

WHATS THIS??

“Every child comes with the message
“That God is not yet discouraged of man”.
-Rabindranath Tagore

“The Sun.....A flower.” There were hardly any more responses. The groups being questioned were adult.

When the same question was thrown at a class room of 10 year olds, their answers couldn't be noted down fast enough:

- it's a bug
- Glowing diamond/ruby, etc...
- a pin cushion
- I see a cactus
- A dial...They went on and on..

Somehow, as we grow older, imagination takes a back seat.

EREHOWN, a Bombay based group, has been conducting workshops in Delhi and Bombay schools.

They aim to develop thinking abilities. And we thought the regular schooling would take care of that. Parents, I think were sceptical. Students treated it as another free period initially. Soon, they were caught up in the excitement-to think-think differently. There were no wrong answers. No threat of immediate evaluation. Many teachers began using these approaches in the regular teaching: that's when creativity and stimulation became a part of the lesson.

In The class Room

Teachers dread them. The overacting restless students. But the ones to be really feared are the passive ones. While the energetic ones are the obvious nuisance, the passive students-locked up in himself, is self-damaging. Creativity is the answer for both types. Providing the extra stimulation for the active, it also creates an excitement which draws the passive into participating.

We tend to reserve creativity for the arts. It can be there in the Mathematics or History or Social Studies' lesson, too.

UNLEASHING CREATIVITY

Our thinking is compartmentalized. Neat and orderly. We store our information under different heads. If we can sometimes break the division, use information from one box in a seemingly unrelated subject, new ideas emerge. Graham Bell's telephone, for one, was modelled on the mechanism of the ear.

In our classes, do we allow a “borrowing” from other subjects? Renu did it, unleashing a barrage of creativity.

Often teachers overemphasize discipline killing creativity, too. Pin drop-silence usually matches dead-pan expressions. Classroom discussions are a powerful tool. Encourage students to express their views, question and think creatively and independently.

To be a source of stimulation, teachers themselves need to be creative. Think up new ways to teach the same lesson.

Party Time

The Science teacher, Mrs. Sen had been teaching about the different groups of food. At the end of the lesson she announced, “and tomorrow, we have a party!” Immediately her class V pupils perked up. “But you have to plan out the menu among yourselves, so that we have all the major groups of food.” That was a well-remembered lesson.

When teachers use creative methods, student enthusiasm is visible. Get everyone in the class involved in an activity. They’ll love these classes, where they are allowed to discover, explore and ultimately learn more effectively.

Outside the classroom, too, creativity in children needs stimulation. It may find expression in art, dance, music writing, drama...

As a child grows his interests, likes and dislikes keep changing. He needs to be able to explore as many forms of expression as possible. Some interests won’t last beyond the summer vacations, others might become lifetime hobbies. Each however, teaches him something new: a self-expression and discovery of pleasure.

PARENTS are a child’s first Teacher. Recognizing a talent and encouraging your child are the first stimulus he needs. When parent shares a child’s interests, that in itself gives him a sense of achievement and confidence.

Music

Creativity can find expression in innumerable forms. I’ve chosen music in particular-because music seems to surround us. Everywhere –on the radio, the T.V, at restaurants...at home. At the press of a button you have music. Then, why learn to play?

WHY LEARN TO PLAY?

Firstly, learning an instrument provides a child an excitement and a hobby which bring life-long pleasure.

Secondly, his own ability to play helps him understand and enjoy music.

Those who have never learned an instrument may find it difficult to appreciate how much the ability to play contributes to the enjoyment of music in general.

It may be the school music teacher who first spots your child’s talent. Usually, by the age of 8-10 ears, a child will start taking music seriously. Then, it’s up to parents to egg him on.

“Parents with a musical ground give their children a definite advantage”, says Vishwas Vergese, who teaches the piano. “They have music in them and learning comes more naturally.” Don’t, however, expect you children to share your likes and dislikes in music. Their horizons are much wider, and their influences too are different from yours.

CHOOSING AN INSTRUMENT

Many people like to pretend there is a special mystique about music, and that it requires some special ability to play an instrument. Anybody can learn an instrument and play fairly proficiently with practice and guidance. Reaching higher levels of excellence requires a special talent.

When a child picks up an instrument, the first thing to check is that it is comfortable for him to hold. Higher pitched instruments are generally smaller and easier for the younger child to handle. A lazy child will not enjoy the hard work of struggling with a stringed instrument. He, would probably prefer the single note instruments like the flute, where you can get a tune out of it in a few weeks. For the persevering child, choose the keyboard or a stringed instrument. A high spirited, energetic child would be happiest on the brass instruments. You can often rely on a child's own intuition: if he strongly wants to play an instrument, he'll probably make best progress on it.

HOW IT BEGAN

Music has been a means of expressing all basic, human emotions from prehistoric times. To express his joy, early man would jump and dance and shout. He needed some accompaniment –he clapped his hands and stamped the earth and beat a drum: the oldest instrument to produce sound. Then came the wind instruments-simple whistles of bone, wood, clay, and later the reed pipe. These progressed to the flute which dates back to the Egyptians, 6,000 years ago.

DON'T GO OVER-BOARD

Different children will choose different means of expressing their creativity. The hobby a child picks will often be influenced by his own parents' hobbies-that's what he's often the most exposed to. While we have stressed on parental encouragement, don't go overboard. Talent often becomes the golden goose. We chase after it, driving our children to achieve our own unfulfilled ambitions, or to get added status and recognition. Over-drive, can kill the joy of a favourite occupation.

Whatever form creativity takes, help your child enjoy it. You've then given him something precious-a lifetime's gift of pleasure.