

## Getting Creative

Follow the child's lead. Do not direct, evaluate, suggest, or encourage children and teens while they are working. Instead, be present with them and remember that what is important for the child or teen to experience as they work on their project is the process—not the product. The experience of creating art and the emotions that process evokes is more important than the finished product.

Most children will know what they want to do, but if they are unsure, it can be helpful to explain what materials are available. Offering choices will give them a sense of control. Wait for them to ask for help or direct you rather than assuming what they want.

Reflect what you see. It is most helpful to children when adults reflect the process the child is using. Example: "You are using..." or "You are working with..." Do not evaluate the child's art by saying: "That's pretty" or "I really like your picture."

The use of open-ended questions while the child or teen is working on their project will often promote talk about their feelings. For example, if a teen is working on a project you might ask: "What feelings or thoughts are you experiencing as you design the pillow?" "What are the memories inside of you that are different than the ones you share with the world?" Your voice level is also important to consider. Use a quiet voice to calm the energy and an excited voice to energize them.

It is important to avoid making comments, interpretations or judgments about the artwork. You may ask the child or teen: "Would you tell me about your painting?" But don't say: "What is that?" or guess "Is that a house?" You might ask: "If you were going to give your design a title, what would you call it?" Listen and reflect what they are saying and help them process what they are experiencing without directing.

Clean up is part of the process. Plan for and allow the children to help with putting things away and cleaning up what they have used.

