

Focus on the process, not the product

by Shelley Birger Phillips

As many of you know, for the five years after college I was a preschool teacher in Montessori classrooms. I was very intrigued by Maria Montessori and her methods, but what struck me most was her philosophy. There are quite a few key Montessori philosophies that I subscribe to, but today I want to share one that's near and dear to my heart. Montessori said, "It's the process, not the product."

What she meant is that for young people, it's the process of learning that is to be enjoyed and savored. Too often we put the emphasis on our kid's paintings, drawings, or little cut out shapes, but we forget that it's the experience of painting, drawing, and cutting that matter most to our child's development.

For children, it's easy to enjoy the process because they haven't yet been conditioned to value product over process. You can see evidence of this in that many three or four year olds will spend time creating a piece of artwork only to forget it at school or toss it aside when it's finished. We are the ones who teach children to value their art by featuring it on the refrigerator or espousing its many wonderful qualities. But is our value of product over process something we really want to teach our kids?

What if instead we supported their innate experience that the present moment is



really all there is? What if we agreed with them that the feeling of the sand moving

through their fingers is just as valuable as an ornate sand castle? I imagine kids would experience a lot less frustration if we stood behind the idea that the process matters even more than the final product. After all, it's often when they "mess up" that kids get frustrated, but if messing up was actually expected and enjoyed for it's teaching value, it would inevitably be much less painful.

So this week, focus on the process and let go of your attachment to the final product. Remember, the more fun kids have as they learn new things, the more likely they are to continue to develop a lifelong love of learning. Consider activities you can do with your kids that are process oriented such as water play and shaving cream finger painting. And if you do something that is more product oriented, focus on the process! See how much fun you can have working on a puzzle together, playing a game, or building something. And when it's all finished, don't make a big deal about the finished product. Instead, remind your child how much fun it was to work together on it.

<http://www.awakeparent.com/Shelly/process-not-product/>

Thumb-tack

For about ten years I had a piece of paper thumb-tacked at eye level on my office wall. It said:

Process, not product.

I needed that piece of paper in plain view to remind me as I worked on projects that, ultimately, the process I use to achieve my goals is more important than the end-result.

No, I'm not saying that the products of my work aren't important; far from it. Rather, if I concentrate on my end-goals to the extent that my awareness of the process I am using to obtain them suffers, then:

1. My end results will be inferior to what I could have achieved; and
2. I'll be living a miserable life.

It took me ten years before I removed that piece of paper, ten years to be able to reliably remember not to plunge into achievement at the expense of mindful action.

***Which is more important for you?
Process or product?***

<http://www.conferencesthatwork.com/index.php/soapbox/2010/10/process-not-product>

