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### BOOK CHAPTER

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## Creating space in the family for imagination and creativity

*Jeanne Magagna*

This chapter addresses the creation of a space in the family for creativity to flourish. The couple comes together for the ultimate creative act: the creation of another human life, a baby; however, throughout childhood and adult life, our creativity can be inhibited, with serious consequences. For this reason, I describe developing a secure psychological space within the family which acknowledges the value of spontaneous phantasy and supports imaginative activities for all family members. I think about how mothers, fathers, nurseries, and the children's subsequent teachers can all use this creative space to develop freedom: the freedom to use one's capacity for love and work to its fullest.

I address four issues: first, I look at how situations can arise that block a child from developing a creative internal space. I then turn to some solutions, seven different ways in which we can help children to develop their internal space for creativity and imagination. Third, I also give you the opportunity to reflect on what you can do to promote creative thinking, with the help of colourful "thinking hats". I end this chapter by reflecting on the difference that creativity can make in a child's life, and looking at some inspiring acts of creativity.

### *Impediments to developing an internal creative space*

In the beginning, a baby generally experiences sounds of the family, such as voices or the playing of music, and rhythms of the mother's body, such as her heartbeat or her breathing. These sensory experiences become the basis for the baby in the womb's earliest phantasies of pleasure and trauma. We now know, through the work of Mancina (1999), that the baby's rapid eye movements are suggestive of the baby dreaming inside the mother's womb. A mental space for phantasy has thus begun before birth.

If the birth process is not too traumatic, the baby greets the mother and father visually at birth, suckles at the nipple, and cuddles into the warmth of the mother's body. Feelings of

wellbeing promote taking in the parents' receptive warmth and love and introjecting secure, loving, internal parents. This secure, loving, internal base provides for the growth of a "house for imagination" to flourish. It is premature to speak of creativity without noting its essence: the use of imagination.

Winnicott (1960) describes how the parents provide a cocoon of receptivity to the baby's wishes and needs, so that the baby's basic genetic need for protective, nurturing parents is satisfied. Target and Fonagy (1996, p. 472) state,

The child's mental state must be represented sufficiently clearly and accurately for the child to recognize it, yet sufficiently playfully for the child not to be overwhelmed by its realness; in this way he can ultimately use the parent's representation of his internal reality as the seed of his own symbolic thought, his representation of his own representations.

Infancy, however, is not simply a delightful experience. Some of the most traumatic moments are when the infant is in distress and is initially fairly helpless to alleviate the stresses of separating from the mother: a hungry stomach, the wish for a social contact or physical holding. Some of the impediments to the use of imagination and creativity may develop when the baby has not yet sufficiently internalised a secure loving internal base, a house for the imagination, an internal space.

### *Adhesive identification*

Esther Bick, a British psychoanalyst, described how one can adhere to sensory experiences as a way of holding the self together psychologically when there is terror of *falling to pieces*. Bick (1968) states,

The need for a containing object would seem, in the infantile un-integrated state, to produce a frantic search for an object—a light, a voice, a smell, or other sensual object—which can hold the attention and thereby be experienced momentarily at least, as holding the parts of the personality together.

The "sticking" on to a sensory experience is a normally used psychological protection, in lieu of having either an internalised loving secure base or an external parent containing the baby's anxieties. "Sticking on to sensory experience" should ordinarily be replaced by the parental containment and internalisation of their capacities to love and bear anxieties.

Impediments to imaginative thinking are very obvious when one sees a baby

- banging the head repeatedly in the absence of the mother;
- rocking the self repetitiously;
- holding the body musculature in a stiff, terrified manner;
- engaging in non-stop movement.

In worst-case scenarios, the baby "spaces out" and leaves the external world completely. An example of this is given below, taken from Cooper and Magagna (2005, pp. 25–26).

Anna 5 months, and James 23 months

Anna is seated on mother's lap, facing outwards, having her bottle. She has both hands around the top of it while mother holds the end. James comes over with Anna's dummy . . . and pushes it into [her] mouth . . . until the bottle is forced out. In response, Anna whimpers and cries . . . Crying, James climbs into mother's lap . . . Milk . . . dribbles out of Anna's still mouth. [She remains] motionless, [staring] straight ahead into space. Mother . . . shows she has given up [feeding Anna] by putting the bottle down. Anna rocks herself in an autistic-like rhythm. . . . her eyes [are] still blank and unfocused . . .

This dissociation from the external world does not promote psychological development. Rather, it provides a lack of incentive to have the courage to face the developmental perils causing anxiety. If sticking to sensory experiences becomes a repetitious pattern, what we see is a child holding on to the same old repetitive rituals for dear life, as a protection against the uncertainty of exploration. For example, we might see a child fearing walking and letting go of the table, fearing letting go of the side of the swimming pool, fearing using his inner balance to ride a bike, fearing flying with his imagination beyond the sensory experience of the fuzzy bear, the hard truck, the bead on a string which he is twiddling. I was reminded of this watching two children play.

Day after day, Marco, aged five, uses a toy crocodile's big mouth to repetitiously bite a little lamb and little calf. He does not move into other activities apart from the biting. Eva, aged three, sits at the table playing with some beads on a necklace. She twirls them round and round and looks up only occasionally to see the other nursery children playing with one another.

As I was writing this chapter, I felt that making a list of household tasks, rather than facing a blank sheet of paper on which I would let my imagination fly beyond the concrete, was another form of what Esther Bick calls adhesive identification. I was adhering to concrete activities rather than going into the internal house for the imagination to soar. The anxiety of what I would find in my internal house of imagination was diminishing my courage to go into it and explore.

*Hatred of limits, of feeling rejected, creates the critical harsh voice*

One of the problems with setting limits and saying "no" to a child's wishes, when the child does not have a secure internal base, is that the child may easily perceive this as "Mummy doesn't love me", or "Daddy doesn't care about me". The child might feel, "Why would they say 'no' if they love me?" Feeling rejected by the parents leads the child to feel hostile. This hostility turns the rule-making part of the parents into a cruel figure filled with projections of hostility. Subsequently, this becomes the perfectionist, cruel voice criticising the self and, thus, inhibiting imagination and creativity. A child might then be heard to say:

- "Nothing I draw will ever be any good";
- "I can't write";

- "I have no musical talent";
- "I don't have a good sense of rhythm";
- "My work is rubbish".

This *critical voice* prevents the spring of life, of imaginative vitality, from arising and developing within the child. Listening to it keeps one safely secure in its prison-guard grip.

### *Institutional and social inhibition of creativity*

The inhibition of creativity is not limited to the individual within their family setting. Torrance (1963) researched the development of creativity in schools. What do you imagine that he discovered? In particular, he noted that these were some of the factors that interfered with creativity.

1. Premature attempts to eliminate fantasy activity.
2. Overemphasis on verbal skills prematurely in child's development.
3. Emphasis on destructive criticism of child's work.
4. Teachers' over-emphasis on conforming too closely to their proposed structure for learning.
5. Coercive pressure to conform.
6. Emphasis on immediate success, rather than on simply using one's capacities as best one can.

### *The influence of inhibitions*

Ultimately, the defences, rigidities, internalised critical voices, and external pressures that I have described lead to a cessation of development, or, in the worst-case scenario, the closure, of the internal creative space. Once the child is older, lack of creativity can appear in various ways. Here are some of the reasons for inhibiting one's imagination necessary for creative acts:

- fear of being out of control with feelings;
- lack of capacity to symbolise because for some reason one was unable to develop a mentalizing internal mother/father inside oneself;
- inhibition of aggression, or sadness because of the lack of a secure base for mentalization;
- lack of a secure attachment;
- lack of a strong sense of self in early years and fear of losing oneself in the phantasies;
- fear of going mad and losing the self completely;
- use of intellect or obsessional behaviour because one is afraid of letting concrete images of things break down inside and be transformed by imagination;
- fear of change, of transformation to something unfamiliar;
- emotional neglect, poverty, and maternal deprivation;
- lack of an internal house for imagination to soar;

- lack of access in the daytime to an internal house for imagination, which may be soaring in one's dreams, in one's unconscious.
- lack of opportunity if families and schools become have too many rigid structures, too many concrete tasks, too many facts to learn, too much input, and not enough meditative space created through "doing no specific task" and *imagining what to do* spontaneously in one's free time.

### *Seven solutions*

An important question is: "How do we help a child to move away from his rigid defences towards a creative, imaginative future?" There is a different path that one can take, although it might entail struggle. It involves enabling the child's resolution to feel "I will try to develop my capacities to perceive, to sense, to listen to inner experience, to symbolise, however limited my capacity, whatever my capacities are." This state of mind involves choosing an unexplored, uncertain, risk-taking path of development. It requires the courage to be open to outer experience and imagination.

We see in early infancy how the baby is naturally inquisitive and has the courage to explore as he searches around for the mother's body and father's voice Magagna (2002, p. 86) describes this:

[One-month-old] baby [Eric's] arm is wrapped close to his chest with his clenched fingers placed near his shoulder. His slightly bent legs stay still . . . He sucks energetically . . . [for] about seven minutes at the breast, [then he] extends his arm and gradually spreads his fingers like flower petals opening out. With his fingertips he gently moves along Mother's blouse . . . and begins sliding his hand along her breast in a very slow fashion. (Magagna, 2002, p. 86)

We are all born free to explore, to be curious, and to imagine. King (2011) tells us,

Open is a deeply soulful word . . . Openness, openheartedness, openhandedness are the richest nutrients we can grow our lives on. To be fully open, to experience world afresh to be open is to be fully human, to be receptive, to empathise, to love, to experience all the world's wonders, to experience that variety moment by moment as it comes. It is a challenge to remain open in a world doing its best to close you down. Being able to obtain openness makes living an adventure.

Too often, we delegate to teachers the entire task of helping the child use his imagination when, in fact, the family can also play an extremely significant role in fostering imagination while being together. Let us learn from some creative people how we can foster in family life the development of the internal house for imagination to soar. I will present seven different solutions in turn.

#### *The seven solutions*

##### *1. Using imaginative identification with other family members as well as with fairy tale and storybook characters*

All the family can listen to a fairy tale. They can then enact roles in the fairy tale and describe

how it feels in that role. This can be a fun activity for the whole family, not just for the children in school.

Children often spontaneously play as if they are the mother or the teacher. Family members can take turn taking roles in the family and saying what they would do in the role of the mother or father. Pretend games such as this may enable family members to imagine another reality in which their feelings and needs are communicated without the child having to be so explicit or verbal about what it is he feels.

Another creative activity is the "empty chair technique", in which a family member might sit on the chair and imagine what it might feel like to be Maria. This might be particularly helpful on a day when a child is refusing to eat, is sulking, or is unable to be come out from retreat and speak after a temper tantrum. The family might sit in a circle around the child and the parents might suggest that family members, including themselves, imagine how it might feel to be Maria today.

2. *Underlining the value of dreams, helping family members become familiar with capturing them in the morning, and discussing the dreams and the theme represented in them*

Drawing dreams, writing down dreams of the past, thinking of dreams for the future, and talking about dreams in the family can foster more connections with the root of phantasy: the unconscious processes. Perls and colleagues, in their book *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951, p. 27), say,

The dream is a message of yourself to yourself, to whatever part of you is listening. The dream is possibly the most spontaneous expression of the human being, a piece of art that we chisel out of our lives . . . Every aspect of the dream is part of the dreamer, but a part that to some extent is disowned and projected onto other objects.

Bion (Schneider, 2010) says that dreaming involves the pursuit of truth by means of thinking and feeling; the mind is enriched and developed though creating pictorial dramas of lived emotional experience and, thus, finding another opportunity to look at different ideas about, or solutions to, an emotional issue. Ways of eliciting discussion about dreams are:

1. We can encourage children's drawings and telling of their dreams as a way of beginning discussions about feelings which they do not have sufficient words to describe. Like the Senoi Tribe children, your children could be encouraged to assume that dreams could be a part of normal conversation about what happened "last night".
2. If there is a monster in the dream, such as a bear or burglar or bully, family members can discuss ways of using one's personal strength to find safety, to fight back, to own one's aggression rather than project it into the monster.
3. In telling a dream, there is a request to make something mentally creative out of elements of the dream. It is often a relief for a family member to simply write down a dream, draw a picture of the dream, or write a poem or story using the dream. The creativity of producing imagery connected to the dream allows the person to transform some underlying emotional experiences so that they become more bearable.

3. *Having openness to hear the heart and mind of oneself and others in the family and finding ways of spontaneously symbolically expressing those experiences*

"The Family Squiggle Wiggle Game" (Jongsman, Peterson, McInnes, & Berghuis, 2004, p. 47). Have the child pick a family member to draw a squiggly line on a sheet of paper. The child is then instructed to draw a picture out of the squiggly line and then tell a story about his or her picture. Family members and the child will then talk about the story and the characters in the child's story, how they are feeling, what they are doing. Once the discussion is completed, the child will then be asked to draw a squiggly line on another sheet of paper and pick a family member to create a picture out of his or her squiggly line and tell a story about it.

"The Imaginary Time Machine" (Selekman, 2000, p. 129). The child is given the following directive: "Let's say I have sitting over here an imaginary time machine and once you enter it, you can take it anywhere in time, in the past or into the future. Where would you go?" Follow up questions could include: "What would you see there? With whom would you meet and talk? What would you talk about? If you and the person from the past hopped into the time machine and came back to the present day, how would this person help you out today? What advice would he or she give you? How would he or she help out with your parents? What would you bring back from there to help you out today?"

There are other ways of dramatising the past and imagining the future. Sometimes, a toddler appreciates an opportunity to pretend he is a little baby again with the parents. This is particularly helpful around the time a new sibling is a few months old and the toddler is aware of how much the baby receives from the parents in terms of attention, cuddling, and feeding. A child sometimes spontaneously "becomes a baby" again. This is an opportunity to talk about that experience together, but maybe also a time to join your child in his "being a baby again" and parent as if the child was "a baby" briefly before going back to the child's present age and discovering what might be lovely about being his own age able to do certain things.

In talking with young people, I have discovered they, too, like to reminisce about "the time when they were babies" and have the parents talk about this time. They might also like to imagine themselves in ten years, in twenty years, in thirty years' time. "What would you do if you were the mother in our house?" "What would you do differently from us?" These dialogues can be an imaginative way of improving the quality of family relationships. Also, discussions of the future can involve more thinking about now.

"I would like to be a writer when I grow up," said one young person. When asked what she wanted to write about, she said her "illness", which was anorexia nervosa. I said, "Why wait till you grow up to do that?" Last year she published her book at age fifteen. Of course, you do not always have to wait to do things when you are grown up! Marion Milner's seven-year-old son had his storybook published (Milner, 2012) and the young children of Tempo Lineare had their drawings of fairy tales published (Pasquini, 2002). If you gain sufficient support at the age you are, many more things are possible than sometimes can be imagined.

The other commonly heard subject is, "I will do something creative for myself when the children are in secondary school", or "when they leave home"; however, does it have to be impossible to find an evening once a week for parents to do something now, either separately or together if a baby-sitter is available? Life is not solely for the children! They will be relieved and inspired if they see that their parents are also fulfilling their imaginative and creative potentials.

#### 4. *Creating special time for the children and for the parents*

It is simply unhelpful and stressful to children if the burden of developing imagination and creativity is all placed solely upon them, with people vicariously getting pleasure through their achievements. Rather, it is important for each of us to consider how we promote the development of teachers', parents', and professionals' imaginative thinking, as well as providing good opportunities for the children's imaginative and creative activities to develop. Here are some ways for adults to free their own creative forces.

##### 4(a). *Catching "butterfly sensations, feelings, and thoughts"*

For adults, I can recommend reading Milner's *On Not Being Able to Paint* (1950) and Cameron's *An Artist's Way* (1995). Milner suggests that we may cling to the raft of logical thinking (Brearley, 1998) in fear of rough seas of imagination. She stresses the need for constant oscillations between merging with the object through blurring of boundaries in order to create symbols and the more logical, differentiating, practical, common sense states. She believes children without a secure internal mother may desperately cling to thinking in a rational way for security.

Milner feels one can regain lost parts of the self through use of the imagination and symbolisation. In her book, *On Not Being Able to Paint* (1950), she describes how one has to sacrifice the old self one knows and plunge into an empty space from which one develops a trust that, out of the unconscious, something new and valuable can grow. She advocates a kind of introspection that involves observing fleeting thoughts which she calls "butterfly thoughts", for they leave the mind so quickly. Milner suggests that observing and noticing fleeting thoughts through drawings or writing and becoming more deeply aware of one's sensory experiences promotes both growth of the imagination and the self.

In a similar vein, Cameron suggests that we may have our own internalised perfectionist and eternal critic who keeps up a constant stream of subversive criticism which sounds like the truth (Cameron, 1995, p. 11). In order to unblock imaginative and creative processes, she suggests that a person write three morning pages by "moving the hand across the page and writing down whatever comes to mind". She says, "nothing is too petty, too silly, too stupid or too weird to be included" (Cameron, 1995, p. 10). She suggests that through doing a kind of "stream of consciousness writing" one will "touch a source of wisdom within" (Cameron, 1995, p. 15). To avoid being self-critical, she suggests not re-reading the morning pages. The other, thoughtful introspective writing can happen after the free-flowing and unread morning pages are written.

##### 4(b). *Using imaginative journeys and tales*

Completing stories is not just an activity for children. For instance, you might be inspired to gather round with friends and older members of the family to complete the stories in Calvino's (1979) book *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*. If you read a few lines of one of the twelve chapters you will become enticed by the story. Then the story is suddenly interrupted. You have the opportunity as a group to then create and tell the rest of the story. For example, there are stories written in the style of Borges, Chekhov, and a Spaghetti Western.

4(c). *Using spontaneous play and a "special time box"*

Of course, there is a need for parents to be attentive to, and accompany, rather than interfere with, a child's spontaneous play, for the child is spontaneously telling a story of his unconscious feelings and thoughts. Strange as it may sound to you, using a special time box with toy human and animal figures can be useful for an adult on one's own or for couples, too. You might find that stories emerge from within you if you sometimes use your children's toys to imagine how you are experiencing your world at the moment. This depiction is a little like a dream showing some deeper, buried, inner experiences that you might want to consider more fully but do not have words to describe. Being a partner to your hidden self and getting close to your actual partner can occur through physical depictions using three-dimensional animal and human figures to represent your personal experiences of the moment or of the past. Trying to understand the themes present in the internal conflicts, tensions, pain, and joy, which are present in the representation of states of mind, can be a very enriching and creative activity which frees the self to exist with more vitality in the world.

5. *Appreciating the need for time, for an uncluttered safe space, and supportive fostering of imagination*

Unless we have the emotional and intellectual capacity to conceive of what does not yet exist, there is nothing towards which we are able to direct our motivation *to create* something. We all have access to imagination, the imagination required for creativity to ensue (Liu & Noppe-Brandon, 2009). What differentiates a creative person from a non-creative person is developing an *empty inner space, time, motivation, and effort* in order to develop the imagination and be creative in some way. To actually become creative, good practice doing the activity is required. Good practice is releasing the ego's hold on the situation long enough to let imagination and mistakes made in creating to guide us. Good practice involves having a safe environment where the fear of being correct is absent. A safe environment allows the creating person to learn from the experience of imagining and creating from those imaginings. (Liu & Noppe-Brandon, 2009, p. 189).

The motivation for creativity can only come from within, but many a creative person has been inhibited by the negative, pessimistic remarks made by their family and friends. Motivation to create something from one's imaginings can be linked with the wish for recognition, approval, catharsis, validation, a challenge to mortality, sublimation of the birth instinct, excitation of feelings of passion and aliveness and a desire to make order out of chaos (Palaccio, 2008).

6. *Exploring and then choosing an area for development*

Many people are multiply talented. However, to show creativity, ultimately one needs to dedicate oneself to a particular type of creative endeavour to develop in that specific area. Explore what you like doing, what your children like doing, and then find a way for them and for you to devote time and effort to that *particular activity* specific to each of you, rather than scattering one's talent. One can move on to another area, but true creativity requires depth of interest, time, and motivation to deepen the creative impulse in a particular area. Here is an example:

Leonard Bernstein said that his parents were looking after a neighbor's piano. His parents weren't particularly musical. With a child's curiosity he lifted the lid, pressed on the keys and felt the sounds vibrate from the instrument. A wave of excitement rushed through him. He didn't know why this happened but he knew then that he wanted to spend as much time as he could making such sounds. He had found his medium. (Robinson, 2001, p. 129)

Creativity is not so much a separate faculty as an attitude to spend time and effort in seeing new possibilities of perceiving and expressing oneself and *acting* on these possibilities (Robinson, 2001, p. 137).

### 7. *Promoting spontaneous imagination and creativity*

Torrance's (1963) research in schools suggested that teachers could promote creativity in children by doing the following:

- treating unusual ideas or questions with respect;
- providing sufficient opportunity for self-initiated learning and non-evaluated learning, for evaluation promotes defensiveness;
- showing children that their ideas have value and encouraging self-expression.

To promote creativity, parents need to ensure that children have stretches of time for daydreaming and thinking and feeling about things other than schoolwork. Similarly, parents need time free from uncreative tasks in order to daydream.

Freud encouraged a shift to action in order that creativity would emerge from spontaneous imagination. He described how the creations of art heighten feelings of identification, by allowing opportunities for sharing highly valued emotional experiences (Freud, 1927c, p. 18). He encouraged Joan Riviere, an English psychoanalyst, to write, to get her thoughts out, and make something of her ideas so that they would have an existence independent of her.

Most importantly, the love of a good mother, accompanied by the mother's faith that the child will be a worthwhile and creative individual is the antecedent of creativity. The image of a trusting mother will sustain a child throughout his life and facilitate his struggle to endure the pains of innovative searching. Arieti says that "a longing for love" promotes an inner turmoil to expand one's own self (Arieti, 1976, p. 29).

Creating an inner space for spontaneous imagination allows transformation of extremely intense feelings into bearable and shareable states of mind. To use one's spontaneous imagination, one has to let go of facts seen or known and to look at things as though they could have been otherwise. To have an imaginative insight one has to believe in oneself, to put total trust in one's thought. "Belief in the self" is connected with internalising the good mother and father and allowing thought and feeling to freely intermingle with one another. The goal of freedom is to think thoughts that are one's own (Symington, 1990). In a book titled *Imagination First* (Liu & Noppe-Brandon, 2009), Richard Lewis asked some 7-8-year-old children, "Do you think there is a bird who could make the rain fall, or who could bring up the sun in the sky?"

What do you think they came up with? Joel, one of the seven-year-olds, wrote,

LONDON: ROUTLEDGE, 2007

My bird comes out at night in the full moon.

He flies through the sky.

At night you can never see him. He is in you.

His name is imagination.

He lives in a place called heart brain body.

It is in everyone.

Some adults think it is childish, but it will never leave you even if you hide it. (Liu & Noppe-Brandon, 2009, p. 190)

We constrict children if we focus too much on teaching them names of things and numbers and colours before they have had the opportunity to explore freely with their hands, their eyes, and their symbolic play. We put a great deal of emphasis on the child saying words and insufficient emphasis on the fact that the powers of exploration, perception, and imagination welling up in the child need to be protected from too much clamping down with facts and words.

Grozinger (1995) suggests that the scribbling phase of a child is an important and decisive phase in which the child creates the inner space where he then receives and assimilates the world. Encouraging the child to scribble with both hands stimulates the child's sense of space and the body. The paper on which a child draws is like a body on which the child's sense of space and body crystallises. It is primarily the body that gives birth to the drawings: the trunk, hands, and feet are at work. Through engaging both sides of the child's body, both hands in drawing, the child experiences a liberation from the constriction of being kept to conceptual drawing, which is linked with language. Grozinger (1995) feels that it is good thinking to combine the drawing with limbering-up and breathing exercises. Now I understand why Wordsworth, like many poets, used to like to walk before writing. Painting with two hands can also be a way of working through psychic experiences and conflicts. Painting should not be marked or criticised, and neither should one ask what it is . . . It is what it is. It is part of natural development (Grozinger, 1995). Scribbling is like the child's babbling; it represents the child walking over the paper with the wordless rhythm of life. Premature favouring of the "proper hand" prevents the child from having a full sense of his body and the vision can be left solely to the eye. Grozinger suggests that there are phases of spontaneous expression through scribbling with both hands:

First there is 'the suckling', followed by the 'grip-ling' and only then by the 'talking'. This means that the eye has first of all to work together with the hand, with the sense of touch, in exploring the world. Only when the hands have both reported back, like scouts, as to how far away things are, how light they are, how solid, how heavy, only when space has been crawled through, walked through and felt through, does the eye know something of the world. Then the hands and feet can rest, then the eye can ally itself to the ear and name things . . . the haptic phase of touch will be missed if one starts naming things too soon. . . . It would be useful to allow drawing to take place without a suggestion to 'draw' something in particular . . . just drawing, like skipping, singing, dancing, without colour necessarily, just lines, later the need for colour might occur . . . It is better simply to suggest that the child draw on a large surface, perhaps standing up initially so the whole body can be more involved. (Grozinger, 1995, p. 35)

### *What can you do? Using your thinking hat*

I have shared with you seven different approaches to freeing the mind of its tightly held rituals and defences, in order to help creativity flourish. Now I have an exercise for you. You can do it alone, or with family, friends, or colleagues. I want you to step back for a moment, and think about what you believe promotes imagination and creativity. This could be at home or school, in parents, teachers, or children. In doing the exercise that follows, you will be able to think more about what creativity means for you, and what you can do to promote it.

As an added twist, let's step away from our usual thinking patterns and use a creative way to organise our thoughts: Edward De Bono's *Thinking Hats* (De Bono, 1985). Imagine that we have six hats, each in a different colour to represent different points of view. Now it is time to pick a hat. You can choose any colour you like: white, red, black, yellow, green, or blue.

#### *White hats*

White hats seek and lay out information. White hats have the task of differentiating facts from surmises. What factual information do you know about the development and inhibition of imagination and creativity?

#### *Red hats*

If you have a red hat, you focus on your intuitive feelings. You are allowed to be bold and open about them. They could be feelings of dislike about some methods or there might be strong feelings of pleasure for a particular way of allowing creativity to soar. They often say that at first people "have a feeling" and then they work out a logical reason for doing something based on that feeling. Whatever the situation is, feelings are always an essential part of thinking. What do you *feel* prompts your imagination or that of your child? Do you have feelings against the ways schools help children develop? What is your intuition about how Tempo Lineare helps and hinders imagination?

#### *Black hats*

Black hats represent caution, critically pointing out difficulties and problems with new approaches. They focus on what will not work with a new idea. Black hats might encourage reasons as to why we should focus more on learning facts and technical achievement rather than on fostering imagination and creativity.

#### *Yellow hats*

The yellow hats' thinking is hopeful, positive, and optimistic thinking about the future. Yellow hat thinking allows visions and dreams of what might be possible. Yellow hat thinkers are supportive of the idea that there are aspects of life in everyone that would profit from the creation of more time and psychological space for the imagination to develop. How would having a better house for the imagination benefit you and your family?

*Green hats*

Green hat thinking is concerned with generating new ideas and new ways of looking at things. The green hat symbolises fertility, growth, and a need to go beyond the known, the obvious, and the satisfactory. When you put on the green hat, you are signalling to yourself that you are setting aside time for deliberate imaginative and creative thinking to improve what already exists. Creativity involves provocation, exploration, and risks. Put on the green hat and pretend you are head of Tempo Lineare, or head of your child's elementary school, responsible for planning the weekend for your family or adding new dimensions to the use of personal space for you. What could you do?

*Blue hats*

The blue hat's task is to summarise what came out of this exercise of using different ways of thinking to create stronger houses for the imagination to grow. Did anything helpful come out of this thinking exercise, using many of the ingredients of imaginative thinking? What did you conclude that you could do to help promote and develop creativity?

*What creativity can mean: inspirational creative acts*

Volavkova (1993) tells the story of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, an artist who hoarded materials such as scrap paper, cardboard, and wrapping to give to the children in a concentration camp, Terezin, near Prague, Czechoslovakia. Friedl went from camp to camp working with the children using these art materials. She taught the children the importance of observation, patience, the freeing of oneself from the outer world of numbing routine in the concentration camp and the inner world of dread. She told the children stories, much like Patrizia Pasquini does in Tempo Lineare. Afterwards, the children would act out the fairy tales, or stories they and others wrote, create and sing children's operas, and draw pictures. The children drew their concealed inner worlds, their tortured emotions, which Friedl was then able to enter and try to heal. Through art, she helped to restore a balance to the trembling consciousness of terrified children. Of these 15,000 children, who for a time played and drew pictures, only 100 survived.

Expressing their feelings through art and poetry was a way in which the children were enabled to moderate the chaos of their short and threatened lives. They loved drawing and writing with their teacher, Friedl. The children used the precious moments when they were alive. Here are two poems that they wrote. The first, "Illness", is by Franta Bass:

*Illness*

Sadness, stillness in the room.  
 In the middle, a table and a bed.  
 In the bed, a feverish boy.  
 His mother sits next to him  
 With a little book.  
 She reads him his favorite story  
 And immediately, the fever subsides.

(Franta Bass, in Volavkova, 1993, p. 30)

Pavel Friedmann wrote the following poem in 1942, while he was in Terezin:

*I Never Saw Another Butterfly*

For seven weeks I've lived in here,  
Pinned up inside this ghetto.  
But I have found what I love here.  
The dandelions call to me  
And the white chestnut branches in the court.  
Only I never saw another butterfly.  
That butterfly was the last one.  
Butterflies don't live in here,  
In the ghetto.

(Pavel Friedmann, in Volavkova, 1993, p. xix)

When they wrote poems, the Terezin camp children told of longings to go away somewhere else where there were kinder people; there was a longing for home and a fear. Yes, fear came to them as they saw the executions and they could tell of it in their poems, knowing that they were condemned to die. Their drawings and their poems speak to us; they are "the voices of reminder, of truth and of hope" (Volavkova, 1993).

There are other, less serious tragedies which children are able to work through using writing stories. For example, one boy's father was a painter. His father gradually became blind. This boy, Peter Mann, helped his own grief and that of his father, Sargy Mann, by writing about his father and his painting (Mann & Mann, 2011). In doing so, he helped us understand something about "seeing and not seeing" which is important to our own capacity to observe, to imagine, and to create from our own experiences. Mann describes how drawing is completely about questioning and trying to understand the world as we perceive it. He describes how you need to look harder at what you see. As a seeing person, he would experiment with visualising space through walking around blindfolded for the day. I have done this with children, trying to help them become more intimate with their bodily sensations, emotions, and perceptions other than vision. Subsequently, they talked and wrote about their experiences. Walking around outside their familiar school became a new and significant adventure for them.

Sargy Mann was also an art teacher who taught psychoanalyst friends of mine. They said, "He taught us to see" (Symington & Symington, 2012). Developing imagination within the family can involve a deeper seeing, a more acute seeing, that brings all sorts of different possibilities for expression of one's experience. You can help the family to see by asking questions and trying to find answers to them. Here are some examples of what you can say.

Look at this glass. Can you see the bouncing light coming off the surface? How do you communicate sensations of bouncing light? How do you show both the colour of the illuminating light, the direction from which it has come, and then show the object on which the light has landed? You can walk around just noticing the light, how it lands, how it bounces off, how it influences the same plant in your house at different times of the day. You can learn to see light in this way.

Pierre Bonnard helps us to keep quiet while looking at a child's drawing. He says, "You can take any liberty with line, form, proportion, colour, so long as the feeling is intelligible and

clear" (Mann & Mann, 2011, p. 4). Let your child find his way while drawing and allow yourself the same privilege.

Children and their parents can search for "a picture" to draw. Mann and Mann say,

When searching for a spatial experience eyes can move very fast. It can be like flying. Your eye hits some grasses near your feet, skims the field, dipping and banking, climbs up the bushes, up and over the poplar and willows and off into the sky to circle and dive. These rushing dizzying circuits explore and build to an ever greater experience of the whole articulated space in which one finds oneself. Every point on that journey is giving off a different sensation of coloured light and requires a different colour at that place on the canvas. (Mann & Mann, 2011, p. 68)

You can experiment now, looking around, far away and close up, imagining how and where you might "frame" something you see.

When Sargy Mann became blind and unable to see details, he was a better painter than ever before! This occurred because he allowed himself an intuitive freedom with colour. Before, he was always involved in using colour to create the most convincing light. Now he was free to use colour not to express the presence of light, but, rather, he could use colour completely intuitively in order to express whatever experience he had in being with a figure, feeling its surface, and painting on the canvas. His blindness forced him to be free from his painting routine of looking for the way a light existed on an object. He now had to paint not through what he saw, but through feeling with his hands and then painting what he was feeling with his hands. You can imagine that he had an inner house for his imagination to grow and ferment, an imagination which was infused with memory and the experience of feeling what he drew without seeing (Mann & Mann, 2011, p. 212). People in the family can take turns closing their eyes, touching an object presented, and then trying to draw as Sargy Mann does. Through this, touch becomes another way of seeing.

The painting of Sargy Mann's wife, Frances, in the *Black Coat Pink Lining* (2007), was done when he was blind and using simply touch to paint her. In the painting, the top part of her head is missing, and it is not known if he planned it this way or not. What we see is a perspective from someone sitting below her, almost like a child.

### Conclusion

We have been dwelling on developing a stronger house for imagination and creativity in families, schools, and in ourselves. I have been trying to encourage our minds "to stroll about hungry, fearless and supple" and to encourage our hearts "to always be open to little birds with secrets of living" (Cummings, 1991, p. 481). In doing so, I am aware that it is very comfortable to remain secure in the old routines, old ways of being together, and old ways of thinking together. I hope, though, that we shall be inspired, as was the black writer Maya Angelou, by Paul Dunbar's poem "Sympathy":

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,  
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,  
When he beats his bars and would be free;

It is not a carol of joy or glee,  
 But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,  
 A plea, that upward to Heaven he flings,  
 I know why the caged bird sings.

(Dunbar, 1893, p. 102)

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