



# ENCOURAGING CREATIVITY

## in Our Children

■ by Colleen Jackson, BFA, Clinical Intern

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”  
(Ephesians 2:10, NIV)

We are God’s handiwork and he makes no mistakes. We have been given gifts to do good works he prepared in advance for us to do. What amazing news! And yet, many of us struggle to know and walk in these truths. Thankfully, our God is faithful to redeem and sanctify us all the days of our lives. But is there anything we can do to help the next generation live these things out? Encouraging creativity is a great way to foster important skills in children that will prepare them for the good works God has for them.

### How do I encourage creativity?

Creativity will look different for everyone. Whether it’s acting, painting, listening to music, working on a craft, reading, cooking, writing, or simply using your imagination, creativity flourishes in a safe environment where you are free to take risks, make mistakes, and try new things. Parents can help their children by creating spaces where it is okay to make a mess. It’s a helpful reminder that children often learn by overcoming obstacles, so it’s important to reinforce their ability to try again—and *again!*—without feeling like they have done something wrong.

### The goal is the process, not the outcome

Here’s a helpful tip for fostering this idea: instead of complimenting a child when he or she has created something, saying “You are so smart” or “You are a brilliant artist,” point out the things the child has done to get there.

“You used the yellow crayon and the orange crayon to create the sun in your picture.”  
Or maybe, “You used a cape to become a superhero!”

These kinds of comments downplay an achievement-based sense of self-worth and instead reinforce a sense of confidence in their ability to use the gifts they’ve been given to create good things. This technique also helps build resiliency, or the ability to recover quickly when experiencing obstacles or difficulty.

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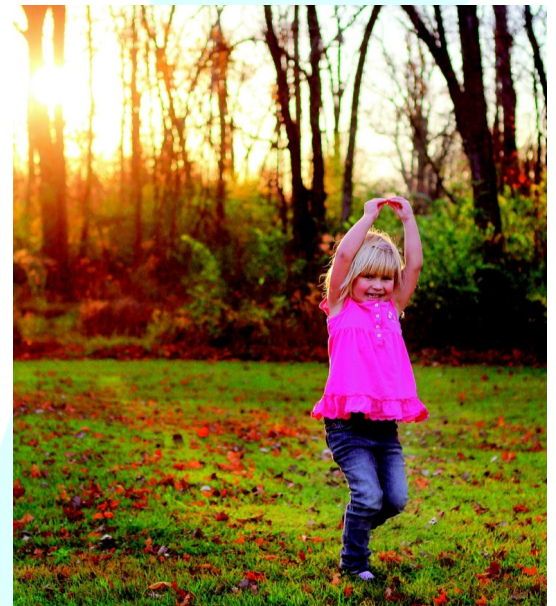
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### What are the long-term benefits?

Encouraging creativity promotes a healthy self-image and empowers children to engage in positive risk-taking, which is the idea that, through trying new things in a safe way, we learn important skills like problem-solving, we gain the ability to trust ourselves, and we build into the knowledge that we have what it takes to overcome challenges. What's more, creativity is often collaborative. It can be used to develop social skills, teach children to celebrate others, and increase emotional intelligence. Creativity is good for children of all ages. Let's look at how creativity can meet children's needs at different developmental stages.

### Toddlers

Toddlers and preschool-age children are developing their views of themselves and the world around them. That is my favorite thing about this age group—as you affirm and encourage their ability to make choices and do things on their own, you are nurturing that healthy self-image and positive worldview. Even at this early stage, the toddler is learning about leadership, so collaborative creativity is important.

### Elementary-age children

Elementary-age kids are beginning to build their skill base and are looking to the world around them for validation. They want to know if they are competent or not. This is the time to praise the process. It's also the time to create an environment where it's okay to make mistakes and encourage kids to try again.



### Middle school and high school children

These capable young people are ready for increased responsibility and independence in their creativity. At this stage, adolescents are dreaming about who they want to be in the world. Extracurricular activities in areas your child is interested in can develop confidence, leadership skills, and mastery over the unique gifts they've been given.

Creativity is a wonderful, God-given gift that can help develop children into healthy disciples of Christ who use their gifts to glorify God and further his kingdom. Let's encourage the next generation to boldly sing along with the psalmist: "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." (Psalm 139) ■



*Colleen Jackson, BFA, is a Clinical Intern and sees clients in our South Holland, IL and Schererville, IN locations.*

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