

Understanding Creativity
Knowing it, loving it & trying it

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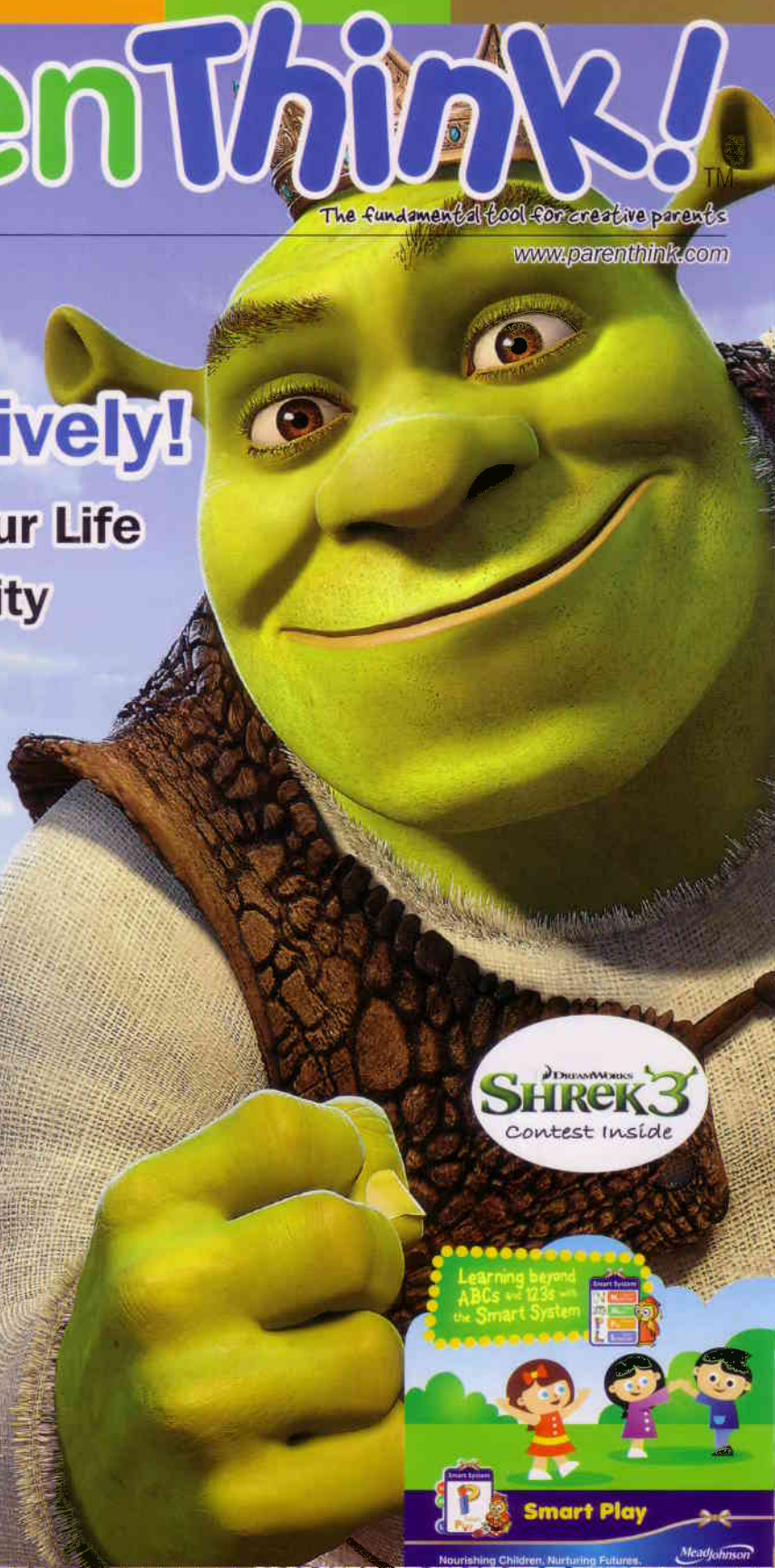
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Creativity includes the ability to create something new from nothing

Understanding CREATIVITY

What, Why and How?

Let's explore the meaning of creativity with Titus Yong.

What is Creativity?

Some say creativity is related to art, music or even doodling; others say creativity is about inventions. This is what creativity researchers say about creativity in children:

What Creativity ISN'T...

Creativity is not the same as intelligence or giftedness or talent, although they are related to some degree. High and even low levels of creativity can be found in highly intelligent children as well as those with average intelligence.

What Creativity IS...

What the child did or said can be considered creative if it is both:

1. **new** - it should be essentially different from what the child has seen, heard or done before, and
2. **useful** or **appropriate** - this is a more subjective criteria. The product (art, essay, song, etc.) or words are constructive and appropriate for the child's age - not just strange or unusual.

Creativity is also more than just a problem solving ability. Creativity includes the ability to create something new from nothing e.g. think of a useful idea or invention, compose a melodic song, write a captivating essay, or even discover a totally new way to cook!

Are there Different Types of Creativity?

Creativity can be classified into 2 types: big "C" Creativity and small "c" creativity.

The big “C” refers to the major discoveries or groundbreaking work e.g. Einstein’s theory of relativity, Picasso’s painting of Guernica, microfinance to the poor (Prof. Muhammad Yunus and his Grameen Bank in Bangladesh won the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for this socioeconomic innovation).

The small “c” is the everyday creativity that encompasses little improvements or inventiveness such as finding a new way to sell a product, or creating a new origami design. Everyday creativity can be nurtured at home through your living creatively by example and positive encouragement when your child displays acts of creativity.

Why is Creativity Becoming More Important?

This year is the 10th anniversary of the defeat of Man by Machine. In 1997, Garry Kasparov, the reigning world chess champion, lost to the IBM computer named “Deep Blue”. The computer triumphs over man in tasks that require memory power, processing speed and analytical ability – not surprisingly, these are the kinds of skills that are heavily tested in exams in most Asian schools. These skills are becoming more commoditized and the solution seems to be to invest in creativity, where humans still have the edge.

In the worldwide bestselling book “The World is Flat”, author Thomas Friedman notes that the world is getting increasingly globalised & digitally interconnected. China, India and Russia are entering the world economy and that brings along a few billion people to compete for jobs.

In the new “flat” world, passion and curiosity (I’d say that these are the typical traits of creative people) are becoming much more important for success compared to IQ. Hence the following equation:

$$CQ + PQ > IQ$$

CQ : Curiosity quotient

PQ : Passion quotient

IQ : Intelligence Quotient

“I have no special gift -
I am only passionately curious”

Albert Einstein



Individuals who engage in creative activities (that they are skilled & interested in) are more successful in their careers, happier and more fulfilled in their lives



Your child should grow up to enjoy his/her work and derive meaning from his/her career

One of Friedman's prescriptions is that countries need to focus on "the right education to get more of (the) people innovating and collaborating". Governments and corporations in countries ranging from USA to Singapore and even China are putting the spotlight on creativity and innovation as the next source of competitive edge.

At the personal level, engaging in creative acts can be deeply satisfying. Individuals who engage in creative activities (that they are skilled & interested in) are more successful in their careers, happier and more fulfilled in their lives.

How Can You Foster Creativity in Your Child?

Here are my five recommendations:

1. Find the Creativity Intersection

The Creativity Intersection is the area where your child's talents and interests overlap. I believe that it is more beneficial to guide your child on the path to discover his/her talents and passion, than to prescribe your idea of a good profession.

Your child should grow up to enjoy his/her work and derive meaning from his/her career. I have seen many young graduates who feel miserable in well-paying or prestigious jobs (based on their parents' wishes) but that are incompatible with their talents and interests.

Make the following observations:

- What are the things that your child enjoys doing most?
- What is your child really good at? In what areas or activities does your child show creativity? Using the Multiple Intelligences framework, which of the following intelligences does your child display?
 - linguistic (words and grammar)
 - logical-mathematical
 - musical
 - spatial (involves visualization and navigation)
 - bodily-kinesthetic (useful in sports and performing arts)
 - intrapersonal (knowledge of self)
 - interpersonal (relating to other people)
 - naturalistic (relating to nature – flora or fauna or the environment)
- How has your child surprised you?