**Personal Sharing**

**A Mother’s Childhood**
Lucky me I was born in a simply not well-off family. I led a completely ordinary life in my first fifteen years. I never had any structured playtime or organized learning from my parents. Instead, playing with my siblings and neighbourhood kids was a critical component of my childhood and teenage years. Without any actual toy to play with, we imagined our plays, developed rules for play and took turns to play. Many of those wonderful moments were not just fun, but have been fostering my learning to be an empathetic, cooperative and negotiable person.

**No Time For Play**
Playing was once an absolute right for every kid. Ironically, ‘No time for play’ is one of the most commonly discussed topics by child educationists and parents these days. To tease for higher marks in school, playtime has been inevitably sacrificed. While some have opted to set less homework on kids, others dare not take such a risk to let children fall behind the flock. Children are shuttled from activity to activity. Obviously immense proliferation of tutorial centres gets solid backing from parents.

Personally I have no doubt that structured activities bring about beneficial outcomes. My concerns are growing more now on what children can handle, how much is too much and whether children are receiving a balance growth on mental, emotional and social aspects.

**My Parental Dilemma**
Being an employer and at my age, I start to smell something weird through interviewing new graduates. Funny how knowledgeable these young people are, they do not know themselves and why they choose this career. Funny how they are brilliant at test scores, they are not ready to work as a group. Funny how intensive efforts they have put in their studies, they show no persistence to solve problems at work.

I have struggled for long - to schedule or not to schedule my kids for extra
activities after school. I fully appreciate the heightening expectation for each prospective student. Yet I believe knowledge cannot compensate for the lack of experience in the real world. I see the most successful children have parents who do not do for them. Most importantly I value family time and prefer not to shuttle kids from place to place. What is a good balance?

My Decision

Time is very precious. I choose to play more with kids. I recall that a lot of really good learning comes out of plays and using my imaginations. Thus I kind of combine a time for learning with a time for play and family time with structured activities at home.

Creative Dramatics Do Help

Coincidently the concept of Creative Dramatics has come to my attention when I joined a seminar on English drama last year. The speaker of the seminar discussed what, why and how Creative Dramatics could be used as a “teaching tool and educational process for teaching and learning” (Adapted from Nellie McCaslin’s Creative Drama in the Classroom and Beyond). The message that really impresses me was that my kids could learn effectively through play.

Our Parent-child Activities

After some research, I have started to use some components of Creative Dramatics to teach my kids the topic of Christmas. Here is a list of things that we had done at home:

1. Interactive Story Times – The Christmas story of Joseph, Mary and Baby Jesus was introduced
2. Singing Songs – Songs with lyrics that help kids to remember the events happened on that very first Christmas
3. Movie Viewing – We did a review on the historical and geographical setting of events taken place some 2000 years ago
4. Sequencing Games – The characters and events of Christmas were sequenced in order
5. Role Playing – The Christmas story cast by kids
6. Improvisation – we made imaginary play scenarios and kids
were asked to invent their own version of the Christmas Story.

7. Open-ended Discussion – To foster a deeper understanding of the emotions of each character in the story.

**Conclusion**

To me, the benefits of using creative dramatics as a teaching tool are multifaceted. Mostly importantly, components of creative dramatics with emphases on imagination, emotional awareness, people interaction are important to the development of the whole being and at the end the most successful child in the real world.

**Recommended Book**

This book is now in its eighth edition with commitment to Creative Drama as a medium for promoting physical, mental and emotional learning of the whole child through theatrical components and dramatic exploration.

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