

## Nurturing Creativity (How I Learned to Shut Up)



(<http://www.janetlansbury.com/2010/04/a-childs-creativity-how-i-learned-to-shut-up/>)

Years ago, my two-and-a-half-year-old daughter was coloring Easter eggs. She had dipped an egg into the purple-dye cup and was about to blend it with yellow dye, when I stopped her. “You might not like the way those colors will look together,” I warned. Spirited girl that she’s always

**been, she overruled me and proceeded to mix colors that I was certain would combine to look like a putrid shade of late sixties shag rug.**

To my amazement, her finished egg was indescribably beautiful. The luminous green-brown hue was unlike any I'd ever seen – glorious – beyond classification by any Benjamin Moore chart. And (to think!) my pedestrian Easter egg vision could have easily discouraged its existence.

The question –which came first, the chicken or the egg? – will always be a puzzle. But I feel certain that if the 'egg' represents a child's creative endeavors, a parent's trust must precede the egg. **Trust in a child's instincts is the key to encouraging free access to her creative power.**

Creativity is in all of us. It cannot be taught. It doesn't come in a craft kit, a toddler dance class, or in a parent's slew of brilliant ideas. Creative sparks happen, seemingly out of nowhere sometimes, and often when we least expect them. They flow freer when undirected, certainly when un-judged.

Creative ideas come to me after a few minutes of running when my mind can wander. Sometimes they come to me in the shower, or in the semi-dream state I bask in when I first wake up before self-judgment has the opportunity to barge in with rights, wrongs, and self-doubt.

When we are babies, the **lines of connectivity to our creative power are clear.** We encourage our children to keep those lines open by being patient, accepting, providing lots of open-ended time for free play and choice, and most importantly, refraining from directing, judging either positively or negatively (both are perceived as judgment by a child) or otherwise interfering with our well-intentioned help.

Early Childhood educator and popular lecturer Bev Bos (<http://www.bevbos.com/blog/>) urged adults, "Never draw for a child." Her advice extends to include painting, sculpting, crafting, block tower and sand castle building, story creating, or anything artistic or creative. **When we show a child how to do those things, we intend to encourage creativity, but we interfere with it instead,** by demonstrating for our child the 'right' way. We create doubt for our child in her abilities, and encourage our child's dependency on others to affirm for her what is 'right', or good. The artistic genius of a budding Picasso will persevere and overcome our influence, but we don't want to discourage *any* child from experimentation and the therapeutic benefits of the wide variety of creative outlets at her disposal.

Creativity comes to us naturally, but it takes courage to follow our intuition and express it. Whenever I write and post something new, it feels like a leap from an airplane. **Creative courage is shining a light in the darkness of boredom by dreaming up a new activity, or daring to fill blank space with our words or images.** It is drawing a picture of a girl in bed "dreaming she is riding an elephant," as a 3 year-old I know did, even if no one else understood it (but if you looked closely, it was all there).

Einstein once said, “I believe in intuition and inspiration.... At times I feel certain I am right while not knowing the reason.” Children are born with that conviction, but they are easily swayed by our doubt in their judgment and abilities. We must be vigilantly aware of our children’s powerful instinct to please us if we want them to keep trusting that voice inside. Some of us have to learn to shut up (as I did) so our children can continue to listen.

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For more about respecting and nurturing our children’s creativity, please read *Blue Sky Thinking*, (<http://dev.janetlansbury.com/2009/10/blue-sky-thinking/>) *Creative Spirits* (<http://dev.janetlansbury.com/2009/10/creative-spirits/>), and my compilation, *Elevating Child Care: A Guide to Respectful Parenting* ([http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1499103670/ref=as\\_li\\_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1499103670&linkCode=as2&tag=janetlansbury-20&linkId=3J74CAIVMXU6RH33](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1499103670/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1499103670&linkCode=as2&tag=janetlansbury-20&linkId=3J74CAIVMXU6RH33)).

Photo entitled “To the moon and back” by *Frolic!*  
(<http://www.flickr.com/photos/frolicphotography/>) (My egg girl)

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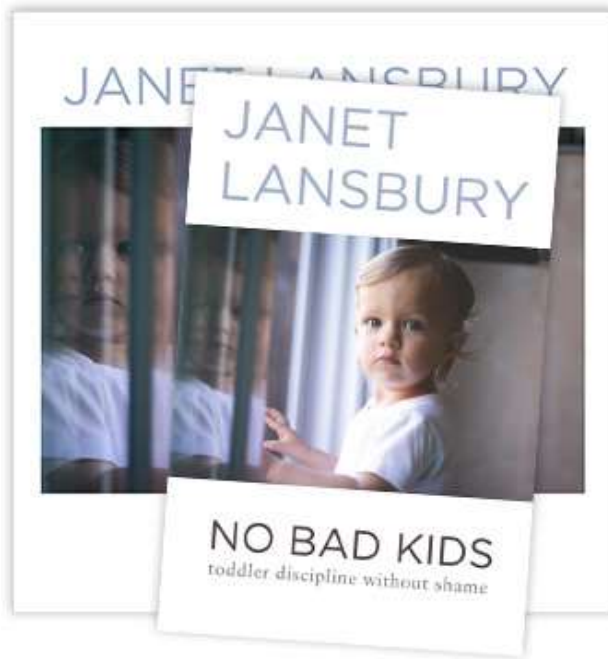
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