

What We Can Continue to Learn from Fred Rogers



Earth Day Ideas



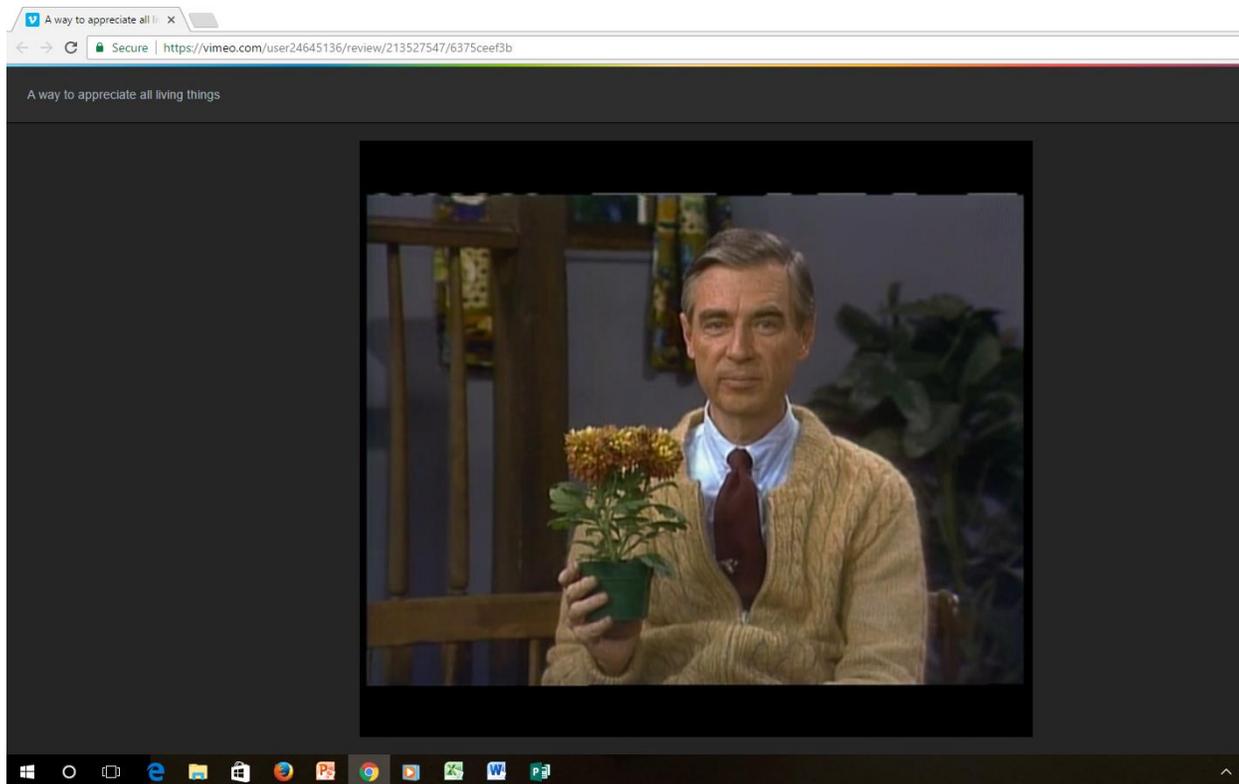
Earth Day is Saturday, April 22, and I've been thinking about ways to talk with children about caring for the environment. That can be a real challenge because concepts like scarcity, recycling and conservation can be hard to explain. Young children take our resources for granted, and that's understandable. They see that we turn on a switch, and the light comes on. They turn on the faucet, and the water flows.

Besides that, young children live in the present. For them, the future is too many "tomorrows" away.

Fred Rogers cared deeply about conserving and caring for our planet. He created a whole week of *Neighborhood* episodes about caring for the environment, but he didn't want to make young children feel responsible for solving our environmental problems or worry about the future of our planet. He believed strongly that

children need to trust that we adults are doing all we can to care for our world.

On the other hand, Fred also knew that there are ways we can help children grow to be caring stewards of our world. Here's one example of the many ways he encouraged children to appreciate things in the world around us.



Here are some ideas I've learned from Fred and from teachers I've met over the years.

Teach by our example. When we turn off lights and when we turn paper over to use the back of it, when we gather newspapers for recycling, we're sending clear messages to children that caring for our planet is important to us. They'll take in those messages because children want to be like the important adults in their lives, like the Quaker saying Fred often quoted: "Attitudes are caught, not taught."

Find new uses for throw-aways. Offer throw-aways like boxes and tubes and trays, and ask the children how they could use them. They might want to use a cardboard box as a garage for toy cars or as a pretend doll bed. They might want to make collages from greeting cards or sculptures from bits or throw-aways. When

we help children find new ways to use throw-aways, they're getting important ideas about resourcefulness, creativity, and recycling.

Create opportunities to appreciate nature. Take a walk and talk about things that capture children's attention. Point out things that you notice, too, like dandelions or even interesting weeds. Give children bags to collect things like fallen blossoms, twigs or stones.

Look for appropriate ways to conserve. Include a position of a "light leader" when you're naming daily "helpers." That's the person who turns off the lights in the room when everyone leaves the room. When the children are brushing teeth, encourage them to turn off the water while they're brushing. When it's appropriate, suggest that they use both sides of a piece of paper.

Of course Fred always reminded us that it's our continual care for the children themselves that helps them learn to care about what's important to us. We help them develop a sense of belonging to our planet when we help them know that they belong in our lives -- that they are loved, lovable, and capable of loving. They'll grow up finding it natural in their own "tomorrows" to turn off the lights and use the backs of the papers.

Thank you for being our neighbor,



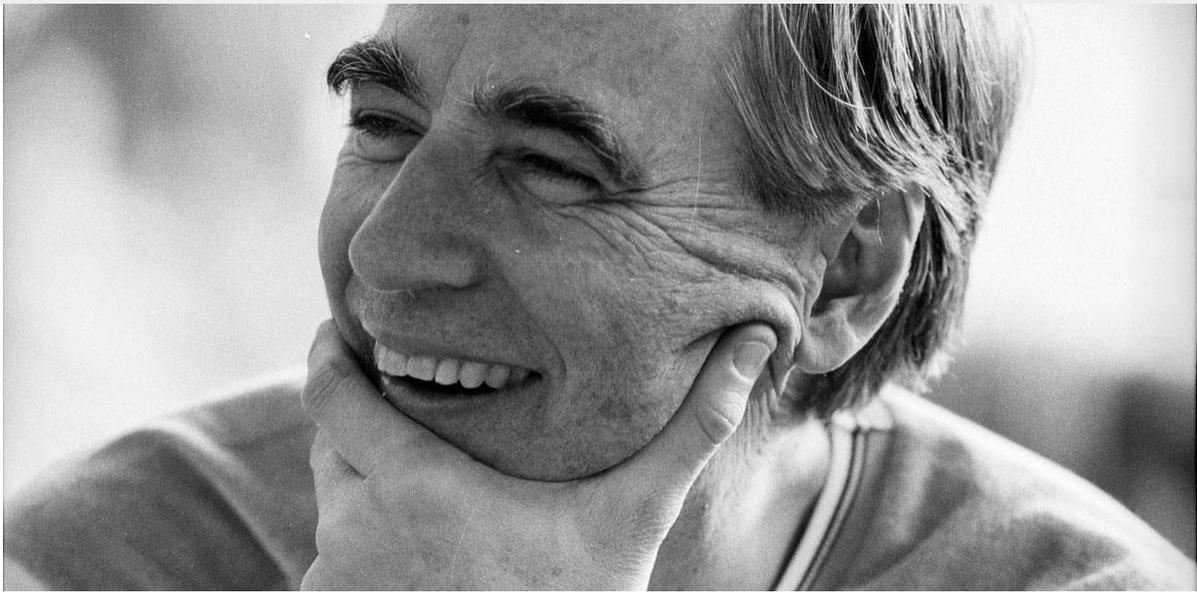
Hedda Sharapan

M.S. Child Development

PNC Grow Up Great Senior Fellow

hedda.sharapan@stvincent.edu

Timeless Wisdom from Fred Rogers



"It's the children who have already grown to feel that life is worth living and that people are worth loving, who are the ones most likely to grow up rejoicing in life and regarding this planet with loving care."

[MORE QUOTES](#)



[Subscribe](#) | [Forward](#) | [View past issues](#)

[Update your profile](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)

© 2017 Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning & Children's Media

You are receiving this email because you opted into receiving information from Hedda Sharapan about child development.

Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning & Children's Media

Saint Vincent College

300 Fraser Purchase Road

Latrobe, Pennsylvania 15650-2690