

# Training the Creative Mind

Do you often find your student staring off into space when there are math facts to be figured and leaving a trail of residue from completed creative projects, also completely lost in a very disorganized room?

Let me introduce Sally. Sally loves to create. She works hard at making many things: creating a lovely picture, wrapping a lovely present, and any number of crafty and artsy projects.

Sally has a problem. Her mother and sister are both very organized and get easily frustrated with her ways. She doesn't try to make messes, be forgetful or disorganized; but, often, she gets so absorbed in putting the last touches on her classic pieces of "art" that she totally forgets about everything else - including cleaning her room and feeding the dog.



## The Creative Mind

I think it would be safe to say Sally has a creative mind. She creates and works toward a "visionary" end. Her mind doesn't necessarily think about the individual pieces going into the finished product she has envisioned, but she takes and uses whatever she can find to build and create toward the completion of her bright idea.

Sally's mother and sister think, rather, of each individual piece (detail) and how they could possibly use it. Very organized. Very detailed. Very systematic.

Every family needs a creative mind at work. However, the trick is balancing the creative mind with thoughts of fulfilling responsibilities in a timely manner, and with thoughts that can guide it into being an asset and a help to those working and living nearby. This is what Sally's creative mind needs: schedule, routine, and guidance in establishing detailed thinking.

## A Firm Schedule

A firm schedule is a great asset to the creative mind. Scheduling responsibilities immediately before or after a daily activity helps quite a bit. For instance, breakfast is always at 8:30 every morning. Before breakfast Sally should be tidying her room, dressing herself, and reading her Bible. To do this, she wakes at 8:00 to the sound of her clock alarm beeping across the room - which means she must get up to turn it off. If her clothes have been laid out for her the evening before, it saves her from trying to "think" of that detail so early in the morning. Scheduling other daily responsibilities around set meal times is an important key. This type of routine is a totally essential ingredient for the creative mind. They say if you do something a certain amount of times, it will become a habit. The creative mind is very prone to wander, so committing as much of a schedule to LIFE (not memory) is the best therapy.

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## Cleaning and Tidying Effectively

About Sally's living quarters. Thinking about putting yesterday's blouse in the hamper, storing her shoes in the closet, and putting the book she finished late last night back on the shelf is

not a priority. She needs help sorting out the many details clamoring for her attention in the heaps of disorganization. Creating the lovely piece of “art” was easy. Breaking it down into manageable details is very difficult.

Sally’s mother discovered a way to help her break down the monumental chore of cleaning her room into achievable steps:

**One:** put the clean clothes in the closet and dresser (make sure there is plenty of space to do so) and the dirty ones in the hamper.

**Two:** collect all of the miscellaneous knick-knacks from around the room and place them on the bed. (Sally may need help sorting these pieces out and your guidance as to what to get rid of and what to keep.) Place each knick-knack in a specific location which becomes its permanent home. (Don’t give Sally step #2 until after completion of #1, etc.)

**Three:** projects in progress need their own organized location. A bookshelf, a cabinet, or even a clear shelf in the closet are good places.

Helping Sally to think through the process of cleaning may take several sessions before she finally “catches on.” Having help in sorting out the heaps into do-able details is what a creative mind needs.

## Focusing on Homework

Focusing on school work is another difficulty for Sally to overcome. School work has no “visible end,” and it can be frustrating for her to try to sort out what to do next or how to organize her thoughts to learn. This is the toughest job for the creative mind: to be narrowed down to ONE detail, ONE thought, ONE process to memorize. It can be quite an agonizing thing!

One of the best things to do is to have Sally do one subject a day - like completing the entire week’s work of science on Monday- so she doesn’t have to change “gears” so often. Providing a creative scientific experiment as a reward upon completion is a good idea. To intersperse drawing, an art project, or creative writing based on the scientific theme she is learning throughout the day would help her express what she is learning in an artistic way. It also makes school meaningful to her and helps her to see that science is really a useful thing.

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## The Most Important Factor

The best and most important way to help Sally is to pray with her. She, above all, needs to come to rely on God’s guidance and help in every detail of her life. Praying together helps her to see that you are depending on God’s help, too. Take fifteen minutes in the morning to pray through the specific agenda of the day, and then watch as God guides your steps throughout the day! Sally’s faith and confidence in God’s timely help and strength will become the anchor of her life. God will also give you ideas to help her to train her thought processes and to structure her schedule.

As she is learning, Sally may need you to sit down with her and “walk through” what she needs to do step-by-step. You’ll find that, as you help her train her mind to pay attention to details, she will not lose her creativity; but her creativity will become a lovely ornament in the structured life you help her to create with God’s gracious wisdom, guidance and strength.

-Holly Hageman; Copyright January 2002, January 2003

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