



Do you too worry about **GENERATION IPAD?**

In today's modern age of entertainment on tap, how can our children be creative if they have less time to explore and reflect? Put simply, if they are never bored? A curious statement perhaps, but a dose of good old-fashioned boredom - a chance for their brains to switch off digital autopilot - is in my opinion, crucial to them switching on the magical world of 'make believe'.

One primary school head teacher in Denmark explored the notion of creative decline in children over a 15-year period. Before addressing parents, he would first hand prospective pupils a piece of paper and some colouring pens, asking them to draw in most instances a house, whilst he spoke to their parents. If they didn't know what to draw he would suggest they draw a house. In the first drawing from 2002, the house is surrounded by a lawn with flowers and a Danish flag. The drawing is embellished with lots of detail and colour, and well framed. When we get to the drawing from 2016 we see a very poor outline of a house hanging in the air, no grass, no flag and only one colour has been used, the colour blue. The lack of grounding of the house could very likely symbolise that the child who drew this drawing also lacks a solid foundation or grounding. Without wishing to generalise and imply all children draw the same, the difference between the two pictures nonetheless leaves me concerned. The head teacher also observed that as time passed, more and more children chose to draw a house rather than initiate a drawing borne from their own imagination.

Source: Politiken: Mister generation iPad evnen til at tegne?

'Is "Generation iPad" losing its ability to express its creativity?' the Danish article asks, a concern shared by other professionals and researchers.

Growing up today

Many things are different for children growing up today. The world is so open, so full with opportunity and possibilities that children have so much to process. They are overstimulated.

As a child growing up in the 70s I used to think boredom was the worst feeling ever. However, in hindsight I now recall the many creative activities that grew from feeling bored, like playing hide and seek in the garden, putting on my mum's clothes and pretending to be a fine lady, creating a punk band with my sister, drawing, reading, writing my diary etc. When I look back upon my childhood adventures - and there were many - I realise creativity was the common denominator, afforded by the time to simply 'be', to let my imagination run riot. And it's this precious time that so many children today are deprived of. The creativity we foster in our children today will not only give them a more colourful life but it will also help to nourish and strengthen their minds in later life.

More human, less robot

So what happens when children today are never bored? When they never experience that glorious feeling of time standing still? How creative can they get when pen and pencil are replaced by stylus and keypad? In my daughter's Danish public school all students in grade 0-3 are handed iPads and a Chromebook at 4th grade. These questions leave me worried. So worried that I have introduced 'screen free' mornings, 'screen free' Tuesdays and 'screen free' vacations. And I love it when my daughters throw themselves to the ground and proclaim they are bored!

I'm not going to sugar coat the initial resistance; boredom brings out the worst in kids, especially when they're not familiar with it. It drives them mad and makes them irritable, but resist the temptation to 'quick fix' the situation with a digital screen!

Meditation is a way to contemplate, delve deep and reflect on a higher level.

How do we teach children to be creative?

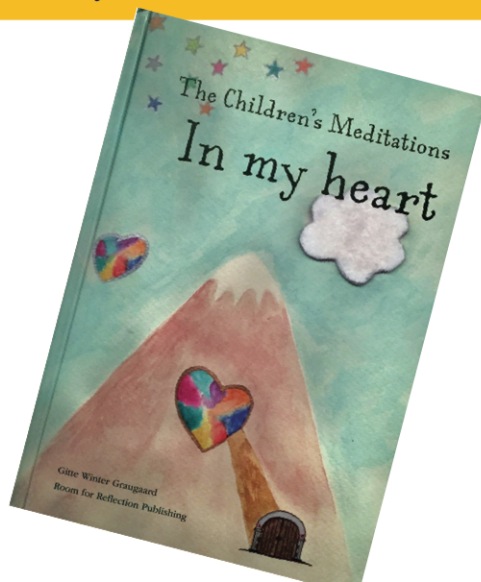
The onus doesn't lie with parents alone. Schools must also allow time for children to become more creative. In Finland teens and children aren't 'measured' at all for the first six years of their education. School days are shorter, children start school later and yet their schools are constantly at the top of the assessment tables. Finland instead allows its children time to be children, to use their imaginations and to become creative without constant evaluation. A similar line of thought led me to open the Momo Academy in Denmark; I decided to bring mindfulness, yoga and meditation into the Danish kindergartens, schools and high schools. Meditation is a way to contemplate, delve deep and reflect on a higher level.



The source of creativity lives in the heart

In my book, 'The Children's Meditations In My Heart', I teach children to fill their hearts with love. I teach them about their power and the beauty of their hearts. In the love we feel in our hearts we are all beautiful, and when we get to experience it we know that we are so much more than our brains. In my book the children get to know their love mountain, their love cloud and become conscious of how to turn up their love, share and receive love, retrieve love from their love cloud and share their love with the universe.

Meditation helps us to connect with different parts within us and allows our inspiration to kick in. And inspiration - being "in spirit" - and imagination are very much connected. By teaching these techniques, by showing our children how to access their inner resources from a young age and as they grow up, we will give them lifelong access to their light, healing and creativity. Which are exactly what most adults in the world today are deprived of and often the reason why, whether consciously or not, they take sick leave and retreat from society with stress and depression, a disease announced by the WHO to be the biggest health risk by 2020.



Why do you have rainbows on your heads?

A final thought. One day I came to pick up my 4-year-old daughter from kindergarten. The teacher pulled me aside and asked me why we have rainbows sitting on our heads in our family. My daughter had drawn a family portrait and we were all enriched with rainbows. I had been meditating with her for the past six months using the meditations I later shared in 'The Children's Meditations In My Heart'. I asked her about the rainbows, and she looked at me with puzzled eyes, for how could I ask such a silly question. The answer was so obvious to her. The small part of the rainbow was the door to our love mountain, the next was us entering the chambers of our hearts full of light and the latter, the red one, symbolised we were inside our hearts and in love. Children are naturally so full of wisdom. Our finest assignment as parents, caregivers and teachers is to make sure they don't forget.

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