



What We Can Continue to Learn from Fred Rogers



Encouraging Curiosity



Much as I don't like the cold February weather here in Pittsburgh, one evening I found myself looking at a wintry scene with new eyes, thanks to Fred Rogers. As I was walking to my car in the parking lot, I noticed that the snow was especially beautiful. It was sparkling like diamonds. Normally, I would just keep walking and think how pretty it was. But that evening, inspired by Fred, I found myself going beyond that.

I started to *wonder*...to wonder why the snow was so sparkly. Was it because of the way the light from the lamppost was shining down on the snow? Was it because I was looking at new-fallen snow before footprints and tire tracks? Or maybe there was more moisture in the snow so the extra water molecules were catching the light? I'm not sure why -- or even if there was any truth in that last "scientific" explanation that I made up! I just enjoyed wondering about it and

thinking about some possible reasons.

Here's what I learned from Fred that made me so inquisitive that snowy evening. Watch what he does and says, and maybe you, too, will be inspired to wonder!



How can we build on what Fred Rogers was doing to encourage curiosity?

Model wondering

One of Fred's favorite quotes was "Attitudes are caught, not taught." Children want to be like the important adults in their lives. So when children see that we're curious about things, they're more likely to wonder, explore, predict and experiment, too.

There's another side to this, too, for us. Being curious about children's behavior is part of our professionalism. Taken in another direction, let's wonder about children's behavior that's challenging for us -- where is it coming from? What happened just before? Is there a particular time of day when that usually

happens? Or a particular activity?

Ask questions about familiar, everyday things

In a deceptively simple moment on the video, Fred just looked around the room and mentioned lots of different things we could wonder about -- “How long did it take someone to write this book? How many stoplights are there in the world? Do fish laugh, or do they cry?”

When you’re helping children learn about basic scientific concepts, keep in mind that wondering and asking are part of “developmentally appropriate” science in early childhood. We want them to be curious about things in their everyday world.

And you don’t have to have all the answers. I certainly don’t. In fact, I don’t understand much about the scientific phenomena in my everyday world. Even if I did, it would be impossible to explain in a way that a young child would understand. Often our best response is “What do you think?” or “I wonder how we could find out?” You might be in for a treat, too, because you’ll probably hear some fascinating -- and delightful -- ideas!

Something else can happen when we’re wondering. On that cold snowy evening, I found a new appreciation for winter. Thank you, Fred! Wondering and marveling can lead us to a fuller appreciation of lots of things in the world around us -- and when children see us wondering, marveling, appreciating, that’s contagious!

Thank you for being our neighbor,



Hedda Sharapan

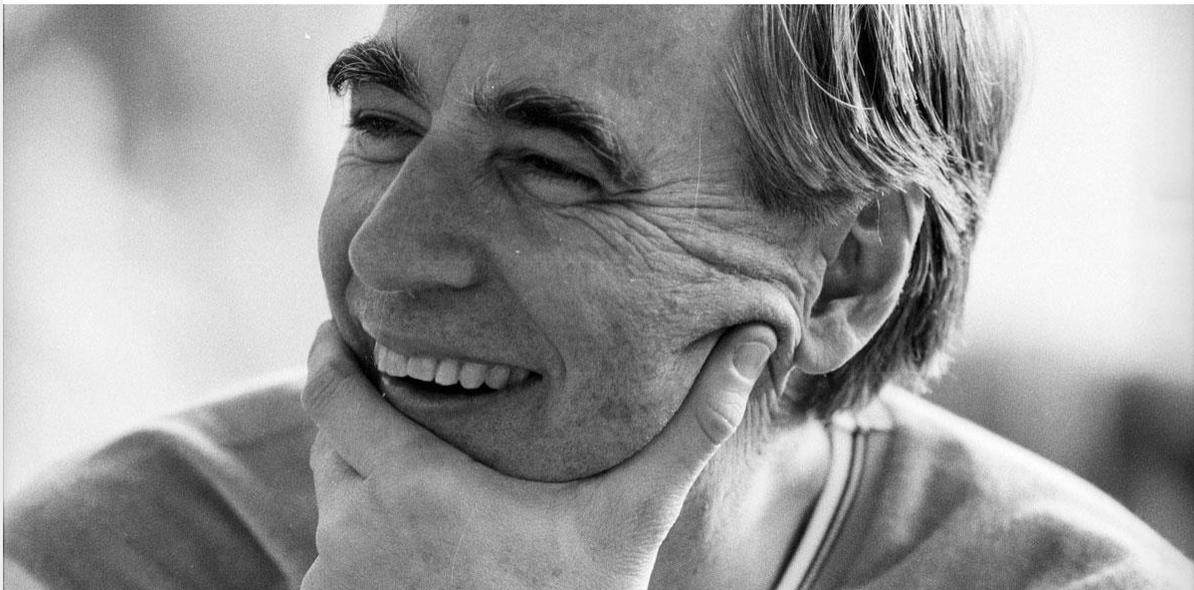
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P.S. “I wonder how people make...” Remember the factory videos on *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*? We’ve included a number of those popular videos on the new website www.misterrogers.org under the banner of “Places.” You’ll find there videos showing how people make crayons, balls, towels, wagons, macaroni, and sneakers. Even if children aren’t familiar with the *Neighborhood* program, they can appreciate Fred Rogers’ thoughtfully planned, developmentally-appropriate narration.

Timeless Wisdom from Fred Rogers



"In child care, with all that you're doing for and with the children, it can be a real challenge to allow a child to take time to explore and discover...and for you to respond to the questions that may even come in the midst of storytime or cleanup. But when you can, you're building a rich foundation for a love of learning that will serve those children all their lives."

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