

What We Can Continue to Learn from Fred Rogers



Starting with the Ordinary



Starting with the Ordinary

Here we are in mid-August, and I wonder if you're asking, as a lot of people are, "Where did the summer go?!" I also wonder if you're asking, as a lot of people are, "Where did my budget go?!" especially now when you're planning for the year and looking for a variety of materials to provide the children with engaging learning experiences.

While you're searching for meaningful materials, I hope you can appreciate how much you're giving children when you create a learning experience out of simple, everyday things. Think of the times you've offered an engaging activity that turns a paper plate into a mask, a paper bag into a puppet, an egg carton into a sorting box, or a half-pipe into a ramp. When you're resourceful, you're

showing children that just by using ideas, we can turn something ordinary into something extraordinary.

Fred, too, was resourceful. He was that way personally, and he was especially intentional about that on the *Neighborhood* series. He wanted to help children know that we can do a lot with a little -- with our imagination and open-ended materials, everyday things, and natural things around us.

Here's one of those resourceful ideas from a *Neighborhood* episode. Watch how much fun Fred has with a simple piece of string.



Here are some other ideas that start with simple things:

Encouraging resourcefulness

A few years ago in a workshop I attended, we all stood in a circle and passed around a paper towel tube. As the tube was handed to us one at a time, we had to call out a different way we might use it. What can you do with a paper towel tube? Some of us had trouble thinking of a new idea at first, but fueled by each other's creativity, we ended up with a wealth of ideas. Think about offering this at a staff meeting. Try it with a paper plate, too...or with an egg carton.

Doing an activity like that with adults can remind us there are all kinds of ways to offer those everyday items to the children. In fact, you might be surprised to see what they do with simple things like paper plates, paper towel tubes, shoe

boxes or cereal boxes. Here's another idea -- why not set these things out (with some craft materials) in the block corner, the science table, or the housekeeping area where children might be motivated to make them into something they can use as a tool or a prop in their play?

Working with natural things

I'll never forget a fascinating workshop I went to at a NAEYC conference about all the ways we can use rocks or stones to help children learn STEM/STEAM concepts (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Math). Think about how much children can learn when they spend time observing different kinds of rocks or stones with a magnifying glass, describing their similarities and differences, sorting them by color and then by texture, or lining them up by size, seeing which float and which sink, which roll down ramps faster, etc. All those learning experiences from something as ordinary as rocks or stones!

Before the children start working with rocks or stones, I would suggest that you read to them *Everybody Needs a Rock* by Byrd Baylor. It's a great way to help the children think of rocks or stones as treasures and handle them respectfully.

What I've learned over the years is that it's not enough to just listen to a keynote or workshop or webinar or read a newsletter or a blog. It's the reflection afterwards that can help us grow professionally. That's one of the reasons I always look forward to being at conferences. I hear ideas that excite me, and then I think about how I can translate them for my work. When I ask, "What do they mean to me?" they have more of a chance to be meaningful for me.

We all need a boost from professional development, whatever form it's in. And I hope that you, too, have those kinds of opportunities -- and that you can take the time to actively reflect on what they mean to you.

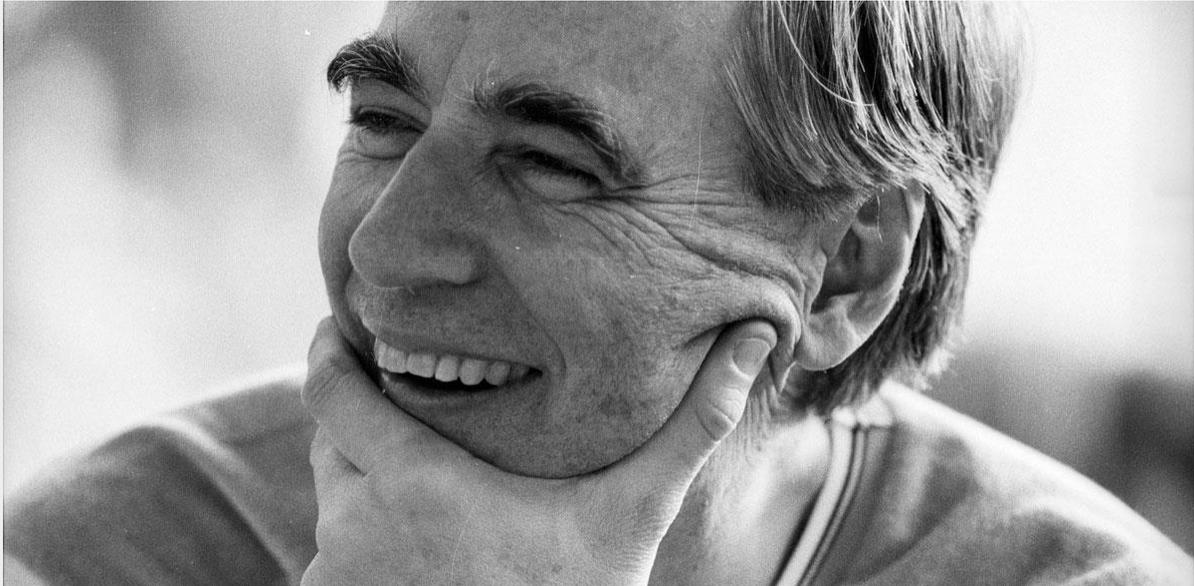
Thank you for being our neighbor,



Hedda Sharapan

M.S. Child Development
PNC Grow Up Great Senior Fellow
hedda.sharapan@stvincent.edu

Timeless Wisdom from Fred Rogers



"One of the most important things a child can learn is to make something out of whatever he or she happens to have at the moment."

[MORE QUOTES](#)



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

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

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

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