

Do you think adding an Instagram filter counts as creativity?

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When we screened Screenagers to employees at Pixar, I had the following interchange with the organizer Guido Quaroni, V.P. of Software R&D (and also the voice Guido in Pixar's film, Cars): I said "It must be hard to find enough software coders for all you do. He replied, "No, it is not too hard — yes, we compete with Google down the way but that's okay because frankly, we are a bit cooler." Then he paused and continued "The real challenge is finding the creatives...the people to write the stories, to do the animation, to create the set designs." I was taken struck by this response.

This is not surprising because it's hard work to be creative. The brain of teens, like us, gets seduced into relaxation through entertainment. Meanwhile, the inner critic starts making himself and herself comfortably at home sometime around age 11 plus or minus a couple of years.

A while back, a team at Facebook's headquarters in Menlo Park asked me to come to show Screenagers and talk afterward. When I brought up the 3% finding about creativity, one of the VPs said that he knew of the study and that it did not include activities done on Instagram (FB had recently bought Instagram). Many teens do add filters and do many arty things on posts — so it is a point worth talking about with our teens. We can ask them if how they feel that social media exercises their creative muscles.

It so happens that the entire interior of Facebook was covered with art installations. Our host said, "We have great internships where we invite in artists because it is so key that all our employees be reminded to think outside the box."

We all want young people to be thinking outside the box and executing on their ideas. I think back to a screening when I was talking with two teen girls about what was happening related to their phone use and one said: "Everything is OK I guess, but I am bummed that I don't do any of the art projects that I used to."

With many of our kids on Spring Break, now is a good time to think about helping them find things to do creatively online and offline.

If you are tired of barking at them to get offline, here are some ideas to help redirect them into something more creative online — and by the way, it can be a great opportunity to do it with them. Also, if there is a creative tool they already know and love, have them teach it to you (Don't you just love when you witness their excitement of teaching us things?)

1. Creating a movie on their phone using one of the many editing apps. The iMovie app is way easier on your phone than the desktop.
2. Work on a piece of music. They can make it offline and then simply record it online and if they are inspired to share it with others they can upload it to [Soundcloud](#).
3. Making a music mix. Share this article with them about what a "[mixed tape](#)" was back in the day.
4. Make their own podcast. They can use their phone to do interviews out in the world. Then, GarageBand has a way to make a podcast. Have them listen to any of [these Podcasts](#) for inspiration.
5. [Draw](#) on a tablet.
6. Learn [animation](#).

HERE ARE SOME OFFLINE SUGGESTIONS FOR CREATIVITY:

1. Suggest they write a script for a scene of a movie, and if they create a part for you, you will do a script reading — or better yet, truly act it out.
2. Prick a hole in eggs to blow out the inside and use sharpies to make beautifully decorated eggs.
3. Create a scavenger hunt with their friends.
4. Go to a museum and sketch an art piece.
5. Make their own non-tech pinball machine.

6. If you have Girl Scout cookies, one could make a sculpture (like the photo) and build something from those boxes or other boxes.
7. Beading — it was and still is my favorite artist past time.
8. Build your own skateboard. If you have tools at your house there are some good videos on YouTube that show you how to do it. But... this company has a cool kit [skateboard](#).
9. Here is [a list](#) I made of ideas last fall.

Here are a few questions to get their brains thinking about some of these ideas:

- What are all the things you do online that you would categorize as creative?
- Do you think making Snapchat stories takes creativity?
- In a Common Sense study, they found that only 3% of what kids do online is about creating. What do you think about that statistic? How much of the time online do you spend actually creating something?
- Read the list of ideas above and see if any of them appeals to them. Ask them if they have some ideas about something new they might try over the break.

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