

Supporting your child with creative arts

Dr Rachael Jacobs



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Creative arts during lockdown

There are many things that are going to keep us alive in these tumultuous times, including physical health, science and our knowledge of disease prevention, and of course, connection to those around us. But the arts will keep us fully alive. Throughout the pandemic the world has turned to the arts for comfort, hope, solidarity and humour. Books, movies and stories have provided us with escape and entertainment. Music, poetry and artworks have helped express us express feelings that words cannot describe. It is now clear that the world needs the arts to survive. So too, the arts can help young people survive the confines of learning at home. Arts activities can provide much needed time away from screens, as well as an opportunity to think creatively and solve problems independently. Plus, the arts can keep one occupied for hours!

Tips to encourage creativity

Fast facts

- The Arts form part of the curriculum in Australia, and include Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts and (in all states and territories except NSW) Media Arts
- Research suggests that just two hours of arts activity every week improves mental health and overall well-being
- A study of students who engaged consistently in the arts found they out-performed their peers in reading, language and maths development
- The arts develop skills that employers value, such as creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, executive function and emotional intelligence

What can we do during lockdown?

You don't need expensive equipment, like an instrument, easel or tap shoes to encourage a little creativity. The arts are children's natural language – children naturally play pretend, sing, move, dance, draw and create. During lockdown they can return to these natural languages through play and discovery.

Encouraging playfulness

The pressure of schooling at home, sharing space with family, missing friends...it's a lot for young people. Some of the best stress relievers can be returning to playfulness, which will switch on their creativity, help them take risks, think more freely and become independent. Some simple activities for encouraging playfulness include:

Goggle eyes: Buy or make eyes and encourage them to move around the house putting eyes on things to create a face. This will also entertain the family as you discover them throughout lockdown

Noticing walk: Deep noticing is critical to creativity. On your daily walk tell your child to take photos of 5 things that correspond with a theme. For example, 5 purple things, 5 wavy lines, 5 examples of repetition, 5 interesting signs etc.

Anything but a scarf: Scrunch or fold a scarf to make as many different objects as possible e.g. toothbrush, puppy, surfboard. Children can perform the objects to someone else and see if the other person can guess the object



Time to create

It sounds crazy, but the lockdown boredom can open a door to creativity. That's because boredom gives children motivation to find their own imaginative solutions to the tedium. Creative play is valuable for children, particularly if they can create another world.

Create a world: Younger children can re-create shops, zoos or castles or fantasy worlds. Older students can re-create the myriad of places we're unable to visit right now, such as galleries, fashion shows or archaeological digs. Get involved and interact if they invite you to visit their site.

Recycled costumes: Using the safe items from your recycling, your child can create clothing items for themselves and the family for a fashion parade.

Story time: Recently I heard a child say they'd never written anything that was not for school. Creative writing is a fantastic skill that combines literacy with imagination, fostering a love of writing. It's hard to be creative about nothing, so providing enabling constraints are important to help generate new ideas. Pick three enabling constraints for the story out of a hat, for example a setting (real or imagined), an object and a superpower, and ask children to write, draw or tell a story that includes all three. Get involved by giving yourself and your child 15 minutes to write the story, then read them to each other to compare.

Art for others

Some of the most rewarding activities can be creating art for others. There's currently a beautiful trend of painting rocks with bright colours or messages of hope for the community. Young people can create cards for people they miss or neighbours in need. They can learn a song or create a dance which they can record for a friend or family member to brighten their day.

Learn a new skill

For something that requires longer, sustained engagement, lockdown provides space to develop a new skill, such as playing an instrument, creating a puppet show or learning magic tricks. If your child has an interest in music, download a free piano app on a phone or tablet and easy some music so they can learn a simple song. Activities like performing a puppet or magic show, preparing a dance performance or playing a piece of music requires concentration, practice and finally performance in a given instance. Encourage your child to prepare, improve and practice until they're ready. And when they perform, encourage them not to start again if they make a mistake. The show must go on!



Keep in mind

- The arts can be enormously fun, but like anything rewarding, it can be challenging as well. Learning an instrument, finishing an artwork or story or mastering a dance requires children to push through difficult, often tedious moments. While giving up is easy, persevering is worth it.
- Art is messy, it can be noisy or full of uncertainty. Don't panic if your child doesn't know what they're creating to begin with. Imagination needs space to run wild.
- You're not alone. There's a whole world of arts out there, now specifically online to help us through the pandemic. Do a virtual gallery visit and ask your children which artworks they liked and why. Watch a 'Couch Concert', or visit the Opera House in the comfort of your own home.

Helpful links:

Creative activities from Polyglot
<https://www.polyglot.org.au/polyglot-at-home/>

Digital Opera House
<https://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/forthekids>

Online exhibitions from the NSW Art Gallery
<https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/>

Kids Couch Concert
<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/kidscouchconcert>

Creative activities (including activities in Auslan) from the Museum of Contemporary Art
<https://www.mca.com.au/learn/adults/creative-insights-approaches-art/>

Everyday creativity from VicHealth
<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/be-healthy/everyday-creativity-at-home-during-lockdown>

