

Creativity from the outset

6 ideas for parents and other
adults who like spending time
with young children.



lapurla

Children are guided by their curiosity

Creativity is the word on everyone's lips. And it's hardly surprising given that it's considered to be a key skill for the future. Lapurla shows how easy it is to be creative even with very small children.

Our children in the world of tomorrow

What will the world look like when our children are grown up? The ways in which they shop, cook and work will surely be predominantly based online. Their work will be more challenging because smart machines will take over the routine tasks. Adults in the future will probably live in densely packed cities and in living formats we haven't yet encountered. The new cities will be breeding grounds for innovation, with the main focus on technical advancements that will help to create a new, resource-conserving relationship to the environment. Our society will probably be more diverse in the light of demographic developments. Will this lead to polarising tendencies? Hopefully not! Finding ways to live together on the basis of democratic principles will be key to creating a resilient society – on the ground, together with others. This goal is also pursued by the Migros Culture Percentage. This strengthens social cohesion, facilitates dialogues and promotes togetherness.

Our children will break and create new ground. The more creatively and openly they are allowed to learn about their everyday lives today with our support, the more self-efficiently they will be able to shape their living environment tomorrow. Their inherent curiosity is the starting point for this journey.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Schnelle".

Dr. Jessica Schnelle

Co-initiator, Project Leader
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Cooperatives

Lifelong curiosity

For children the world is brand new. To get along in and with the world, it needs to be discovered. Childhood curiosity is therefore essential. We adults, however, can sometimes find it unnecessary or cumbersome when young children feel the need to explore and test out – using all of their senses – everything they can get their hands on. But it's precisely this urge to discover that forms the basis of creativity: the courage to open yourself up to the unknown without inhibition, the power to take failed attempts on the chin and try things again and in different ways. The process is more important than the product. Being creative as adults means trying things in a new or different way to how you would normally approach them. Children need creative adults who are prepared to question the things we are familiar with and open themselves up to unfamiliar experiences. And adults need children who can show them how to do it.

We at Bern University of the Arts HKB attach immense importance to this attitude in terms of sustainable arts and cultural education and the social responsibility that goes with it.

This booklet aims to encourage readers to embark on everyday journeys of discovery together. The following six ideas show that creativity is not a piece of art, but an exciting tightrope walk. Stay curious. And you might be surprised!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Kraus".

Karin Kraus

Co-initiator, Bern University of the Arts, HKB, CAS Study Programme Director and Lecturer, "Cultural education: facilitating creativity from early childhood"

Children are curious. That's how they explore and learn about the world, right from the outset. To do this they need us to open doors and marvel at things with them. Easier said than done? These six ideas may be helpful.

"But how?"

Creativity is easy to say. But what exactly do we mean by it when referring to the day-to-day lives of children aged 0 to 4? Here are a few examples of trying things out and developing.

"Yes, but!"

Creativity is wonderful, desirable and important. But for us adults it always seems to get in the way. Six "Yes, but!" examples as possible stumbling blocks and suitable walking aids on the path through day-to-day life with small children who are steadfast in their pursuit of curiosity.

6 ideas for parents and other adults who like spending time with young children.

 Ideas

In the here and now	8-9
Fewer plans, more time	10-11
Searching, collecting and changing	14-15
Less instruction, more companionship	16-17
Neither right nor wrong	18-19
Short journeys for short legs	20-21



In the here and now

Idea

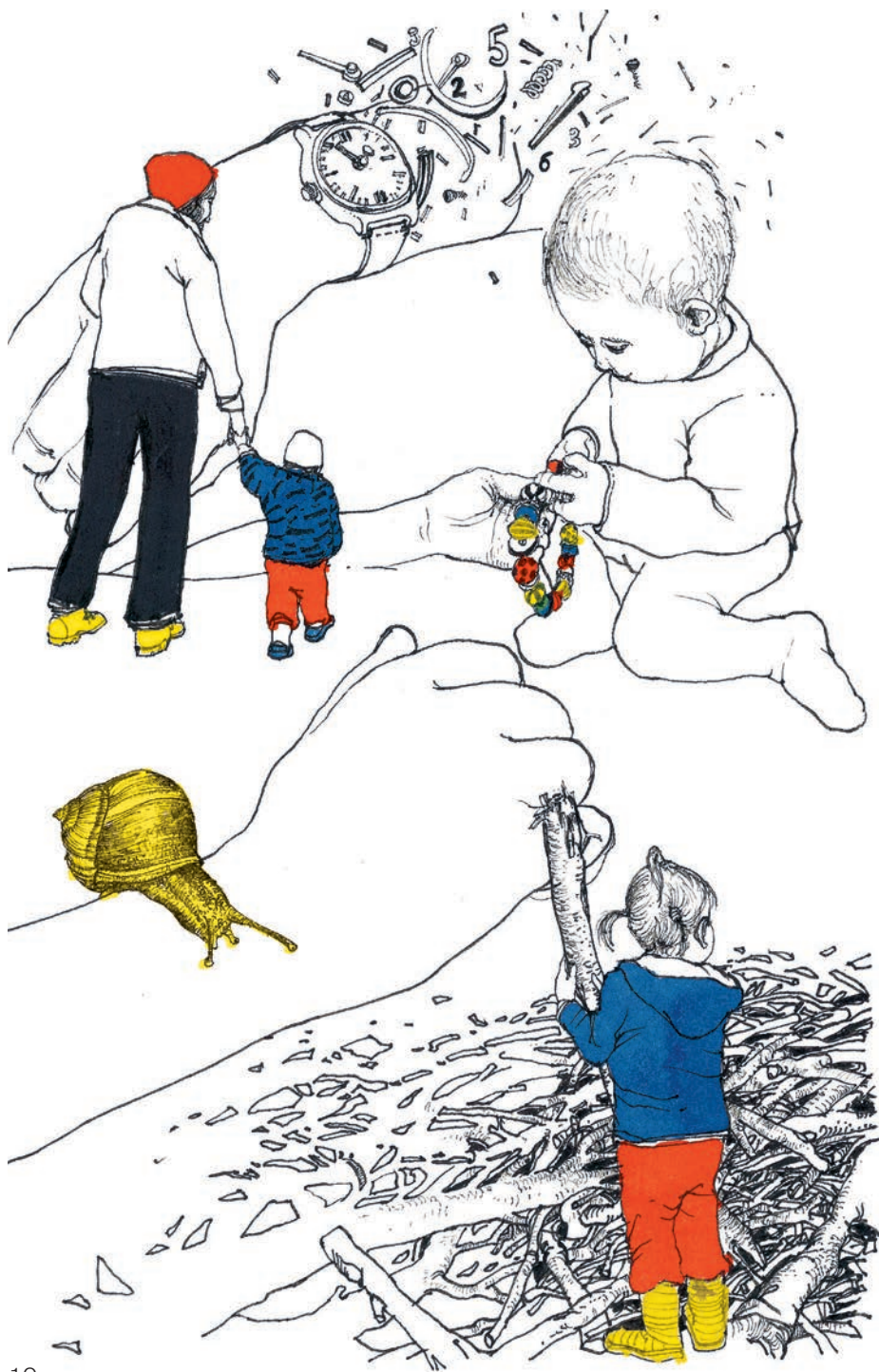
Being creative with young children means not knowing where it will lead you. It means being curious, being amazed and allowing yourself to be surprised by the unexpected. Small children do not initially create any specific products. Instead they examine things in a playful way using all their senses. Lots of playing means lots of learning.

“But how?”

Children find kneading, splashing about, covering themselves in water, sand, earth, clay or dough extremely interesting and highly enjoyable. Even mounds of gravel or puddles of rain are fascinating starting points for all kinds of discoveries and experiments. When playing, things constantly turn into new things. Nothing stays how it is.

“Yes, but!”

We adults are familiar with the rule: In for a penny, in for a pound. Seeing something through in an orderly fashion is part and parcel of our lives. For our little ones things are different: for them, they are “finished” when it’s no longer exciting. This can happen quickly and is usually irritating. From our perspective, the picture still looks unfinished because not everything has been coloured in. Where is the sun in the sky? And the face is missing a nose! Frustration threatens to come to the surface – for both parties! It helps to keep in mind that nothing goes according to plan when children are being creative. Being creative means trying things out, casting things in a new light, throwing things away, failing and starting again and again. Recognising and tolerating this difference can be very challenging for us adults, who are used to things being done a certain way.



Fewer plans, more time

Idea

Unplanned time is the launch pad to more creativity. Having fewer plans leaves more free time for unplanned activities. Getting out and about with the young children of the world in the here and now will do them as well as you a lot of good. These moments often lead to wonderful surprises.

“But how?”

You don't need a lot to stimulate creativity. Children can use a torch to discover things and their surroundings: kitchen cupboards, cellars, dust bunnies underneath the bed or the pages of a picture book. It's nice when they have company while doing and experience adults' interest. Even cardboard boxes can be enough animation to create your own world.

“Yes, but!”

We usually have a lot of things to juggle. Our days are packed with precise schedules. First it's a trip to the paediatrician and then the washing machine is being repaired, followed by two important calls. And that's just the morning! None of this matters to our little ones. They don't yet have a sense of time. They have no idea how long five minutes are. With sheer delight etched on her face, the three-year-old jumps in a puddle on the way to the doctor's. Her trousers become wet and dirty. The parent is nearing the end of his tether, time is running out! Our children are guided by their curiosity. We adults stick to our plan. This often causes stress. Sometimes courage helps in braving the gap; a yes helps us to slow down. There will be days when the children lead the way to “less is more” – and the unpredictable and unplannable will benefit as a result. And there are other days when everything that needs to be done needs to be groundbreaking.

"I had just painstakingly bound together the cardboard waste. While I left the room my sons used it to make a river landscape. My eldest built bridges and the baby "swam" underneath. At first I was annoyed, but then I saw their beaming faces."

Andrea Kammerer

41, Head of Early Learning, Zurich, three children

"As a grandfather I have a lot of time. Sometimes I spend a couple of days in our mountain cabin with the kids. There are no toys to play with there, but we never get bored. The small brook that runs alongside the house, together with pebbles, fir cones and branches, is great for all kinds of fun and games. Recently, we decided to build a cage for frogs, which kept us entertained all afternoon long."

Peter Bertschi

66, Journalist, Basel, seven grandchildren

"Before my nieces slept over at my house for the first time, I went out and got a couple of toys. What a waste! My nieces showed me that sofa cushions are great for building dens, wine corks can double up as characters or building blocks, and the combination of pen and envelope is a wonderful way of drawing."

Sibylle Sutter

33, Project Manager, Zurich, seven nieces and nephews

“My three-year-old son only truly became excited about his handicraft set when he had the idea of using the mosaic tiles to cover his own body. He was so engrossed in his exploring and left fascinating patterns on his skin.”

Carolina Liebling

48, Museum Director, Lausanne, two children

“At our daughter’s birthday party we made a photo frame with the children using handicrafts. Our daughter was the only one who didn’t make a frame. Instead she got a stick and wound lots of colourful thread around it, and told us how we could attach a picture to it. That’s her to a tee. She happily listens to ideas but usually does her own thing.”

Flavio Gerber

34, Film Producer, Zurich, three children

“I was visiting friends. The whole family was sitting with us around the table. The younger daughter was doodling, three lines on an A4 sheet of paper. Clearly proud of her achievement, she showed me the sheet. “What is it?” I asked. She took another look at it herself and mused, “Maybe a ship?”

Myke Naef

47, Entrepreneur, Zurich, four godchildren

“Early development is good, but can’t you sometimes have too much of a good thing?”

Hana Spada

37, Marketing Expert, Basel, two children



Searching, collecting and changing

Idea

You don't need expensive handicraft material or instructions. There are materials you can collect and experiment with all around you: twine, cartons, lids, fabric remnants and much more. It could be exciting to ask: What does everything feel like? What crackles? What rolls? What can be stacked? By collecting lots of materials, you can carry out a variety of experiments and explore the materials with your senses. And it won't cost you a penny!

"But how?"

Small children like collecting things about their lives: each little piece of paper, small stone or stick can become a piece of treasure. How does it sound when lots of pickle jar lids fall onto a stone floor, carpet, stairs or parquet floor? Is it a funny noise or could it be music? Alternatively, tear up, scrunch up and shred waste paper. Then you could sort the pieces by shape and colour. This is a playful way to train dexterity as well as help them to get a basic understanding of mathematics and physics. Great idea!

"Yes, but!"

A box with odds and ends, a string collection, metal caps in all colours and sizes and other mishmashes in great quantities can help to promote the creativity of our munchkins. But does this mean that our desire for "stylish living" is taboo? Do we not also have the right to be able to relax from the demands of everyday life in our own four walls? Don't things also need to be in their right place? What should we do when our children's bedrooms and other rooms are flooded with "treasures" and their own creations? Perhaps it could be helpful to hold small farewell rituals to say goodbye to old things to make place for a new creation? In addition, tidying, sorting and throwing away are all activities that greatly promote creativity – and a game that is good for everyone.



Less instruction, more companionship



Idea

Children are guided by their curiosity. Having someone accompany them while on this journey is a great pleasure. Being curious together and finding answers to questions together is fun. Leading and following can be a fun game, first you, then me, sometimes at the same time. Learning from and with each other. Rediscovering the world through a child's eyes is an enriching experience. Being allowed to do things how you would like promotes courage and strength of mind.



"But how?"

What would you say to a change of role? Instead of racking your brains over which exhibition (e.g. in a museum) your child might like, simply follow their urge to discover. Here, the automatic entrance doors, cloakroom boxes, cracks in the walls in the stairway and illuminated fire alarm buttons can be just as fascinating and exciting as the actual artwork!



"Yes, but!"

Everything is interesting for young children. After all, they are newbies on the planet. They cannot yet differentiate between "important" and "unimportant", or between "art" and "non-art". They follow their curiosity, always and everywhere. Yes, but why should we go to a theatre, concert or museum if our busybodies are not primarily interested in the thing being shown there?

It helps us to be safe in the knowledge that actually they are very fascinated by these new spaces, just in a different way than expected. Young children's ways of adapting to the world can re-open new perspectives for us. And our kids love it when we adults, who are already familiar with the world, open ourselves up to the things that are fascinating to children's eyes and hands. The more often the better. The day will come when our children realise why these cultural spaces are so significant.



Neither right nor wrong

Idea

When children pursue their curiosity, they don't need any praise. Having the adults interested in their experiments and discoveries is much more valuable to them. Participation equals appreciation. If you want to do something nice for your child, enjoy the things they are fascinated by, and relieve yourself from the stress of having to create something demonstrable.

"But how?"

When you are small and curious, a pen can be a good instrument for lots of things, not just drawing. You can use it to make holes in paper, you can tap things with it and you can pretend it's a syringe and you're giving someone an injection. Children are masters and experts at discovering ways of using things for different purposes than intended.

"Yes, but!"

Our little ones use their magical imaginations to lead the way. Everything appears as they imagine it. Being allowed to show things in the way they appear in their own imagination is called freedom of expression. A bird can have six legs. A man can have three teeth on his head. When this happens, we adults are quick to correct them in a well-meaning way, because there are definitely not six legs on a bird and teeth belong in the mouth! But, rather than correcting, it's better to ask: Why does your bird need so many legs? What happened to the man to make his teeth go out of his mouth and onto his head? Our little ones often have convincing reasons for doing these things that we find so visually irritating. And on other occasions, observations in books and outside in nature can help them to imagine things differently and thus create different pictures.



Short journeys for short legs



Idea

Stimulating places are usually nearby: forests and seashores, museums and workshops, concerts and theatre shows, attics and courtyards, fallows and screes. There is lots to discover and explore all around us. By opening yourself up to these spaces and viewing things through the eyes of small children, you will discover new worlds and give your child a source of inspiration and creativity.



“But how?”

You've hardly stepped out of the house or made headway because there's so many exciting things to discover and watch. Who hasn't encountered this? Perhaps there's a snail on the pavement, or a leaf that has just fallen from a tree. Or maybe there's a plane up above disappearing into the clouds, or a dog barking nearby. Processing all of these impressions requires a lot of energy. For children everything is new and exciting, and that's why the journey also forms part of the destination.



“Yes, but!”

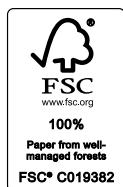
Travelling by car or public transport, as nice as this could be, can often be endless and tiring for children. When you've finally reached your destination, they are tired and anything other than willing to discover new and unusual things. Instead they become grouchy or they refuse to do anything. This is really annoying for us adults! We were so looking forward to this change of scene. We don't always want to stay at home just because of the children! A bit of variety is good for you. A typical predicament. The things that we want to do often cause unnecessary stress for our young ones. What might help is having prudent conversations about these questions: Is going further really better? When is less more? When does less stay less? And when do we start leaving the children with other adults we trust for our own account? What can wait? And what can't? What can we expect of our children and what can we expect of ourselves? Question after question. The answers will point the way.

And now?

Lapurla wishes us “bon voyage” with lots of discoveries, some tight-rope walks, changes in plans time and again and daily surprises – and hopes that we are generous to ourselves and our children. The journey is the destination!

About us

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▶ Short films

For even more inspiration visit: lapurla.ch/impulse



“Lapurla – children are guided by their curiosity” is a national initiative of the Migros Culture Percentage and Bern University of the Arts HKB, focused on little ones. It has two key goals. Children from 0 to 4 should also be welcome at all culturally significant places, and Lapurla is committed to enabling the creative power of the newbies in this world to be recognised and facilitated. After all, they will shape the world of tomorrow.

A joint initiative by:

MIGROS
culture percentage

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