

CREATIVE PARENTING
a fresh coat of paint



Troubleshooting with Art

by Diane Quiroga, MA, ATR-BC

My internal age is 4.5 years old, which is why my professional life consists of making art and playing with toys, in addition to asking and answering questions while I scribble in a notepad. I'm a Board-Certified and Registered Art Therapist as well as a Mental Health Consultant and everyday parents ask me questions about their children, husbands, wives, grandparents, dogs, pet rocks, you name it. I have a firm belief that everyone has a creative side, literally or figuratively, and that sometimes we get stuck in the same old routine of living, loving, and working. Whether it's with our children, spouses, family members, co-workers, or most importantly, OURSELVES, we've probably all had to get a little creative in dealing with certain issues. This column will take you to a whole new level as I delve into topics that will get you looking at things a little... differently.

As the parents and loved ones of our children, we are more than well-versed when it comes to thinking outside of the box. Through my years of experience I've had to get all kinds of creative when it comes to adjusting and adapting art making and materials. The following troubleshooting tips I've discovered will hopefully offer you as much success as they've given me. My motto: Do what works!

#1

The challenge: Getting kids to grasp the marker, crayon, or paintbrush

The solution: Wrapping Model Magic around it! As an Art Therapist, Model Magic really is, well, magic. I discovered that wrapping it around art tools will create a new grip that conforms to your child's hand. The Model Magic will dry as hard foam on your tool, and if you choose to maintain its soft squishy texture then seal it in an air-tight container for future uses.



#2

The challenge: Getting kids to stay on the paper

The solution: Using a tray with a lip can create a boundary and automatically make it easier to control materials inside their space. You might already have an item in your house that can serve this multipurpose such as a cookie sheet or even the top of a gift box! Lining paper on a tray, sheet, or box will keep your child working inside the boundaries of the object and help them become more aware of their paper limits.

#3

The challenge: Getting kids to stay inside the lines

The solution: There are several tricks you can use to create boundaries such as lining the borders of your paper with Wikki Stix or Bendaroos (brightly-colored non-toxic wax sticks that can be sculpted and adhered to basically anything). These waxy wonders will create a small barrier to prevent your child from veering off of the paper. If your child may get too distracted by the bright sticks, try squeezing thick lines of Elmer's glue all around the edges and let dry to create a clear invisible boundary. Don't have time for glue to dry? Use colorful masking tape around the edges instead!





#4

The challenge: Getting kids to look at their work

The solution: Try using a large piece of foil or sand paper as the art surface. Kids can paint, draw with crayons, or collage on these surfaces for a little extra sensory input when making art. More options include using a stand-up table mirror, table easel, or an actual window in your home. Window crayons, window chalk, or window markers can be used on these surfaces and your child will love drawing on their own reflection or on the outside scenery!

#5

The challenge: Getting kids to touch “the sticky”

The solution: Contact Paper or Saran Wrap. These are great transition materials and your child can try to place pieces of tissue paper or magazine pictures onto these different textures. Getting their fingers to occasionally tap down on these paper substitutes will help ease them into feel and texture of sticky substances. Helping them peel foam stickers to decorate an art piece can also expose them to “the sticky” while maintaining the fun!

The challenge: Introducing my child to art

The solution: Exposing your child to art images is a great first step to creating and developing new mental schema and visual imagery in the brain. Laminated museum art cards are perfect to begin exposing children to new colors and images. Children also love the “Touch the Art” Series by Julie Appel and Amy Guglielmo, which are board books that incorporate famous works of art into a story. The key to the books in this series is that every picture has textured touch spaces to make each page interactive and fun!



#6

The challenge: Getting my child to start making art

The solution: Art making should be a pleasant experience, so I make sure to start with a fun activity that can be easily completed. Scribbling is the best way for your child to practice fine motor skills, pre-literacy skills, as well as art making. Creating an art “starter sheet” for your child will decrease the anxiety and intimidation they may feel when faced with a blank sheet of paper. A “starter sheet” is essentially a piece of paper that YOU start by placing magazine cut-outs or drawn items for your child to complete on their own. Their inspiration and fun begins quickly!

#7

The challenge: Getting my child to complete an art activity

The solution: Depending on attention span, I alternate the art activity with a sensory activity such as sand tray play or Model Magic squeezing. Some children simply can't sit— so my focus becomes increasing their attention span through a non-conventional mode of art making. In those cases, I might tape a large mural paper on a wall outside, use gravel on the ground as a surface, or tape a large piece of paper underneath a table while the child lay on a mat or foam wedge while they paint as the next Michelangelo.

#8

Hopefully these tips have stimulated your creative juices and can help your child's art making process a whole lot easier!

Many of the materials mentioned here can be purchased through:

Discount School Supply: www.discountschoolsupply.com

Sax Art Supply: www.saxarts.com

Triarco Arts & Crafts: www.triarcoarts.com

Lakeshore Learning: www.lakeshorelearning.com or your local art stores.

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