



Welcome to the JOURNEY

"You don't have to do everything to make a difference. You just have to begin."

TEN SMALL OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE A MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE IN THE LIFE OF A CHILD.



You do not need to complete these activities in order.



You do not need a special schedule.



And you certainly do not need to do them all at once.

Just start.

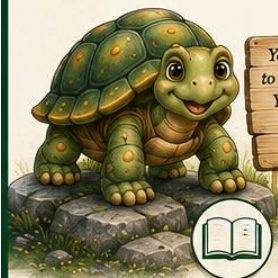
Try one activity when it fits naturally into your home, classroom, or time with a child. Talk. Write. Draw. Reflect.

Return to an activity when it feels useful. Practice the same idea in a different setting. Invite an older child to encourage a younger one.



Even one activity each month means that over the course of a year, you will have intentionally explored all ten.

And small moments practiced consistently can become something much bigger.



You don't have to do everything. You just have to begin.

Each question below connects to one of the ten activities that follows, creating a simple journey from understanding what a child needs to helping them grow with gratitude, hope, and contentment.



1

What does this child need?

2

Where has this child grown?

3

How does this child think?

4

What is this behavior communicating?

5

What habits are shaping the day?

6

What is happening inside this child?

7

What helps this child keep going?

8

Who is influencing the direction this child is growing?

9

What is this child learning about the world—and the people in it?

10

What will help this child live with gratitude, inspiration, hope, and contentment—even when life isn't perfect?

ONE ACTIVITY IS ENOUGH TO BEGIN

You may have read *Growth Mindset Lifestyle: Grit by Design* from beginning to end—or you may simply have found these resources and decided to try one.

Either is okay.

Each activity gives you a WHY, WHAT, HOW, and WHAT MIGHT I NOTICE, along with simple ways to adapt the experience for Home or Classroom use.



The goal isn't to complete another checklist. The goal is to create small opportunities to notice a child, listen, ask a thoughtful question, encourage growth, and help that child gradually understand themselves and the world around them.



Small Steps in Learning. Big Steps in Life. ♥ T.L. McCullough

CHAPTER

1

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Foundation Check:

What Helps a Child Feel Ready?

Small steps today build a lifetime of growth.

Children learn, try new things, solve problems, and grow best when their basic needs for physical well-being, safety, connection, and confidence are supported.

♥ This simple activity helps you notice what may be helping—or getting in the way. ♥

1



WHY

Why does this matter?

When a child feels healthy, safe, connected, and capable, they are better able to focus, participate, take healthy risks, and keep growing.

2



WHAT

What will we do?

Use the five prompts below to explore what helps a child feel ready. You can talk about these together, listen and observe, or invite the child to respond.

3



HOW

How do I make it work?

Choose one prompt or several. Talk, write, draw, or reflect. Listen more than you talk. There are no right or wrong answers—just helpful clues that can guide your support.

4



NOTICE

What might I discover?

You may learn what helps a child feel secure, included, competent, and ready to try. Your insights can help you strengthen routines, adjust expectations, or offer the support they need.

THE 5 STEPPING STONES: ASK, LISTEN, AND NOTICE

1



BODY

What helps your body feel ready for the day?

2



SAFE

What helps you feel calm and safe?

3



CONNECTED

Who or what helps you feel like you belong?

4



CONFIDENT

What helps you feel capable and good about yourself?

5



READY TO GROW

What are you ready to try, learn, or work toward?



AT HOME — Try It This Way

Use one prompt or several during an ordinary, relaxed moment—a car ride, at dinner, before bed, or while doing something together.

Talk, write, draw, or reflect.

Listen for what helps your child feel ready, safe, connected, and confident. Revisit the prompts another day—you may be surprised by what has changed or what your child is ready to share.

Keep the page somewhere you can return to when things feel "off" or when new needs appear.



IN THE CLASSROOM — Try It This Way

Use one prompt at a time as a quiet reflection or journal-writing opportunity. Students can respond privately in their own journals rather than sharing aloud. At another time, invite them to look back at an earlier response and notice what has changed, what still helps, or how they may have grown.

Talk, write, draw, or reflect.

One thoughtful question can be enough.



A LITTLE REMINDER FOR THE ADULT

Notice before you correct. Sometimes what looks like unwillingness, misbehavior, or unmotivation may be a signal that something underneath needs attention, support, or understanding.

Need a few ideas?

Examples of things that might help a child feel ready include: eating breakfast, getting enough sleep, knowing what to expect, a calm space, a familiar routine, a trusted adult, feeling included, hearing encouraging words, taking a short break, or remembering a previous success.

You don't have to do everything. Just start. ♥ One activity a month = all 10 concepts in one year!

♥ - Small Steps in Learning. Big Steps in Life. - ♥

CHAPTER

2

GROWTH MINDSET & NEUROPLASTICITY

Catch the Growth: Then & Now

Every time a child learns, tries, and doesn't give up, their brain changes.
Looking back shows them how far they've already come! ♥

Your brain
can grow at
any age.



WHY

Why does this matter?

Children don't always notice their own growth because it happens little by little. Looking back helps them see that effort, practice, strategies, help, and persistence really do make a difference.

Benefit for you: It gives you a powerful way to say, "You already have evidence that you can grow."



WHAT

What will we do?

Choose ONE thing the child can do now that was once difficult. Then explore four moments:

- 1 THEN – What was hard at first?
- 2 TRY – What did you do when it didn't work?
- 3 CHANGE – What helped you improve?
- 4 NOW – What can you do now that you couldn't do before?



HOW

How do I make it work?

Talk, write, draw, or reflect.

Choose one experience. It doesn't have to be big.

Ask open questions and listen more than you talk.

Look for the process: practice, strategy, mistakes, help, time, and trying again.

Let the child do most of the remembering.



NOTICE

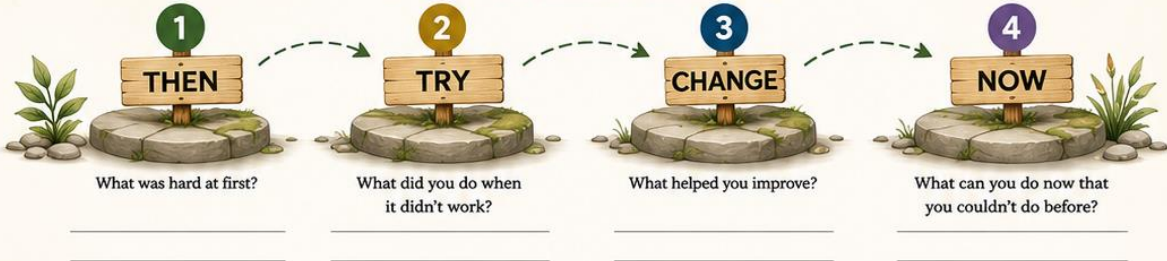
What might I discover?

Listen for what the child believes caused the improvement. Do they say, "I'm just good at it now"? Or can they see:

- I practiced.
- Someone showed me another way.
- I kept trying.
- I made mistakes.

This helps connect success to effort, strategy, support, and persistence—not just talent.

THE 4 MOMENTS OF GROWTH



AT HOME — Try It This Way

Make it a family growth conversation! Each person—even you—shares something that was once difficult but is easier now. Older siblings can share stories that encourage younger ones. Use one prompt or several during a relaxed moment.

Talk, write, draw, or reflect.

Revisit the activity another day or another month.

You may be surprised by what has changed!

Small moments of growth today build big confidence tomorrow.



IN THE CLASSROOM — Try It This Way

Use one question as a quiet journal-writing opportunity or a class discussion starter.

Put this on the board:

**What can you do now that was once hard for you?
What helped it change?**

Give students 5 minutes to write privately.

Later, invite them to look back at an earlier response to notice what has changed or how they have grown.

One thoughtful question can be enough.



A LITTLE REMINDER FOR THE ADULT

Don't just celebrate what they can do.

Help them recognize how they got there.

Need a few ideas?

Think about reading, math, sports, friendships, routines, managing emotions, hobbies, chores, technology, speaking up, or learning something new.



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CHAPTER 3

CRITICAL THINKING & THINKING TALENTS

One Problem. Five Ways to Think.

Every child has a thinking talent. The right question helps that talent shine.

There is more than one way to think—and all of them matter.

WHY

Why does this matter?

Being "smart" is not about knowing the right answer fast. It is about using different kinds of thinking. When children explore problems in more than one way, their strengths emerge and their confidence grows.

Benefit for you: You may see a child's strengths that don't always show up in traditional schoolwork.

WHAT

What will we do?

Choose ONE simple situation from real life.

Then explore it through five different thinking paths:

- 1 **IMAGINE** – Productive Thinking
- 2 **CHOOSE** – Decision Making
- 3 **PLAN** – Planning
- 4 **PREDICT** – Forecasting
- 5 **EXPLAIN** – Communication

HOW

How do I make it work?

Talk, write, draw, or reflect.

You do not have to use all five paths. Pick one or two.

Follow the child's thinking.

Another day, try a different path with a different situation.

Resist solving the problem for them. Ask—and wait.

NOTICE

What might I discover?

Where did the child come alive?

- Ideas poured out?
- Carefully weighed choices?
- Naturally organized steps?
- Anticipated what could happen?
- Became animated explaining?

Don't rank the paths. Notice the strengths.

THE 5 THINKING PATHS



AT HOME — Try It This Way

Use something that is actually happening—planning Saturday, rearranging a bedroom, making dinner, solving a sibling problem, preparing for an outing, deciding how to spend \$10, or helping someone in need.

Invite everyone—even adults—to share how they think. Let children contribute to real family decisions when appropriate.

Your child's thinking is useful here.



IN THE CLASSROOM — Try It This Way

Give the class one situation connected to something you are studying or a real classroom topic.

Students can choose—or be assigned—a Thinking Path. Groups or individuals respond in the way of that path.

Compare how the different kinds of thinking helped solve the same problem.

For journal reflection, choose ONE path or question.

One thoughtful question can be enough.



A LITTLE REMINDER FOR THE ADULT

Before giving the answer, give the child a chance to think.

Sometimes the question reveals more about a child's abilities than the answer.

Need a few ideas?

Try everyday situations involving meals, schedules, money, chores, friendships, family plans, classroom routines, stories, science, community problems, or helping someone.

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CHAPTER 4

COMMUNICATION, BONDING & ACADEMIC RESISTANCE

Pause at the Bridge: What Is This Really Telling Me?

A strong
relationship
makes learning
possible.

Before reacting, pause to understand.

Connection opens the door. Understanding lights the way. ♥



WHY

Why does this matter?

What looks like resistance may not tell the whole story.

A pause helps you look underneath the behavior and respond in a way that protects both learning and relationship.

Benefit for you: You may discover that the real reason is something you can help with—when you listen first.



WHAT

What will we do?

When a child shows resistance, choose ONE real moment.

Instead of reacting right away, cross the bridge using three simple steps:

- 1 **PAUSE** – What am I actually seeing or hearing?
- 2 **WONDER** – What might be underneath this?
- 3 **CONNECT** – What could I say that opens the door?



HOW

How do I make it work?

Talk, write, draw, or reflect.

Lower the temperature before raising the expectation.

You are not removing the assignment. You are changing how you get there.

Resist solving the problem for them. Ask—and wait.

Listen more than you talk.



NOTICE

What might I discover?

Listen for the difference between what you assumed and what the child actually tells you.

You might hear:

- I don't understand.
- I don't know where to start.
- I'm afraid I'll get it wrong.
- I'm just tired.
- I really did forget.
- Something else entirely.

Curiosity before conclusion builds trust and teamwork.

THE 3 STEPS THAT BUILD THE BRIDGE

WHAT I SEE

What is the behavior I notice?
Describe it without judgment.
"The book hasn't been opened."
— not —
"They're being lazy."

1 PAUSE

What am I actually seeing or hearing?



Stay calm.
Describe what happened.

2 WONDER

What might be underneath this?



Too difficult?
Overwhelmed?
Embarrassed?
Tired?
Doesn't understand?
Doesn't know where to start?
Something else?

3 CONNECT

What could I say that opens communication?



"Help me understand what's making this hard right now."
Then—listen.

WHAT I NOW UNDERSTAND

What did I learn by listening?
This helps me respond wisely and choose the next reasonable step together.



AT HOME — Try It This Way

Use a real moment, not a made-up one.

When resistance appears, try replacing your first reaction with:

"Help me understand what's making this hard right now."

Sit beside your child when possible.

Listen first. Then decide together what the next reasonable step should be.

Later—when things are calm—reflect for yourself:

What did I think was happening?

What did I learn after I listened?



IN THE CLASSROOM — Try It This Way

Use this with one student who seems unusually resistant, disengaged, or frustrated.

Before assuming motivation is the problem, jot down privately:

What I observed: _____

What I wonder: _____

Find a quiet opportunity:

"I've noticed this has seemed harder lately. Help me understand what's getting in the way."

For a student who communicates better in writing, offer a private journal response:

"Something that makes learning harder for me sometimes is..."

No required sharing.



A LITTLE REMINDER FOR THE ADULT

Connection does not remove accountability. It helps make accountability possible.

The goal isn't to excuse the behavior.
The goal is to understand enough to respond wisely.

Need a few ideas?

Watch for changes around homework, reading, tests, projects, missing assignments, morning routines, participation, organization, frustration, asking for help, or any time learning feels hard.

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HABITS, ROUTINES, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND DIGITAL FRONTIER

The Habit Swap:

Keep • Change • Replace • Try It for 7 Days

Routines
create the runway.
Discernment
guides the flight.

What we repeatedly do shapes how we live.
Small changes today can create a better tomorrow. ♥

WHY

Why does this matter?

Small repeated actions become habits. Good habits bring more peace, less stress, and more time and energy for learning, creativity, connection, and the things that matter most.

Benefit for you: You may find one small change that turns a hard part of the day into something that works.

WHAT

What will we do?

Choose ONE routine or repeated moment in the day.
Look at it through four stepping stones:

- 1 **KEEP** – What's working?
- 2 **CHANGE** – What gets in the way?
- 3 **REPLACE** – What can we do instead?
- 4 **TRY IT FOR 7 DAYS** – Experiment and see!

HOW

How do I make it work?

Talk, write, draw, or reflect.

Choose something small enough to change.

Replace it with one simple action you can actually do.

You do not have to be perfect—just consistent.

Involve your child in choosing the replacement.

NOTICE

What might I discover?

What happens after 7 days?

- Did it get easier?
- Was there less arguing?
- Did mornings feel calmer?
- Did learning begin sooner?
- Did we sleep better?
- Did nothing improve?

If nothing changed, that's okay.
Change the experiment—not the child.

THE 4 STEPPING STONES TO BETTER HABITS



AT HOME — Try It This Way

Pick one repeated moment that creates unnecessary friction.
Work together as a family to Keep, Change, Replace, and Try It for 7 Days.

Everyone—including adults—can choose something!

After 7 days, talk about what you noticed.

Keep what helps. Adjust what doesn't.

Celebrate small wins!

Examples:

- Morning routine
- Homework time
- Screen time choices
- Bedtime routine
- Coming home
- Getting ready for school



IN THE CLASSROOM — Try It This Way

Choose one learning routine that could go more smoothly.

Students can:

- Work together as a class to improve one routine,
- OR
- Pick a personal routine to change.

Use journals or a simple chart:

What did I try?

What changed?

What will I keep?

Try it for 7 school days,
then reflect.



A LITTLE REMINDER FOR THE ADULT

Don't try to change the whole day.

Change one repeated moment.

Small routines practiced consistently
can create room for greater
independence and confidence.

Need a few ideas?

Watch for moments about homework, screen time,
meals, chores, bedtime, getting ready for school,
organization, transitions, breaks, participation,
handling notifications, or beginning independent work.



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THE INTERNAL COMPASS

SEL, Self-Awareness & the Calm That Precedes Learning

A calm mind
helps a child
find their
way.

When children understand their feelings, they make better choices, build stronger relationships, and are ready to learn.

WHY

Why does this matter?

Children who build self-awareness and emotional regulation are better able to handle challenges, stay focused, and make healthy choices. It also strengthens confidence, empathy, and resilience — key ingredients for lifelong success.

Benefit for you: You get to see the whole child — not just what they do, but what they feel and need.

WHAT

What will we do?

Use the 5-Step Compass to explore what's going on inside. Choose one situation or feeling and work through the steps together.

- 1 **STOP** — Pause and notice.
- 2 **NAME** — What am I feeling?
- 3 **UNDERSTAND** — What might be behind it?
- 4 **CHOOSE** — What can I do next?
- 5 **MOVE** — Take a small step.

Small steps build big confidence.

HOW

How do I make it work?

- Talk about feelings, use real-life moments, write, draw, or reflect.
- Keep it simple and calm.
- Let the child lead when possible.
- Practice regularly — not just when there's a problem.

It's not about being perfect — it's about progress.

NOTICE

What might I discover?

Listen for the difference between what you see and what they feel.

You might notice:

- They are more aware of their feelings.
- They make better choices.
- They handle frustration more calmly.
- They show more empathy and kindness.
- They grow in confidence and self-control.

THE 5-STEP COMPASS

A REAL-LIFE MOMENT

Pick one situation or feeling that comes up often.

It could be feeling frustrated, worried, excited, left out, overwhelmed, or even just needing a break.



1

STOP



Pause and notice. What's happening?

2

NAME



What am I feeling?

3

UNDERSTAND



What might be behind it?

4

CHOOSE



What can I do next?

5

MOVE



Take a small step.

WHAT'S ON YOUR COMPASS?

Each feeling is a signal, not a problem.

It gives you information.



AT HOME — Try It This Way

Use a real moment, not a made-up one. Talk together about how feelings show up at home. Then use the 5-Step Compass to find a helpful next step.

Ideas:

- Feeling frustrated with homework
- Getting along with a sibling
- Feeling nervous about a new situation
- Managing screen time
- Handling disappointment

It's not about fixing the feeling. It's about learning from it.



A LITTLE REMINDER FOR THE ADULT

You don't have to have all the answers.
You just have to be willing to listen.

Calm, connected conversations build confidence and resilience.



IN THE CLASSROOM — Try It This Way

Use the 5-Step Compass for a student, small group, or the whole class. Choose a situation that fits your setting — a classroom challenge, a social situation, or a common emotion.

Ideas:

- Use it as a journal prompt.
- Try it during a calm moment or circle time.
- Let students choose a feeling to explore.
- Pair it with a discussion, art, or role-play.

When students feel seen, they are more ready to learn.



Need a few ideas?

Watch for moments when big feelings show up — frustration, worry, excitement, sadness, or stress. Look for changes in mood, behavior, sleep, relationships, or school engagement.

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CHAPTER

7

STAYING MOTIVATED and Being Positive

THE MOTIVATION MATCH

What Helps Me Keep Going?

Motivation looks different for every child.
Let's discover what fuels YOUR persistence. ♥

Progress is
not a race.
It is
a direction.



CHOICE

Do I have some say
in how I do this?
I feel more motivated
when I can make
choices.



CONNECTION

Who helps me
keep going?
I feel stronger when
I have someone in
my corner.



PROGRESS

How can I tell I'm
getting better?
I feel motivated when
I can see or feel my
improvement.



PURPOSE

Why does this
matter to me?
I feel motivated when
it means something
important to me.



FIND YOUR STRONGEST FUEL



AT HOME — Try It This Way

Use a real goal your child already has.
Explore all four questions together.
Let your child choose the fuel that helps most.

Parents can participate too!
Everyone has something they're working on.



Try these examples:

- Finish a book
- Learn multiplication facts
- Practice an instrument
- Make the team
- Complete a project
- Save money
- Improve handwriting
- Learn to cook
- Make a friend



A LITTLE REMINDER FOR THE ADULT

Don't just push harder. Find the fuel.

Motivation may look different from one
child to another—and it may change as
children grow.

Celebrate effort, growth, and persistence.
You're building a long-term success story.



IN THE CLASSROOM — Try It This Way

Before a long assignment, project, or unit,
help students discover what motivates them.

Students can:

- Choose ONE of the four fuels.
- Write or draw about it in a journal.
- Keep it private or share with you.

*When students understand what helps them
keep going, they become more independent
and confident learners.*



Quick Journal Starters:

- When schoolwork gets difficult, what helps me keep going?
- Which fuel gives me the biggest boost right now?
- Did what I chose actually help? Why or why not?



NEED A FEW IDEAS?

Try this with reading, homework, sports, music, chores,
hobbies, friendships, long-term projects, practicing
a skill, saving for something, or any personal goal.
Every small step in the right direction counts!



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THE POWER OF CHOICE: Choosing Role Models, Friends & Influential Leaders Who Lift You Higher

WHO WALKS BESIDE YOU?

The people we choose to spend time with can shape our today and influence our tomorrow. ♥

You don't need
a crowd.
Sometimes
ONE person can
change your life.

WHY

Why does this matter?

The people we invite close to us can encourage us, challenge us, comfort us, teach us, and help us become the person we want to be.

Benefit for you:

You may discover people who help you grow—and notice the qualities that make them helpful.

WHAT

What will we do?

Think about people who walk **WITH** you—and people who walk **AHEAD** of you. Notice how they influence you using these 4 steps:

- 1 **I FEEL** – How do I feel after spending time with this person?
- 2 **I BECOME** – What good qualities come out in me?
- 3 **I LEARN** – What do I learn from how this person lives or leads?
- 4 **I CHOOSE** – Is this someone I want beside me as I grow?

HOW

How do I make it work?

- Talk about people who matter.
- Write, draw, or journal about what you notice.
- Look for patterns.
- Be honest and kind.
- Remember—people grow, and relationships can change over time.

Choose people who lift you higher, not lower.

NOTICE

What might I discover?

- I feel happier, calmer, or more confident.
- I try harder to be my best.
- I make better choices.
- I feel encouraged when things are hard.
- I want to learn, grow, and do good.
- I feel like I belong.

Pay attention to how people influence your heart and actions.

THE 4 STEPS TO NOTICE WHO LIFTS YOU HIGHER



AT HOME — Try It This Way

Talk about people who make a positive difference in your life. They can be friends, family, neighbors, teachers, coaches, leaders, or anyone who inspires you.

You can think about:

PEOPLE WHO WALK WITH ME *Friends and peers*

- Good friends
- Classmates
- Teammates
- Cousins
- Siblings



PEOPLE WHO WALK AHEAD OF ME *Mentors and leaders*

- Teachers
- Coaches
- Grandparents
- Employers
- Faith leaders
- Older role models



Share a time when someone believed in you, taught you something important, or helped you through a hard time. You might be the person who makes the difference for someone else!



IN THE CLASSROOM — Try It This Way

Help students think about the people who influence them. This can be a quiet, private reflection.

Students can:

- Think of one friend and one role model.
- Use the 4 steps to reflect and write.
- Create a "People Who Lift Me Higher" page with drawings or words.
- Think about how they can be that kind of person for others, too.



We can't always choose our circumstances, but we can choose who we let influence our life.



A LITTLE REMINDER FOR THE ADULT

A child doesn't need a crowd. Sometimes one steady relationship can help change the direction of a life. Encourage your child to choose people who bring out their best and support their growth.



NEED A FEW IDEAS?

Look for people who are kind, honest, respectful, responsible, hopeful, and who treat others well. Choose people who help you grow into who you want to become. You become more like the people you spend the most time with.



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CHAPTER

9

LIFELONG LITERACY: Read a Balance of Both FICTION AND NONFICTION READING

TWO BOOKS. TWO LENSES. ONE BIGGER WORLD.

Two kinds of reading. Two kinds of learning.
Together they open a lifetime of discovery.

Both have
their benefits.
Both build
a better you.

WHY

Why does this matter?

Reading only one kind of text
gives us only part of the picture.

Nonfiction helps us understand
how the world works.

Fiction helps us understand
the people living in it.

Benefit for you:

Pairing the two can turn a
child's interest into deeper
knowledge, curiosity, empathy,
and conversation.



WHAT

What will we do?

Start with one interest or topic.

Find TWO readings:

- 1 NONFICTION**
Learn the world.
What did I discover
that is true?
- 2 FICTION**
Experience the world.
What did I understand,
imagine, or feel through
a story?
- 3 CONNECT**
See the bigger picture.
How did reading both
help me understand this
topic differently?

HOW

How do I make it work?

- Talk, write, draw, or reflect.
- Keep it light—one idea from
each reading is enough.
- Follow curiosity before
assigning a title.
- Let your child choose
the topic.
- Make it fun, not a report.

Explore. Discover.
Connect.

NOTICE

What might I discover?

Watch which lens your child
naturally prefers.

Do they gravitate toward:

- facts, explanations,
diagrams, and real events?
- characters, stories,
emotions, and imagination?

Neither is wrong.
Honor the strength and gently
open the other door.

*A balance builds a
broader mind and
a kinder heart.*

TWO LENSES. ONE BIGGER WORLD.

NONFICTION LENS

LEARN THE WORLD

What is real?

- Facts & information
- How things work
- Real people & events
- Photos, charts,
diagrams, evidence
- Builds knowledge &
understanding

When we read both,
we understand more—
about the world
and the people in it.

CONNECT LENS

SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE

- Compare • Ask Questions
- Make Connections
- See the Full Story
- Broader Knowledge
- Stronger Empathy
- Better Thinker

FICTION LENS

EXPERIENCE THE WORLD

What is possible?

- Characters & feelings
- Imaginations & ideas
- Different perspectives
- Adventures &
relationships
- Builds empathy &
understanding



AT HOME — Try It This Way

Choose a topic your child is curious about.
Read one nonfiction piece and one fiction piece.
Then talk about what each helped you learn or feel.
Families can model too!

Examples of topics:



Share what you learned from nonfiction.
Share what you experienced from fiction.
Notice how both gave you a bigger picture.



IN THE CLASSROOM — Try It This Way

Pair fiction and nonfiction across the curriculum.
One topic. Two readings. Two perspectives.

Students can:

- Read both on the same topic
- Think: What did each help me understand?
- Write, draw, or discuss the connection
- Share with a partner or as a class

Journal starters:

- What did the story help me understand that
the facts alone could not?
- What did the nonfiction help me understand
better about the story?



Two Books.
Two Lenses.
One Bigger
World.



A LITTLE REMINDER FOR THE ADULT

Don't ask a child to choose between
knowledge and imagination.
Give them both.

Reading widely helps children
understand both the world around
them and the people within it.



NEED A FEW IDEAS?

Try these combinations:

- Animals + animal stories
- History + historical fiction
- Science + adventure stories
- Biographies + stories about similar challenges
- Places + stories set there
- Inventions + imaginative stories about discovery

Curiosity is the spark.
Reading is the journey.
Balance is the path to
a lifetime of learning.

Small Steps in Learning. Big Steps in Life.

CHAPTER 10

SUSTAINABLE HAPPINESS, INSPIRATION & GRATITUDE

The Light I Carry

GRATITUDE • INSPIRATION • HOPE • CONTENTMENT

Life isn't always perfect. But we can always choose to notice the good, find light, and carry hope—one day at a time. ♥

Gratitude notices what is good.
Hope believes tomorrow can be better.



GRATITUDE

What is good right now?
Something small counts.



There are no "big enough" answers.
All answers count.

I AM GRATEFUL FOR...

What is something good I can notice today?



INSPIRATION

What gives me something to look forward to?
A person, dream, idea, place, goal, book, experience...



I AM INSPIRED BY...

Who or what makes me want to learn, try, create, help, or become better?



HOPE

What helps me believe tomorrow can be better?
What can change?
What can I try?
Who can help?



I HAVE HOPE BECAUSE...

What reminds me that things can change, I can grow, or help is available?



CONTENTMENT

What can be enough for today?
Not perfect.
Not finished.
Enough for this moment.



TODAY, THIS IS ENOUGH...

What can I appreciate without needing everything to be different first?

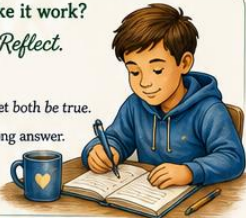
It's okay to have hard days.
Let both be true.



HOW — How do I make it work?

Talk • Write • Draw • Reflect.

- Use all four prompts—or just one.
- Don't force the good on top of the hard. Let both be true.
- Take time. Listen. There is no right or wrong answer.
- Look for light—even on ordinary days.



NOTICE — What might I discover?

- Who matters to this child?
- What gives them hope?
- What inspires them?
- What ordinary things bring contentment?
- Do their answers change over time?
- Are they beginning to find the light without being prompted?



A calm heart can live with challenges.
A grateful heart can live with hope.



AT HOME — Try It This Way

Make this part of your everyday life—at dinner, in the car, before bed, or while doing something together.

Take turns sharing one of the four lights.



- ♥ I'm grateful for...
- ★ I'm inspired by...
- ⚓ I have hope because...
- 🌿 Today, this is enough...

Older kids can invite younger siblings.
Show up. Listen. Every answer matters.



A LITTLE REMINDER FOR THE ADULT
You cannot remove every hard thing from a child's path.
You can help them learn to carry light through it.
What you model today, they may remember for a lifetime.



IN THE CLASSROOM — Try It This Way

Use as a private journal rotation—or one prompt occasionally throughout the year.

- MONDAY** GRATITUDE: Something good I noticed...
- TUESDAY** INSPIRATION: Someone or something that inspires me...
- WEDNESDAY** HOPE: Something I am looking forward to or believe can improve...
- THURSDAY** CONTENTMENT: Something that is enough for today...

No forced sharing—unless the student chooses.
At the end of the year, reread some entries and reflect:
"What helped carry me through this year?"



When we name the light, we grow stronger inside.



NEED A FEW IDEAS?

- People who care about you
- Ordinary moments
- Nature & beauty
- Accomplishments—big or small
- Relationships & memories
- Things you're learning
- Something anticipated
- Something that helped you
- Something that improved
- A kind word
- "I tried."
- You already have more than you think.



Gratitude gives you roots.
Inspiration gives you wings.
Hope gives you tomorrow.
Contentment gives you peace today.

THE JOURNEY: 10 QUESTIONS THAT LEAD TO GROWTH

1 What does this child need?

2 Where has this child grown?

3 How does this child think?

4 What is this behavior communicating?

5 What habits are shaping the day?

6 What is happening inside this child?

7 What helps this child keep going?

8 Who is influencing the direction this child is growing?

9 What is this child learning about the world and the people in it?

10 What will help this child live with gratitude, hope, inspiration & contentment?