

How I developed creativity in my daughter.

Fatherhood allows me to bring out the best that my daughter Amanda could become. I had read from a poll involving CEOs that 60% of them cited creativity as the most important leadership quality, compared with 52% for integrity and 35% for global thinking. The poll results went on to say that "creative leaders are also more prepared to break with the status quo of industry, enterprise and revenue models, and they are 81% more likely to rate innovation as a crucial capability." That was enough motivation for me to decide to work on Amanda's imagination and creativity as early as possible.

"Tell me the story"

As soon as Amanda was of a discerning age, I would draw her attention to a scene we came across wherever we were. The scene could simply be a man sitting on a park bench seemingly waiting for someone. I would then ask Amanda to invent a story around that man and asked her questions to test how she would develop and corroborate her story, eg. "Why does he look so sad?". Often, I would throw in ridiculous suggestions, eg. "What happens if a monster shows up?", to see how she'd handle them. If nothing else, it would get a laugh out of her. Humour is key to learning. She enjoyed that.

Car-icatures

When she turned four, I introduce her to logos of car models. It started on the iPad at home and she immediately took on the challenge of recognising the logos. We had loads of fun identifying as many car models as we could during our bus and taxi rides. I said if she ever needed to be a witness to a hit-and-run accident, she could tell the police that the car was a blue Mazda 323 and not just "a blue car".

Don't just give the answer, let her think

I avoided answering Amanda's questions right off. I would drop hints and let her get the answer herself. One of the most effective techniques to achieving this outcome is to ask her open-ended questions, such as "So what happens if I...?" or "Why do you think they need to do this?".

Show and tell

Since I am a bit of a creative force myself, I made many things for her out of everyday objects and recycleables. The proudest creation I made with her was the character Rolie Polie Olie (a popular cartoon character back then) using styrofoam that we bought together from Art Friend. Since then, she had been handcrafting cards for my birthdays. She is 17 today and I got another handcrafted birthday card from her this year.

Answer every question she asked

Some adults keep "adult topics" away from their children. I am not one of these adults. I answered every question Amanda asked of me, including adult matters, but in her language. For instance, when she asked me about my work, I would take my time to tell her in three ways:

1. Used a lot of children's analogies.
2. Presented it as "this is the problem" and "this is how I solve it".
3. Asked her open-ended questions to stimulate her reasoning so she could arrive at the answers on her own.

This way, she not only understood what daddy did but also honed her creativity.

Creativity need not necessarily point to a talent. I believe there's innate creativity in all children; we just need the right tools to let it out. I'm sure many of you have your ways of developing your child's creativity, but if you need a quick way to start, try my story-telling way. More than opening your child's mind to a world of possibilities, you are also creating a special father-child moment. And that, as I found out, is also priceless.