

10 Ways to Cultivate Creativity

A WildChild Primer for Kids of All Ages

by Marney Makridakis

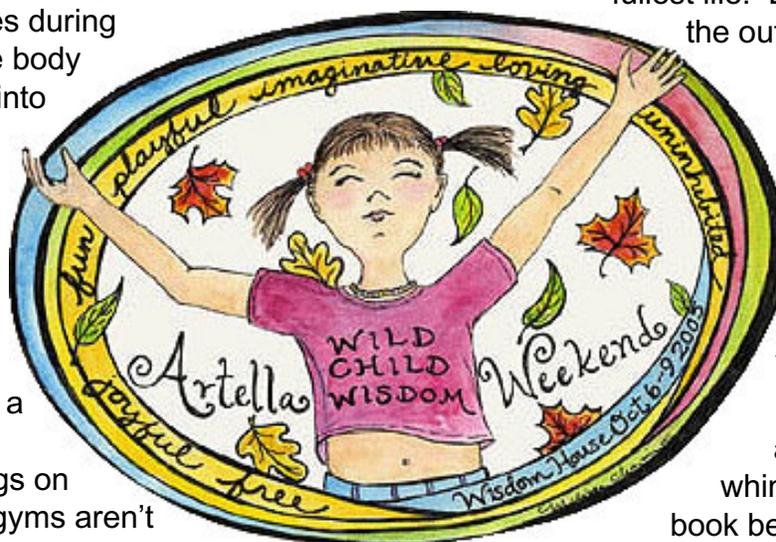
1) Buy crayons and a coloring book at a dollar store, and purposefully, intentionally, color outside the lines. Scribble, break the crayons in half and smash them into the page. Write in the margins of the coloring book what it feels like to break the rules.

2) Spend some time thinking about what you loved as a child. What colors, clothes, games, toys, activities, dreams do you enjoy. Which of those elements are currently in your life? Which ones have you not seen or enjoyed in years? Make a plan for how you rekindle some of your childhood loves in your daily life, today.

3) Children naturally create with their bodies. They want to run, play, jump, dance, and catch fireflies during that an early age before body image questions come into question and before sedentary activities become more engaging than the natural world. Take this wisdom to heart; take a break from the gym and instead work out at a local playground. Hopscotch, pumping legs on the swings, and jungle gyms aren't just for kids! Or try other outdoor activities like gardening or hiking to cultivate a kid-like connection with nature.

4) Grab some crayons, markers, or colored pencils. Think of a goal that you'd like to meet in your life, and then draw a picture of what it will look like when you've reached that goal. Make the drawing detailed, vivid, and kid-like! This isn't about drawing skills—it's about representing a vision in a fun and uninhibited way. When you're done with your drawing, hold it up proudly and say out loud, "I DID THIS!" and then tape it up to your refrigerator!

5) Make your own set of kid-like "trading cards"! Start cutting out images that you love from catalogs, magazines, greeting cards, etc. Focus on images that make you feel full, alive, and truly happy. Glue the images, collage-style, to cards in an old card deck. This is a project you can work on a little bit at a time until you have a whole deck of cards that inspire you to dream big and live your fullest life! Don't forget to collage the outside pack, too!



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6) Walk through your living space and see if there is an area—even just a small one—that could use a little bit of WildChild whimsy. Maybe a children's book belongs with the serious coffee table books. Perhaps you could make some pipe-cleaner flowers to go in a tiny vase on a kitchen shelf that you see when you do

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the dishes. Just think about the corners where a little smile could go a long way.

7) Find an interesting image from a magazine, and tear it out. Place it on a flat surface, and then upside down. Squint your eyes a bit to see what you can see in the new, upside-down image. Try to find an image, activity, or story in the lines and spaces. If you're having trouble seeing anything, ask yourself, "If I were a child, what might I see in this picture?" and go from there. Take markers and pens and start doodling to expand on the picture to illuminate your image. Add words on the page, if you are drawn to do so.

8) Replace your regular "to do list" with two big pieces of poster board that you tape on the wall, on which you will write a list with markers. Write with your non-dominant hand, or if you find that too frustrating (after all—this is supposed to be FUN, not frustrating), put the marker in your fist with the point perpendicular to the poster board, so you can make really broad, child-like strokes as you write. On one poster, write (in kid-fashion; see above) your traditional list of things you need to DO. On the other poster board, write a list of things you dream to BE. Allow yourself to move freely between the two different lists, allowing a free-flowing relationship to develop between them. What do you find that you learn about yourself, and your current priorities, through this exercise?

9) Find a board or card game from your childhood in a thrift store or your own closet, and have fun re-writing the rules. What if CLUE became a game about decorating the rooms in Fun House style, rather than solving a murder mystery? What if Twister was a massive canvas

for art? What if chess pieces were purple and pink and polka dotted and the game was about moving across the board together, instead of in competition? If possible, alter the actual game board and pieces to celebrate your rebellion against the rules. If that's not possible, write about your re-write in a journal, relishing the thought of reigning creativity.

10) Go on a nature walk with child's eyes. Challenge yourself to make all of your senses more open and aware, in the way that a child can taken in the world. Gather interesting leaves, rocks, little flowers, and then bring them home and arrange them to create your own little nature shrine.



Marney Makridakis is the Founder and Editor of Artella, which embodies her personal mission of embracing the creative uniqueness of individuals and catalyzing in them an artistic spirit that supports and actualizes dreams-come-true. Participants of last year's Artella retreat call her by her Muse name, "Catalysta"!

For more information about the WildChild Wisdom Weekend Retreat, visit www.ArtellaWordsAndArt.com/retreat.html