposed constraints.”
- Adoff & Verguna, creativity researchers

New ideas can seem outrageous at first, and often get shot down immediately. Like an slider stopping at a sudden movement. It’s almost second nature to reject ideas that go 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 is 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 alternative manner, we can see the positive in any idea and go from there.

Yes, a Powerful Word
Children hear “no” a lot these are things out and soon to be in the world. The more we say, “yes”, the more open our mind becomes. Creative thinking becomes more fluid; it’s our positive “yes.”

The more we say “yes,” the more we can open our minds and let our creativity flow.

Yes is an important word. It’s a powerful word that opens doors to new ideas and new possibilities.

Try giving 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.

Figure A8. Openness piece.
Creative Mindset: Embracing the Unknown

Uncertainty can be one of the hardest things to face, but it’s 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 shield the dull and demonstrating true things [the dead] and hide and withdraw them even fulfilling the uncertainty-hidden options (like following our dreams)…. But, when we open, we connect more deeply with others… We learn. And we experience life more fully.”

from Surprise by Teresa Luna and Lee Ann Barringer, PhD [see Resources for Parents below]

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

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 new experiences and 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 very angry right now.”

And instead of “Don’t cry” or “Don’t be sad,” say “It hurts when…”

Figure A9. Embracing the Unknown piece.
Creative Mindset: Seeing It Another Way

The power to see something in a new way is a key to creativity. Almost everything on this worksheet appears normal, but if we can alter our thinking into seeing things with new eyes, we can come up with new ideas and solutions to problems.

Perceiving Differently...

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

-From Making the Creative Leap Beyond by E. Paul Torrance and H. Tanny Sather

Empathy

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

Our relationships and creative problem-solving skills can both improve 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 you break through barriers 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?

Activity:

Sit down together and draw a scene from our perspectives. What would each of us draw? What make our picture different? Think about what it tells the other about a character or a level. A scene at the hospital. This kind of way to see a scene can often see things very differently.

Resources

The art by Peter Renolds shows how seeing a dot differently turns a drugged 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 Harriet Tulliet is an example of a book that shows from the author seeing books in another way.

Figure A10. Seeing it Another Way piece.
Creative Mindset: Mindfulness

Mindfulness has been shown to have a number of advantages for well-being, and it also enhances our creativity. Mindfulness is about paying attention, without judgment, to present moment experiences. Mindfulness allows us to see new ways for objects, recognize the connectivity of others, and change bad thought patterns that block creative thinking.

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.

Mindfulness

- Making decisions makes us more mindful. Give kidschoose to engage their minds.
- Make an effort to notice new things, even about something you've seen many times. Novelty is necessary for mindfulness and creativity.
- Recognizing that everything that we know has an element of uncertainty opens us to possibility.
- Mindfulness combats prejudice and sexism by allowing us to notice and appreciate each other's differences.
- Part of mindfulness is being aware of our own emotions. Talk to your children about your emotions and how you experience them. Help them name their emotions, too.

Gratitude

Mindfulness is also related to optimism and gratitude. Being aware of all of the opportunities and positive aspects of mindfulness has positive effects on our well-being.

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

Mindless 'Creativity'

Recently my son found an instructional book about learning to draw vehicles. He was diligently following the step by step instructions when he decided to switch to drawing a truck. The following the first three steps, which happened to be the same as the steps for a bus, but then he started drawing the truck. He was not following the instructions. He was making something up. In his world, he was the truck. His art process had been authentic. The same process with writing he had been authentic. He was using his creativity and his brain disengaged - automatically coming out the exact same thing he had before.

If this can happen so easily in your own, how often do we as adults disengage from tasks or activities only to miss the opportunity to make it interesting?

Activity:

“Try” play a game of “I see” where you point out the size of the “vehicle” and how they are alike and different. Example: “I notice that this one looks same and the one across the street has lines.

RESOURCES

The Game of Life by Home Tablet is a coloring book in which you have to slow down and pay attention with was closed in order to “read” it.

I Hear Pickle by Rachel Vale, takes you through each of the senses, reminding you to notice the difference of everything.

Further reading for parents:
Mindfulness by Ellen Langer

CONNECT WITH US!

Get us at Coping for Creativity, dreamupward.com to share ways we incorporate mindfulness into our parenting.

Created by Sara Smith

Figure A11. Mindfulness piece.
Creative Mindset: Interdependence

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 belonging are more engaged and motivated in the classroom and are more likely to succeed both academically and socially. They feel safe, respected, and valued. In this sense, a classroom can be a microcosm of a larger community that students will belong to later in life."

Camille Fornarino, PhD

Interdependence in Action

In our house, we've been working on noticing and verbalizing each other's strengths. One morning with my kids, we found a huge weed on our ceiling. Not wanting it to eventually drop onto our head, I decided a plan for removing it that proved to be a bit tricky. I was able to finally knock it down and take care of it while my kids decided to walk around the corner.

When my husband got home that evening, I heard from the other room my son exuberantly telling his dad: "She was AWESOME!" 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.

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.

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Sara Smith

April 24, 2017
Date