

Your Child's Creative Spirit

by Lori Miller Kase

Why You Need to Spark It...and How Not to Stifle It

Since creativity is key to a person's ability to solve problems, it's a shame that a child's natural creative spirit is so often stifled by the most well-meaning adults: parents and teachers. Here's how to recognize the spark in your child (hint: don't look for just painting and poetry) and nurture it from infancy on.

at a recent family party, my 3-year-old nephew, Adam, did something that was both funny and fascinating. As we adults devoured a chocolate birthday torte—and the toddlers among us tackled more manageable cupcakes—Adam methodically took the candles out of the cake and plugged them into the sides of his cupcake. “Look,” he commanded triumphantly, holding up his creation. “Spiderman!”

On the surface, Adam's tinkering may have seemed like ordinary food play. But on a deeper level, Adam was making an imaginative leap, transforming what was in front of him into something else. “A creative child is capable of producing some product or outcome that originates within his or her imagination, rather than from following other people's directives,” says Michael Schulman, Ph.D., New York City-based author of *The Passionate Mind: Bring-*

ing Up an Intelligent and Creative Child. “The creative child also strives to express things in new ways—with guiding vision.”

Like most kids, Adam is smart and charming, but no prodigy—he isn't composing piano concertos or painting artistic masterpieces as a toddler. Still, his creative tendencies are becoming increasingly evident. A pint-size impresario, Adam not only assumes various roles throughout the day, mimicking his father's voice one moment or gesturing like Captain Hook the next, but also assigns characters to anyone else who happens to be in the room, enlisting them in his dramatic scenarios. According to Dr. Schulman, Adam can visualize that some interesting theatrical event will transpire if he puts people in fitting roles.

By now, you're probably thinking, “Adam sounds just like my kid,” and that's exactly right. All chil- (Continued on page 131)