

News & Announcements

Welcome Back!

Here are a few study tips to get you started right this school year:

- ▶ Set goals
- ▶ Attend all classes
- ▶ Ask questions in class
- ▶ Organize & stay organized
- ▶ Do your homework every night
- ▶ Set aside time to review past notes
- ▶ Look ahead to upcoming topics
- ▶ Make up quizzes for yourself
- ▶ Schedule in extra study time
- ▶ Build confidence in your ability to do well
- ▶ Ask for help when you need it

STR in the Community

Smart Tutor Referrals offers talks and workshops for peer tutors, learning assistance teachers, teachers and students.

If you are interested in hosting a talk by Smart Tutor Referrals, please contact us for more information.

30 - 45 minute talks for peer tutors are offered free of charge as a community service.

Happy Birthday to Us!

Smart Tutor Referrals is celebrating 6 years of supporting families in education. We began in 2002 and since then have helped many hundreds of students in Victoria. Hooray! Students and families benefit from our dedication to honesty, respect, positive vision, building learning confidence, individual ability and contribution.

Thank you for continuing to support this local, values-based business.

Engaging Creativity In Learning & In Life

by Dahlia Miller

“While we have the gift of life, it seems to me that the only tragedy is to allow part of us to die – whether it is our spirit, our creativity, or our glorious uniqueness.”
Gilda Radner, Comedienne (1946-1989)

Our minds enjoy repetition – we’re so stuck on repetition, that we’ll repeat habits, even if they’re uncomfortable. We’ll stay inside our ‘comfort zone’ even in new situations. We’ll repeatedly approach new challenges and problems with the same mind-set or concept, even if our approach isn’t providing the desired response.

Lulled into complacency and a sense of familiarity, we start to truly believe that what we think about the universe is the full extent of reality. But how could it be? How could it be that we already have a complete understanding of all phenomena, all events, all things, all ideas? How could our perspective be complete if it didn’t include the unknown? Stepping out into the great unknown, with a sense of fun, we can explore the world around us and step into our potential.

Using our imaginations as we learn, we tap the highest levels of our intelligence. ‘Playing at it’ rather than ‘working at it,’ learning becomes its own reward.

Have you ever seen the faces of people who have lived to be over 100 years old? They typically seem so totally engaged in living their lives. Like babies, they appear to be excited and stimulated by everything around them. They nearly always have huge smiles on their faces. They look nice to be around.

Boredom, on the other hand, can sink in from not seeing the potential in each new moment, because of familiarity, or because of fear (of stepping outside our comfort zone, usually). Actually, fear is something that we make up. It’s our choice whether to fully engage or not.

As a child, I used to wonder what it would be like to work as a writer for Walt Disney or for The Muppet Show, Monty Python or SCTV. I envisioned the ridiculous and hilarious time the people behind the scenes would be having coming up with new material for each new show. I imagined them bent over from laughing so hard holding a pen in one hand and a handkerchief in the other wiping tears from their eyes. How much fun would that be: working with a group of writers, each spurring and inspiring the other to new heights of humour! What a great job. “But gee,” I would wonder, “How did they learn to be so creative, spontaneous and fun?”

From the Muppet show:

Heckler #1: *Was that joke good or what?*

Heckler #2: *Oh, did you like it?*

Heckler #1: *I was asleep. That’s why I was asking if that joke was good or what.*

Couldn’t we be ridiculous more often? Couldn’t we inspire each other with questions and answers that require us to think in new ways or from new perspectives? Couldn’t we use the gift of our imagination to amuse ourselves and others more – or to express ourselves more deeply? What kind of impact might this have on our ability to think creatively? (I’m talking mostly about using humour here, but certainly the same points apply to the creative expression of beauty, design, and passion in art, dance, speaking, engineering, cooking, sculpture, wood work, mechanics, music, sewing, etc. – basically any way that humans creatively express themselves and communicate.)

What might happen if we took the same familiar essay topic “What did you do for your summer vacation?” and turned it around... “What would you have done this summer if you had been a fly?” “What would you have done over the summer if you had known you would have to write

About Us

Our Mission Is:

- ▶ To provide top quality, flexible learning support and service to students and parents through:

***In-home private tutoring**
matched specifically to
each student's needs.*

***Stimulating workshops**
building skills in a practical
and creative way.*

- ▶ To enhance students' skills and increase learning confidence through one-on-one support that is truly individualized, recognizing each student's unique abilities.
- ▶ To improve the quality of life, in individuals and communities through education.

Our tutors are certified teachers and professionals. They are carefully screened and chosen specially to match the needs and learning styles of each student.

We support families in education.

For more information and resources, visit us on-line at:

www.SmartTutorReferrals.com

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this essay?" Or for the brave, "What did you do on your summer vacation when you thought no one was looking?"

Sure students need to learn to think within the lines, to answer logical questions logically and prepare for structured essays and exams. High school students are competing on an international playing field for university entrance. But what are the universities really looking for? What are employers (and society) really looking for from young people? It's not just the ability to memorize and respond to questions in a test setting (although of course this is a useful skill that is applicable in a number of real life settings like responding quickly in a disaster situation, for example). In addition to good test writers, universities, employers and society are looking for well-rounded people: people who can think spontaneously and creatively to respond to situations as they arise. How can we help young people to learn to think spontaneously and creatively? We can start by asking them questions that help to spark their imaginations.

There is so much external stimulation in kids' environments these days. But have you noticed how bored and uninterested many young people and young adults seem? With so much coming at them, I believe one reason they're bored is because they hardly need to generate any stimulation for themselves.

Have you heard of the psychology experiments done in the 1950's around sensory deprivation? People were paid to stay in a sensory deprivation chamber for several days. The chamber was sound-proof, scentless and padded. People wore thick suits with stiff arms and heavy gloves and socks (so they wouldn't feel much). They wore earmuffs and translucent goggles that let in light but prevented them from seeing any shapes or patterns. Then they were asked to lie down on a cot in the chamber (leaving only to eat and use the bathroom). The participants began to hallucinate after just a few hours of near-complete sensory deprivation. With nothing to see, hear, smell, taste or touch, their 6th sense, their minds, started creating things to stimulate them.

What does this tell us? Well, it's sort of the opposite of the situation for the majority of young people today. Most people these days are so over-stimulated by their environment (mostly through media and technology), that perhaps, their minds are not finding occasion or reason to imagine. Through lack of use of their imaginations, they are becoming bored.

Our global reality continues to change at an accelerating rate. Change is certain. What we can prepare our students (and ourselves) for is to be creative and spontaneous: to respond appropriately and with the full extent of ability to each new situation. This can't be done with simple rote memorization or the same old attitude/approach to learning/teaching.

Spontaneity can't be copied, but it can be taught and learned. Here are a few points to get you started thinking about creative ways to engage with learning:

- ▶ Socrates never answered questions; he only asked them – forcing his students to stretch their minds and imaginations to find their own answers.

- ▶ Teaching very structured formats (for writing or painting, for example) can allow creativity to flow, as in the case of poetry or 'knock knock' jokes.

- ▶ Thinking of things from a different point of view, shifting perspective, can inspire new ways of approaching situations. Try imagining yourself as a cloud looking down on a problem, or as an insect looking up at it, or as yourself 25 years older looking back at it... what new thoughts spring to mind?

- ▶ Moving or observing everything in slow motion is a fun yet surprisingly challenging way to see things differently.

- ▶ Work with what's happening, like an 'improv' comedian. Step into the moment: look around you where you are, take each situation in unquestioningly and see what there is to work with.

- ▶ Notice the box you are standing in and step out of it – to the left, to the right or straight up.

"The future is uncertain...but this uncertainty is at the very heart of human creativity."

Ilya Prigogine, Russian Nobel Laureate chemist (1917-2003)

"Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep."

Scott Adams, Cartoonist (1957 -