



Messy Art

The Brain Building Power of Sensory Play

by: Anna Reyner, MA Art Therapist / Licensed MFT



Messy Art activities are one of the best ways to promote brain development and adaptive thinking in early childhood. Young children need time to expand their understanding of the world through hands-on, self-directed learning. Open ended art activities, where children dictate how materials are used, are always the best approach. Why are open ended experiences important? Open ended art puts children in control of their actions and outcomes. That alone - having control over ones action and outcomes - can be an exhilarating experience for young children, who typically spend their days following other peoples rules.

What is Messy Art?

Messy Art is a friendly description for process art involving paints and other fluid materials that change with ease as you manipulate them. These “sensory art” experiences provide exciting physical contacts that motivate exploration. The fluid nature of paint provides for dynamic and rapidly changing explorations of color, shape, and textures on paper. Children often feel powerful when painting, because the cause and effect of their actions becomes apparent very quickly. Paints continuously move and blend, creating new combinations and secondary colors. With just a few swift brushstrokes, an entire painting can change and transform into a new creation. Painting is indeed a powerful process!

Art, Neuroscience & Brain Development

Messy Art activities are one of the best ways to promote brain development in early childhood. Early art experiences literally grow the brain. How? Sensory-motor interactions with fluid art stimulates neural activity. This stimulation creates the complex neural networks that form the brain itself and in turn dictate a child's capacity for future learning. Current neuroscience tells us that young brains build new neural pathways most rapidly and efficiently during active sensory motor engagement with the environment. That's exactly what takes place neurologically when children play with sensory art materials and are allowed to make their own choices and discoveries.

During times of stress, Messy Art provides an even higher return on investment. When typical children are stressed, the need for safe, soothing and expressive sensory experiences also increases. Pandemic stress has children and adults alike feel less in control than ever before. There's no better time than now to provide open ended, messy art experiences to help children and families develop greater resiliency.

Find more art ideas at

www.CreativePlayLA.com

Subscribe to receive our Monthly CreativePlay Newsletter

