



MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD

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Mister Rogers' Neighborhood Programs #511-515

One of the most delightful and deeply perceptive of all those with whom I have had the privilege to work is Dr. Margaret McFarland, Associate Professor of Psychology of the School of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh.

I have heard her emphasize again and again that, "At each stage of the child's development, his or her interests in the world are related to the inner experiencing of growth."

"As each new facet of development emerges," Dr. McFarland has said, "children tend to concentrate on objects and phenomena in the environment that give outer expression to their own growth. From this expression comes cognitive mastery of reality."

And she has helped to make me aware that; "Young people depend upon adults' understanding of reality to progress in differentiating between fantasy and reality."

Following Dr. McFarland's wise counsel, each of our television visits makes a clear distinction between what is real and what is pretend. For example, each time we develop the fantasy stories in the Neighborhood of Make-Believe, we are very careful to stress that we are

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pretending, and sometimes, like this week, we illustrate what can happen when what is imagined and what is real become confused.

We explain to children how that can happen - that sometimes when you wish for something very much, it's hard not to think that it's going to happen right NOW!

We encourage children to pretend because one can learn by thinking about things we like and discovering how they might happen in reality, but we are very careful to make it very clear when we are pretending and when we're talking about what really is.

As Dr. McFarland has said, "Fantasy and imaginative thought are lifetime assets in the progressive development of the inner resources of human beings and essential components of all creative and scientific achievement." That's mighty important, and we'll continue to encourage this kind of healthy development all we can.

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood is broadcast each weekday on _____ Channel _____ at _____. Fred Rogers is always glad to receive letters from his television friends and from time to time will answer representative ones in this column.