

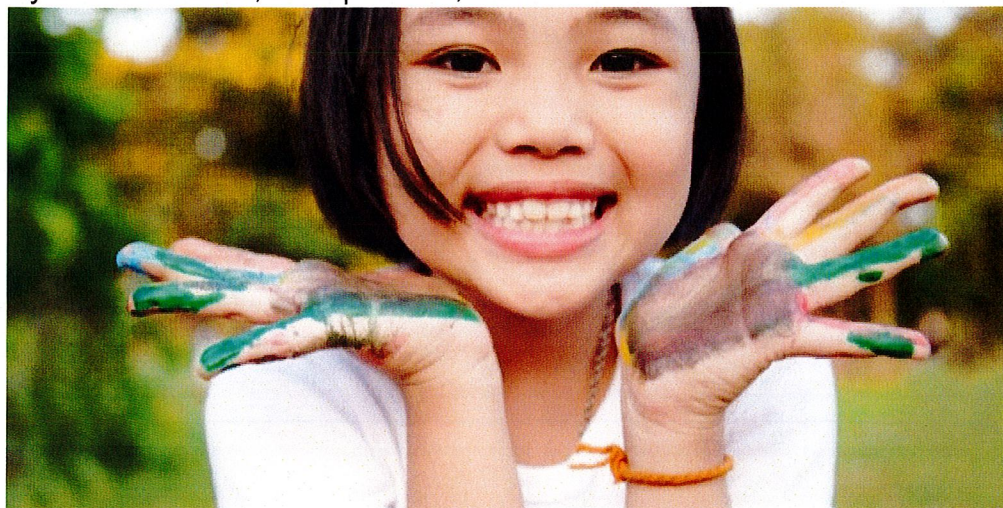
# Can Creativity Help Kids Get Through Challenge?

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## Can Creativity Help Kids Get Through Challenge?

By Joanne Foster, EdD | Jan 23, 2017



### Synopsis

Creativity is a surprising source of strength. It can empower people to become more resilient, confident, and productive. Here's why and how to encourage kids to use creativity during times of challenge.

In a recent video

collaboration with Disney, researcher and creativity expert Scott Barry Kaufman said, "*Creativity is something we carry with us everywhere we go.*" It's exciting to know that it's always available if we want or need to use it. Almost like a superpower!

How can kids effectively tap the creative energy they carry with them?

It involves learning how to embrace it, extend it, and feel motivated and empowered by it. It also involves recognizing that creativity is something that people choose to engage in—and thereby allow to flourish—and this requires, time, effort, and an imaginative spirit.

If creativity is always with us and at the ready, why is it that we don't often think to use it during difficult times? When situations are challenging, creative energy can be a great source of strength. For example, building on knowledge in new ways, and taking an innovative approach to problem solving, can lead to positive outcomes and resolutions, and a greater sense of purpose.

Three **R** words can provide a template for motoring through adversity—**Resilience**, **Resourcefulness**, and **Reflection**. Creativity can fuel that effort, and make the journey more enjoyable, too. To that end, here are a few short questions that kids can ask themselves when things become difficult, followed by a trio of suggestions for parents.

### Questions for Children and Teens to Ponder

Kids can hit roadblocks during the course of any given day as they juggle tasks and demands at school, extracurricular activities, responsibilities at home, and schedules full of commitments with family and friends. Moreover, children and adolescents often experience transitions, such as emotional ups and downs, developmental changes, or new social circles or school programs. Upheaval and challenges may be big or little, expected or unexpected, sudden or prolonged...



The following points and questions offer guidelines for kids—like a roadmap that they can use to navigate difficult terrain, and get creative in the process.

**1. Knowledge: What do I already know that can help me overcome challenge?** This is an important consideration and, in fact, a first step because knowledge is a basis for learning, for developing new ideas, and for forward motion. It's also a springboard for creative activity. Knowing what you already know offers a foundation from which to build.

**2. Application: How can I use what I know and apply it during times of challenge?** Actually, it not just a matter of *applying* the knowledge, it's a matter of thinking about it carefully, and figuring out how it relates to the problem(s) at hand. This is a kind of like hitting a tricky target with a knowledge-laden arrow. In effect, it's applying knowledge in context, and doing so thoughtfully and accurately.

**3. Creativity: How can I use what I know and apply it creatively?** It's good to be thoughtful and accurate, but creativity provides a potentially exciting way to use knowledge and stretch the mind in new directions. By taking different approaches, fresh perspectives, and uncharted pathways, children can discover unforeseen solutions and enriching experiences.

**4. Attitude: How can I use what I know to help me improve my attitude when I encounter challenging situations?** There's a saying that's very apropos (although unfortunately I don't know to whom it is attributed), and it goes like this: "Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it." Attitude, by definition, has to do with personal view. It's an individual's own spin on challenging what occurs, including challenging challenge itself. When things get tough, kids may be bold, arrogant, defiant, tentative, collaborative, secretive, or respond in countless other ways. So why not be creative? Why not take knowledge and expand upon it? Be curious and ask questions, become a maverick and find and choose resources that will enable discovery, be amenable to opening to windows of opportunity. Attitude is a game changer in the creativity arena—and it can make a big difference when it comes to productivity and resilience, too.

## Suggestions for Parents

Given all of this, here are three tips for parents who want to help their kids harness creativity during challenging times.

**1.** Children's perception of **magnitude** and **manageability**—that is, the extent and complexity of expectations and situations—can affect how they'll respond, if and when they'll tackle something, and whether they'll put imagination and creativity into their efforts. Help kids understand what a particular experience or challenge entails, and appreciate that they already have some knowledge so they can get started. Plus, encourage them to remember that they always "carry" creativity with them. And, they can adopt a positive attitude! Let them know, too, that you're available to assist with finding resources, and by talking with them about their concerns.

**2. Consistency** and **routines** matter. Children function best when there's stability and guidance, especially during challenge or times of transition. Sometimes behaviors or routines that have been in place get "rocked" or changed, and this can be hard for kids to manage. Help them get back into a pattern or routine wherein they feel comfortable, and where pressure is minimized. They will feel more inclined to move forward and to use their creative energy.



3. A state of **quiet** and **stillness** can be beneficial, and become a wellspring for motivation and creativity. It's important to recognize the importance of adequate time and a peaceful non-threatening place in order for creative juices to flow. Imagination can be sparked at any moment but many kids find it helpful to have a chance to reflect, and to get away from the impactful busyness of their daily lives. This is especially true when challenges are making things even more complicated or taxing. Creativity develops incrementally, with the right kinds of learning opportunities and supports, and that includes having some solitude and still interludes in order to be able to recharge. Those quiet times enable kids to explore and to consolidate ideas, and create new ones, too.

## Conclusion

When children realize that they have knowledge and ideas for dealing with challenges, they'll feel more prepared, relaxed, and confident. Encourage them to reframe their thinking—from “difficulty” or “struggle,” to “adventure” or “creative opportunity”—to see the power of possibility, and the benefits of taking a creative approach to overcoming challenges.

I began with the words of Scott Barry Kaufman, and I conclude with them as well: “*Everyone is capable of creativity.*” Help kids use it to their advantage, and to embrace the experiential gains that will undoubtedly ensue.

## Additional Resources

For more information on topics related to this article visit [www.beyondintelligence.net](http://www.beyondintelligence.net) and see ***Not Now, Maybe Later: Helping Children Overcome Procrastination*** (by Joanne Foster), and ***Beyond Intelligence: Secrets for Raising Happily Productive Kids*** as well as ***Being Smart about Gifted Education*** (by Dona Matthews and Joanne Foster).

The Disney video with Scott Barry Kaufman is accessible [here](#).

Participate in or listen to the Senginar on helping children and teens use creativity through challenge (Jan. 26th, 2017). The **SENG** programs are available at <http://sengifted.org/programs/senginars/> or to register click [here](#).

See **EVENTS** section for more information about the webinar

For additional articles on topics about children and creativity (for example, what kills creativity in kids; whether procrastinators are creative; what productivity and creativity have in common; and ways to support children's intelligence and creativity), check out “Fostering Kids' Success” at *The Creativity Post*.

In ***Wired to Create: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Creative Mind*** Scott Barry Kaufman and Carolyn Gregoire discuss ten attributes and habits of highly creative people, including solitude, openness to experience, turning adversity into advantage, and thinking differently. Find out more about this book, and others [here](#).



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