

# ***PRESCRIPTIONS FOR PARENTS -***

MAKING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PRACTICAL FOR FAMILIES



## ***PARENTING for CREATIVITY***

Professor E. Paul Torrance developed tests for creativity in the 1950s and from them developed a "Creativity Quotient". The 400 children in Minneapolis who he studied have been followed for decades, and the creativity quotient was 2 - 3 times stronger than IQ in predicting adult accomplishments. Unfortunately, a study by Kyung Hee Kim at the College of William and Mary who analyzed the "Torrance" scores of almost 300,000 children and adults found creativity has been decreasing since 1990.

Studies have also shown that highly creative adults grew up in homes that provided "opposites". The parents encouraged uniqueness, but provided rules and stability. The parents were responsive to their children's needs, but challenged the children to learn new skills. The children were adaptable, able to be creative when bored. Creative adults frequently also grew up with hardship - which can help children develop flexibility and problem-solving skills.

Creativity is not manifested by the toddler who can manipulate the parent's iphone or the preschooler who can recognize letters and numbers on the educational app. Creativity is a thinking process in which new and original patterns are expressed. For example, children playing outdoors and creating a new game with new rules. Children learn best by engaging all their senses to explore their world through play.

Contrary to common belief, creativity does not equate with being undisciplined, and creativity thrives in safe, clutter free environments. Creativity is also enhanced after physical activity - one more reason to encourage outdoor play!

*Kyung Hee Kim (2011): The Creativity Crisis: The Decrease in Creative Thinking Scores on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking, Creativity Research Journal, 23:4, 285-295*

*Lorenza S. Colzato, Ayca Szapora, Justine N. Pannekoek, Bernhard Hommel. The impact of physical exercise on convergent and divergent thinking. Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, 2013; 7 DOI: [10.3389/fnhum.2013.00824](https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2013.00824)*



## **INFANTS and TODDLERS**

Infants and toddlers are naturally creative. They are constantly exploring their world, trying new ways to use their bodies, seeking to find patterns in their environment. The difficulty for us as parents is to balance our concerns for the child's safety with the benefits of the child's exploration.

Creativity and exploration can flourish in safe environments - so make sure you have done everything possible to eliminate potential hazards from your home.

1. Provide "toys" that can be used in many different ways - pots and pans, blocks, cardboard boxes for older toddlers.
2. Avoid toys that require a child to perform just one action - "push the button" to make the music start.
3. Avoid screen time! Children as young as 9 months will copy the way they see another child use a new toy on TV. Better for your child to explore her world in her own way.
4. Offer choices even to 9 - 12 month olds. "Would you like to wear your red



## **PRESCHOOLERS**

1. Allow "messy" play!!
2. Provide items that your preschooler can use to create new things: crayons, paints, building blocks, clay or play dough. (Whipped cream spread on the table is great for finger-painting!)
3. Allow your child unstructured time. Allow your child to feel "bored" so he can use his creativity to fill his time.
4. Read to your child. Reading opens so many new worlds and ideas.
5. Allow time to play outdoors - to run across a field, to dig in the dirt, to make a sand castle, to hold a bug.
6. Ask questions that will help your child think creatively. "What else can we do with the napkin?"
7. Provide opportunities for "dress up" and dramatic play.



## **ELEMENTARY**

1. Continue to encourage reading - and discourage screen time / video games.
2. Create stories - a great way to pass the time while driving. One person starts the story, and everyone takes turns adding to the story.
3. Provide props and let your children create a play or drama. A great activity for neighbors to enjoy together.
4. Legos - Encourage your child to build something different than the suggested models.
5. Ask your child open-ended questions that will help him learn about his environment. "Are there different ways for us to get to school?" "What helps birds and airplanes fly?" "How could we fix dinner if the electricity went out?"
6. Be careful not to pressure your child too much to "perform" "get good grades" "be the best soccer player". These children often become fearful of taking risks.
7. Encourage positive risk taking - trying new sports, an art, music, hobby class. This is the age when the



## **ADOLESCENTS**

1. Find ways for your adolescent to pursue his interests and passions. Find ways he can use them to learn more about his world. Is she interested in basketball? Can she volunteer at a sports camp for disabled children? Can she think of new ways to help these children participate in the sport?
2. Peer pressure can discourage creativity. Encouraging and reinforcing the importance of being unique will help counter the negative aspects of peer pressure.
3. Creative children and teens are often viewed as "nonconforming". Be careful to avoid criticizing your teen if he chooses to be different (in a positive, healthy way).
4. Chose your battles. A little pink hair color or unmatched clothes may seem odd to you, but may be simply creative expression of individuality.
5. Plan a "family night" for everyone in the family to do something silly /

shirt or your blue shirt?"  
Your child can point and  
show you his decision.

5. Start becoming  
comfortable with allowing  
your child to "make  
mistakes" - i.e. fall down.  
Let her get up by herself is  
she is able to do so and  
encourage her for her  
efforts.

brain is most receptive to  
learning new tasks.

8. Be aware that although  
schools often use  
"brainstorming" as a tool  
to encourage creativity,  
often the most creative  
and divergent thinkers are  
"shut down" by their peers  
and will become  
discouraged.

9. Being under constant  
"surveillance" can also  
undermine creativity, so  
allow your child some  
individual, independent  
time.

creative / crazy. Try a  
new hair style, make up a  
new song - or go out to try  
a new sport that no one in  
your family has done  
before - like bowling or  
indoor soccer.

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