



What We Can Continue to Learn from Fred Rogers



Inspiring Us to Be Playful with Art



I just came back from the Professional Development Institute of NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children). What a great place to learn new ideas, have some “old” ideas confirmed, and connect with new friends and old friends! And sometimes, if you’re lucky, you come away from a session being so inspired by someone that you want to share his or her ideas with others.

That’s how I felt when I heard author-illustrator Hervé Tullet who spoke at one of the workshops. Do you know his first book *Press Here*? It’s brilliant, creative and playful – and so is he. After showing us his latest book *Play with Me*, he led us through a fun activity that reminded me so much of how Fred used art.

Fred knew how important it was to encourage children to be playful with art. Through their drawings and paintings or playdough, children have such a great opportunity to express whatever they're thinking or feeling. There can be real freedom – joy – and lots to learn about in creative expression.

All through the *Neighborhood* series Fred wanted his young viewers to meet and hopefully be inspired by a wide variety of artists, including a Native American potter, an artist who is blind and one who paints with her fingers, illustrator Eric Carle, a weaver, and a sculptor who uses recyclables. As a composer, Fred was playful at the piano, so it was interesting to see him being creative with art by combining it with music in this Neighborhood episode.



Here are two ideas for creative art activities, one inspired by Fred, combining music and art, and the other by Hervé Tullet, combining music and math.

- Fred was painting to Mozart's lively Jupiter Symphony in that video. If you check the internet, you can find lots of different classical or jazz pieces you could offer the children for their pictures. You can even google "happy classical music"! Pick music that you like to listen to – that's usually the best place to start. Let the children first listen to some of the music. Can they tell

you what they think about when they hear the music? What color markers do they want to use? How would they move their arms to the music?

- If the children enjoy this activity, think about offering it now and then. When children have more experience doing the same thing again, they can learn more from it. That's why it's helpful to repeat an activity a day or so later and at different times of the year – with different music.
- Along with introducing children to great music, you'll also be helping them develop listening skills and the ability to represent something in another form. Besides that, research is telling us that keeping a steady beat helps with self-regulation.

Here's one of Hervé's activities from the workshop – combining art and math:

- Give each child a blank sheet of paper and a colored marker. You'll also need one die (dice).
- Have the children draw a shape (any kind of shape, like a circle, square, triangle) in the middle of their sheet of paper. They're making a "funny creature," and that's the face.
- Roll the die. Either you or the children can call out the number on top. That's for the number of eyes to draw in the shape.
- Roll the die again – this time for the number of noses to draw. Continue the same process, as you call out each part of the creature – nose, mouth, ears, hands, and feet. To finish it off, the children can add as much or little hair as they want.
- What funny creatures they've made! Each one looks different, and the children will probably want to do it again and again.
- Keep in mind that it's okay if at first they don't draw the parts accurately or draw the right number of parts. They'll have a fun experience with art – and numbers.

In our field of early childhood there are so many forms of inspiration. I'm thinking about Hervé's delightfully bubbly personality. But there are also people like Fred who inspire us in a quieter way. I wonder if you realize that, in your own way, because of who you are and how much you care, what you say and what activities you offer, you're an inspiration, too -- for the children, their families, your

colleagues...and those who meet you at conferences or in your community.

Thank you for being our neighbor,



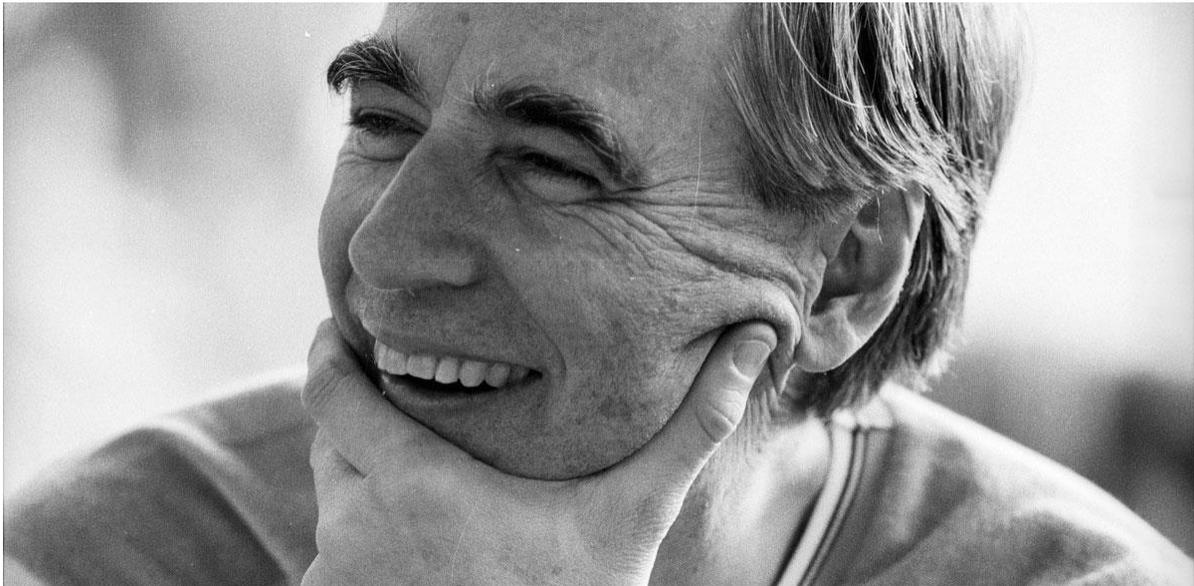
Hedda Sharapan

M.S. Child Development

PNC Grow Up Great Senior Fellow

hedda.sharapan@stvincent.edu

Timeless Wisdom from Fred Rogers



"If you could only sense how important you are to the lives of those you meet; how important you can be to the people you may never even dream of. There is something of yourself that you leave at every meeting with another person."

[MORE QUOTES](#)



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

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

©2016: *The Fred Rogers Center*

Photos courtesy of The Lynn Johnson Collection:
Ohio University Libraries

**Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning &
Children's Media**

Saint Vincent College
300 Fraser Purchase Road
Latrobe, Pennsylvania 15650-2690