3 types of kids crafts that...

- suppress creativity
- reduce IQ
- weaken self esteem

&

how to avoid them

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Hi,

I assume you have been involved in kids crafts is some form. You must be either a teacher or some kind of educator or a parent.

I also safely assume that you and the children you work with love crafts.

You probably can’t imagine that there would be any kinds of crafts that would suppress creativity, reduce IQ and weaken self esteem right? After all, crafts are supposed to be good for you.

The crafts we are talking about here are traditional arts and crafts. The kind you find all over the web and in hundreds of thousands of classrooms and homes all over the world. Caveat: Just because children love them; doesn’t mean its good for them. (like candy)

Let’s talk about this.

What could possibly be wrong, with the traditional arts and crafts that children do?

Most schools and websites talk about arts and crafts as the most creative activity that kids can be involved in

Think about it for a minute. Aren’t most traditional arts and crafts projects… copycat projects? These cute little ideas, straight from some adult’s imagination, encourage children to follow exact directions and deny them the thrill of creativity and experience of autonomy.

Is copying someone else’s project...creative?

Most traditional children’s crafts are . . .

1) Conceived of by grownups, and are thus
2) Copies of a grownup’s model, resulting in
3) Projects that all look exactly alike, which are therefore
4) Not at all age appropriate.

Take any one of the projects that your child has brought home
from school, that you’ve seen on the Internet, or that are sold in prepackaged
form in any art supplies store, and you will notice that:

- There is usually a model to copy that the finished project is supposed to look
  like.
- There are no choices to be made (except, perhaps, for color) and thus no room
  for initiative.
- No thinking or problem solving skills are required or developed.
- Creativity is absent from the activity.

_All of this saps your child of some of the most basic skills she/he
needs to grow and develop to her or his maximum potential._

When children’s only experience in childhood is with traditional arts
and crafts:

1. They end up feeling really badly about themselves because they
   sense they’re not trusted to create on their own.

2. They lose their initiative because they are trained to wait for
directions and to feel that they’ll do it wrong if they start on their
own.

3. They lose confidence since only the teacher’s model is considered
correct.

4. They absorb the message that they are “just no good in art”
   and grow into the adults who say “Oh, me? I can’t even draw a
   straight line!”

(Is this reminding you of your own childhood experiences?)

These feelings are usually subconscious at young ages and most kids can’t
verbalize them. But you’ll often hear kids saying things like “I hate art” or “Help
me, I don’t know what to do” or “Hers is better than mine.” Sadly, remarks like
these are all a direct outgrowth of their arts and crafts experiences.

There is however, a better way. A wonderful, educational way of doing art
with kids. Before you learn about this method of our art approach, it’s important
to have some psychological background on how children develop, which will set the stage for our approach to kids’ crafts and their art in general.

A bit of Background Theory

In order to understand how our minds and those of our children work, we need to consult and learn from the expert researchers of child development. Psychologists study the human mind, while child development psychologists study specifically how children’s minds develop. What follows is a very short synopsis of the findings of two very well known child psychologists that shed light on the workings of our children’s minds.

Jean Piaget was a world renowned child psychologist whose field of study was how children come to know, i.e., to gain life knowledge intellectually. (or cognitively)

While working in his lab over the years, he became intensely interested in how children actually think. He noticed the difference between answers given by younger children and those given by their older peers, and realized that it was not because the younger children were any less intelligent, but because they thought differently than the older ones.

Piaget set about performing numerous experiments with young children to learn how they come to acquire their store of information and the stages they go through to acquire it.

From his testing, Piaget identified the following four stages in children’s cognitive (intellectual) development and the period of life in which each will normally occur:

1. Sensory motor stage - Infancy
2. Pre-operational stage - Toddler and Early Childhood
3. Concrete operational - Elementary and Early Adolescence
4. Formal operational state - Adolescence and Adulthood

Through thousands of experiments and studies, Piaget discovered that children learn best by actually doing and working out problems on their own, actually working through solutions. And he learned that it is mainly through concrete experiences that they will develop to the next level.
By spoon feeding the children they will learn only facts not how to discover solutions on their own.

We know from Piaget how important sensory experiences are and how much better children can integrate knowledge and book learning when they have concrete examples to tie into the theoretical.

I can actually bring you a real live example from my own experience.

“I was never good in math in school and it followed me into adulthood. When I was in graduate school I was taking a class called Math for teachers. We were using manipulatives to learn how to teach kids fractions and we were adding and subtracting the fractions. As I played around with the stuff all of a sudden things that I had struggled with so many years before suddenly became clear because I had the concrete materials right in front of me to manipulate.” (How sad when teachers don’t realize what children need to learn better)

So from Piaget we know....children learn through sensory experiences and handling many objects. (For more on Piaget see http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/piaget.htm)

Another significant figure in the area of children’s development was Erik Erickson. He was a well known psychologist who discovered the eight stages of social and emotional development of man starting with infants.

According to Erickson the socialization process consists of eight stages of man. His eight stages were formulated through wide ranging experience in psychotherapy. Each stage is regarded by Erickson as a “psychosocial crisis” that demands resolutions before the next stage can be satisfactorily negotiated. Just as a building cannot stand on shaky foundation so to the child must learn to manage each crisis before being able to manage the next one.

However, a child whose needs have been adequately met sees the world as a safe place feels a sense of trust and is ready to deal with his next stage of development in a functional manner.

When children are allowed to grow, create and learn according to their developmental age, they gain a healthy sense of self-worth, which leads them to feel that they can succeed in any endeavor they may set out to do.

From the findings of both Piaget, and Erickson we learn that some crucial points regarding children’s learning and developmental needs to be developed at a young age.
How these concepts can be applied to Arts and Crafts:

Now that you are a bit more aware of what skills children need to develop than hopefully we can analyze all of the activities they do to see if they fit these criteria. Plus we can understand why traditional arts and crafts does not fit these criteria.

As we want the activities we give our children to fit their needs we know that the art activities we give should have the following components.

1. Help the children develop a good self esteem.
2. Allow them to think and solve problems.
3. Let them grow wise as they make choices by taking initiative.
4. Allow them to develop a sense of autonomy and independence.
5. Give them room for their creativity to blossom.

From the findings of Erickson and Piaget there are five main categories that we have deduced children need to work on.

1- **A good self esteem** – A good self esteem is vital for children. It is what makes them feel that they can succeed at anything they set out to learn or accomplish.

2- **Critical thinking skills** - The older a child becomes, the more s/he is called upon to use critical thinking skills in school (especially in areas like math).

3- **Initiative** - As children grow, they need to learn to make all types of choices. This requires the confidence and the experience of knowing that they are capable of making the right choices and that if their choices are not right, they can always correct them. This gives them the initiative to make many choices.

4- **A sense of independence** - Without allowing children to do whatever they want, children need to gain autonomy to help them become responsible human beings, which will invariably help them succeed throughout their school years. (and life) without being tied to an adults apron strings.
5 -**Creativity** – Creativity is a very crucial skill for kids to develop especially in today’s day and age where creativity is at a premium. I read a book recently that quoted a study that said even prestigious medical schools are giving art classes to hone their student’s powers of observation.

Obviously traditional arts and crafts is sorely lacking as we discussed before and it is a wonder why so many adults give their children and students craft after craft when their benefits are so doubtful

To give the benefit of the doubt I would like to suggest why this has come to be before discussing the alternatives.

- Our society likes success, winning and finished products. Many children’s things do not look perfect enough for society.

- **Lack of knowledge of what’s wrong with these crafts.**

- A feeling of helplessness as to what can be an alternative.

- *Thinking that by giving children projects that make them follow directions they are learning important direction following skills.*

- Assuming that anything having to do with coloring and pasting must be creative

- **Inability to let children be children**

- Worried about others will say if the artwork looks messy.

- *Thinking that the only skills young children need to develop are fine motor skills*

Now that we know what is wrong we can discuss what is developmentally correct for children.

The answer that is *Educational Art.* (Hence the name Edu Art 4 Kids)

This is a term that I coined to explain how art needs to be educational in that it doesn’t have to TEACH them subject matter (even though there is a place for that as well) but, it makes them better learners. What can be more educational than that?
Educational art aside from making them better learners will help children

- Develop a great self esteem
- Learn to think and solve problems
- Begin to take initiative
- Learn to choose
- Develop a sense of autonomy and independence unless severely squashed in other areas
- Have their creativity expand and expand

Educational art starts with lots of process only art (when the process is more important than the product). As they become very familiar with the various art media, they can then move on to more advanced forms of art that are educational in different ways.

It has been proven that the more time children spend on art, the better learners and better earners they are later in life.

A very important book came out a not that long time by a fellow named Daniel Pink. The name of his book is called “A Whole New Mind”

In brief this book discusses the changes in society that are taking place to the phenomenon of outsourcing.

For years Mr. Pink says the schools have concentrated on the skills and studies to encourage left brain thinking because that is where the jobs were. All of the math and computers and science jobs needed a lot of left brain analytical thinking.

Outsourcing has changed that all. What an American worker would get paid $75,000 a year for an overseas outsourcer will now take $15,000 to do the same exact work.

This means that it is creativity that is now the name of the game and anyone with the well honed skills of creativity and initiative will be the successful ones of next generation. You cannot clone creativity.

Note how Wikipedia defines creativity.

Creativity is a mental and social process involving the generation of new ideas concepts, or new associations of the creative mind between existing ideas or concepts. Creativity is fueled by the process of either conscious or unconscious insight. An alternative conception of creativeness is that it is simply the act of making something new.

Now who do you think will far better in this new world of creativity? Children that have been robot; like making copycat crafts all their lives Or children that have been allowed to be creative and innovative.
It certainly is something to think about.

**Don’t however for a minute mix up adult crafts with children’s crafts**

Adults crafts include many wonderful crafts techniques that cannot be put into the same classification as children’s crafts.

Paper crafts woodcrafts, stone crafts, leather crafts, flower crafts, ceramic, metal crafts, the list is long.

Adults involved in these crafts use their creativity and their imagination to take the particular craft technique they are using to create something new, unique, and creative. They do not copy other peoples work, they may take ideas from nature or even some ideas from other works but never are they replicas of someone else’s ideas.

So why are children encouraged to do so?

Most children’s crafts follow someone else’s model and allow for no creativity and problem solving skills.

A child that is given educational art will be much more prepared in self esteem, initiative taking, and creative imagination to develop and create on his or her own.

Even if children do not pick careers in art the skills they will gain from educational art will help them in any career.

One of the most important ideas in Educational art is allowing children to create according to their developmental age level.

The point is to just let children be and create at their levels.

If you see a 5 yr old consistently creating at a 3 yr old level, it may be time to check out if there are any underlying problems. If you have them all copy the same picture then you will not be able to see if your child is creating at their age level.

Even during the relatively brief span of the preschool years, there is a wide range of skills that children are capable of, and so, you need to know that you cannot expect the same things from a five-year-old than for a three-year-old.
One of the biggest challenges of adults is expecting too much from our children too soon.

We would already like our 2 and 3 year olds to be creating like a 5 or 6 year old and it may take a year or two to see any representational work from these young children.

The challenge of allowing a 2 year old or even 3 year old to keep doing the same things over and over again before proceeding to the next stage is indeed quite a challenge for us.

One needs lots of patience until we see any form of actual representation forming under a child’s hands.

It is not until around 4 or sometimes 5 year of age that children want to naturally create artwork that actually looks like something representational.

At 2 and 3 and a bit of 4 they are still learning the materials, enjoying sensory activities and solving problems at their level. (like where should they put this circle and how much paint should they use)

Drawing and other forms of art are often good indications of a child’s level of growth. Drawings, or even collages, reflect the level of cognitive development and often reveal how a child deals with information he absorbs from the world around him.

Children’s drawing generally follows a certain progression that is a constant in societies across around the world. Just as almost all children crawl before they walk, so, too, they scribble before they draw. Their drawings will differ, however, depending on their environment and the instruments of art available to them.

What is interesting is that when children are taught to draw they are taught to copy however, it is copying to learn the skills to be able to expand their drawing and learn to draw on their own.

So now that you know how detrimental copycat crafts are...
We can now answer the question on the title of this report

3 types of crafts are bad for children and how to avoid them.

- If you see crafts that when done with children all look the same, know that they are not only are not creative, but they suppress creativity. After all, how can crafts be creative if everyone is doing the same thing.

- *If you see that the children don’t have any choices when doing a craft then know that the activity reduces them to robot like status, which reduces their IQ.*

- And if children need to follow exact directions to get a prescribed end result then their self esteem takes a beating as they think, “mine will never look like that”.......and it won’t...... because it can’t.....because they are not developmentally ready to make a craft that an adult thinks of. They also don’t feel trusted to do art on their own.

*Here is a chart to help visualize the 3 types*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#1- All the projects of a group of children look the same</th>
<th>How can crafts be creative if everyone is doing the same thing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#2- There is no choice in choosing materials</td>
<td>There is no thinking involved when children are given materials and don’t have to think what to use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3- Children have to follow exact directions</td>
<td>Children’s self esteem plummets when they don’t feel trusted to create at their own level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I hope this report helped clarify for you some important points about crafts that you do with your children.
Thank you for downloading this report.

I look forward to sharing many wonderful things with you.

I do love feedback and I would love to stay connected so join me on the following social media channels.

http://www.twitter.com/eduart4kids

https://www.facebook.com/eduart4kids

www.pinterest.com/faigie

If you want to contact me personally please do so at faigie@eduart4kids.com

And of course, I can be found at my blog http://www.eduart4kids.com

Thanks so much for reading

I would love to hear your thoughts and experiences on this report. Faigie Kobre (also spelled Faige without the second i)