

Ty Ankrom's Here's What I Think ...

For many of us who grew up before computers and smart phones, maybe even video games, imagination and play were a simple part of life.



At a young age we built forts in the woods and were pirates or explorers. We had battles with snowballs. We played sandlot baseball or driveway basketball, imagining being the next Ty Cobb or Babe Ruth, Magic Johnson or Michael Jordan.

Board games let players be a real estate developer and stack up properties and cash in Monopoly or become characters in fantastic realms in Dungeons & Dragons.

For others, with noses buried in books, children got lost in Nancy Drew or the Hardy Boy mysteries or the Boxcar Children, building worlds using their imaginations.

Today, however, children and teens spend 7 hours and 38 minutes each day using entertainment media, according to a 2017 Kaiser Family Foundation study. And when multitasking is factored in, the amount of time rises by more than 3 hours.

Add in that education encourages teaching facts and figures and society isn't giving the next generation a lot of opportunities to develop its imagination.

Author J.K. Rowling, who used her imagination to develop the world of Harry Potter, attributed imagination as "the foundation of all invention and innovation."

A post by Linda Flanagan on the Mind/Shift blog offers some suggestions for encouraging imagination in older students.

The key, she writes, referencing researcher

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Wendy Ostroff, is to avoid siphoning the fun out of learning. Going to school shouldn't require students to have to sacrifice fun to learn.

For example, encourage students through collaborative storytelling. The teacher begins a story or poem, writing it on a piece of paper and passes it to a student, who adds to it and then passes it on. The next student adds to the story but before passing it along, folds the paper so the next student can only see the one addition prior.

"This kind of impromptu storytelling, with its unpredictable outcome, keeps students engaged and thinking creatively," Flanagan writes.

See Flanagan's other tips at ww2.kqed.org/mind-shift/2018/02/01/how-to-help-older-kids-develop-a-sense-of-imagination.

None of Flanagan's tips advocate eliminating technology. One even encourages an exercise using Google.

Common Sense Media, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping kids thrive in a world of media and technology, suggests encouraging children to create their own media.

Christine Elgersma provides numerous ways that young people can be creative via storytelling, filmmaking, artistry, music and even coding.

Check out her suggestions and links at <https://tinyurl.com/ydy43y6r>.

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