

RESILIENT SUMMER HANDBOOK



**A Guide to
Nurturing
Children's
Intellect, Inquiry,
Imagination, &
Integrity**

In *The Book of Delights*, poet and author Ross Gay coins the phrase “cognitive athleticism” which, he explains, is “figuring something out, which is something we all go to school, some of us for years and years, to forget how to do.”

His words challenge teachers and parents to face the question: *Could our efforts to help our kids be getting in the way of their learning?*

During this extremely challenging year when mental health issues in young people are at an all-time high, it can seem counterintuitive to step back when kids are struggling. Yet, the experience of

puzzling through a low-stakes problem and arriving at a solution on your own builds self confidence and resilience.

If we want to set our sights on building “cognitive athleticism” in young people we need to entrust children to be in charge of their own learning. And that means allowing them to figure things out for themselves and avoiding solving problems kids can solve. The following pages of the Resilient Summer Handbook offer ideas for how to do just that.

As the child psychologist Jean Piaget said, “Every time we teach a child something, we keep him from inventing it himself.” Though it takes time and patience, allowing our children

to struggle and learn for themselves will help them build the self-confidence and resilience that will serve them well in school, at home, and in all aspects of life.

This kind of resilience is essential in navigating the unknown, and our children deserve every opportunity to cultivate these problem-solving skills when the stakes are low so they will know how to employ them in the world beyond our care.



Help your children and yourselves to “right-size” problems and learn to differentiate between those that require parental intervention or support (cleaning up broken glass off the kitchen floor) and those that are ripe for productive struggle (figuring out how to open a snack bag). Is this a problem about safety, or does it involve pushing through frustration into learning? When a problem is challenging due to difficulty and frustration, one strategy that works well with children is to ask them, “If you had to put this problem in a box, show me with your arms how big the box would need to be.” That mental translation of our feelings of frustration into something tangible can offer a useful pause for reflection and help us as adults to adjust our response in equal proportion.

Our children can be our greatest teachers but letting them live into this role requires us to step back and really listen. Here are some ways to do that:

Pay attention to how much you hear your own voice when you are around your children, and how much you hear their voices. This can be particularly useful in shared mealtimes, car, bus, or train rides, or other moments throughout your day when you engage in conversation. Try saying less and encouraging them to say more.

Offer your children a concrete place to express what's on their minds, and what they care about. Then make a point of reading what they have to say. Keeping a parent/child journal is one way of doing this. They write you a note at night and you write a response in the morning. This is also an excellent way to keep literacy skills going!

Prioritize your child's ownership of your physical space. Are there parts of your home that they can be in charge of organizing, decorating, or keeping in order? You may be surprised at how neat they can keep a room when it's a room they care about and giving them ownership over a space boosts its importance in their lives.

Put your child in charge of their own summer learning. Discuss something they are intrigued by that has nothing to do with school. It could be worms, it could be family genealogy, it could be how to become a music star. Whatever the topic, help them brainstorm how they can learn more and what they hope to know by the end of the summer. Let their curiosity be your guide.

Purpose, Persistence, and Action

“I can see how quickly you solved that problem.” “I can see you’re taking your time with that problem.” “What can I do to help you get started?” “What can I do to help you finish?” These simple, yet powerful, statements and questions come from the toolbox of Judy White. She uses them to offer specific feedback and encouragement for students at different stages of the learning process.

Judy insists her students find the expert within themselves, instead of looking to her for answers. Being a learner in her care is both challenging and exhilarating. She teaches students how to think, and avoids doing the thinking for them. This practice is at the core of Purpose, Persistence, and Action, one of Inspired Teaching's 5 Core Elements.

Purpose, Persistence, and Action means learners are fully engaged, intellectually, emotionally, and phys

They persevere in solving problems, making discoveries along the way. They experience failure as a necessary part of the learning process.

As children deepen their understanding of their own learning process, they not only expand their understanding of content, they also learn about themselves. “Nobody learns quite like you,” Judy says. And when children are allowed to pursue learning in their own unique ways



to know we love them, and 3 Approaches to Try:

As parents we want our kids

that's as it should be. But trailblazing feminist author and changemaker bell hooks, challenges us to go to a deeper, and perhaps more important place. She wrote, "If we give our children sound self-love they will be able to deal with whatever life puts before them."

What does it mean to "give our children sound self-love"? How can we teach our kids to love themselves?

1.

Teach your children to see themselves as contributors and problem solvers. For example, when a glass tips over and spills, point your child toward the materials they'll need to clean it up and offer guidance but don't do the cleaning for them. 2.

Teach your children to look to themselves first for validation and approval before looking to others - even you as parents. For example, instead of, "Marta, I love the picture you drew, you're such a good artist" try, "I'm noticing these bold colors, tell me more about how you chose them."

3.

Teach your children how to shape the world, as well as understand it. For example, if you choose to walk or ride a bike to run an errand rather than drive, talk with your children about those choices and their impact on the environment. Enlist them as collaborators in finding ways to make your everyday actions more environmentally friendly and provide them with developmentally appropriate resources to understand why this matters.

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HOORAY FOR MONDAY

Hooray For Monday is an award-winning collection of resources for educators that we share each week of the year. Parents are children's first educators so, this is for you! Each issue features questions, ideas, reflections, and actions we can take to remodel the learning experience for students. [Join our mailing list](#) to get a weekly Hooray For Monday publication sent straight to your inbox. No time to read? [Subscribe to our podcast!](#)

RECENT ISSUES HAVE INCLUDED...



Walk At Their Pace

Walking at our students' pace means willing ourselves toward forward momentum.

Engaging Parents As Allies

Together, we have the power to shape our children's school experience.



Aspirations and Contributions

Asset framing redefines how we approach challenges with children.



Inquiry or Inquisition

The way we start a question, the context, and the tone with which we ask it all matter.

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Watch it Grow

Close observation of change in the natural world can help children better understand changes in their own lives. In this activity, they choose something to observe and collect data over a period of days or weeks on how it transforms.

1. Ask your child to find a small plant that they will visit,



photograph, and write about each day.

2.

With your child, choose a time of day to make these observations. This works even better if you choose something to observe as well!

3.

Record observations each day and talk with your child about what they notice. What is different today from a few days ago? What is making these changes occur? What can we predict based on what we've seen so far?

Find more ideas for this activity [here](#).



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Make Way for the Monarchs

Few lifecycles are as enticing to observe in their entirety as that of monarchs.

Interestingly, the end of their life cycle often corresponds with the beginning of the school year and the start of their life cycle (or at least that of the plants they need to survive) begins when school is ending. That makes summer a perfect time to observe these marvelous creatures and play a role in their survival.

Butterfly Food and Habitat

You can create a butterfly sanctuary anywhere you have an outdoor spot large enough to hold a pot of flowers. Planting and caring for flowers helps pollinators like monarchs to survive. Monarch caterpillars feed exclusively on milkweed. If you have a spot where you

can plant milkweed, you should!

An Interdisciplinary Exploration

Taking time to learn about butterflies this summer can lead you into all kinds of learning disciplines. Here are a few examples:

Language Arts: There are many excellent nonfiction and fiction texts that can be used for learning about butterflies and having children journal about their observations will keep writing skills sharp.

Mathematics: Whether charting growth, studying statistics from migratory research, measuring change in weight and size, or considering exponents when calculating the growth or demise of populations, numbers abound in the information surrounding butterflies.

Social Studies: What role do butterflies play in different cultures? How does the growth of human populations affect the places where butterflies live? What does migration look like? What laws are or should be put into place to protect endangered species?

Science: This is, of course, at the heart of a study of butterflies but can get particularly interesting and far-reaching when you study habitat destruction and its antidote – local activism to reverse that destruction.

Visual and Performing Arts: Watching the wonder of a butterfly's life cycle, and that of the plants they depend upon, offers an endless source of inspiration for every art form from dance, to painting, and more.

Find links to lots of resources and more learning ideas [here](#).

REAL WORLD HISTO

Applications Are Open For 22-23 Real World History

Course Inspired Teaching's groundbreaking year-long afterschool course for high school students enters its eighth year this fall. If you know a student looking for hands-on learning about the Great Migration, opportunities to intern in DC museums, and the chance to think like historians through amazing projects, encourage them to sign up!



When things feel particularly daunting it can be incredibly helpful to pause and situate the challenges within a larger perspective. This activity is good practice for “zooming out” and can be accessed by children of many ages.

Choose an object and ask your child questions about it from different perspectives. Questions for an apple might look like this:

What is this? What is it for? How do you know? How would you describe its size? How would you describe its flavor? Now imagine you are an ant. What would an ant think this is? How would an ant know? How might a horse think about its size? An elephant?

Explore where to go next in this activity [here](#).

Seven Bikes

The more you “think outside the box” the better you get at doing so in other contexts. This activity presents a playful structure for doing just that.

Begin by inviting your child to be a detective of the unusual. You might send them outside with a notebook to jot down anything out-of-the-ordinary that they notice. Have them

craft a question based on what they've observed. What does it make them wonder?

Questions might look like:

Why was there a sock on the ground under that tree?

How did that paper cup get up on that ledge?

Why are there seven bikes in that yard?

Choose one question to explore together using the following format:

Child: Why do you have seven bikes?

Parent: Because I am building a bike sculpture from the parts. Why do you have seven bikes?

Child: Because I have seven dogs who all like to ride them.

Why do you have seven bikes?

Parent: Because they were on sale at our local bike shop. Why do you have seven bikes? Child: Because my friends traded me their bikes if I would do their homework.

Why do you have seven bikes?

You and your child can trade the question for as long or short as you like. Invite them to ask clarifying questions along the way to help develop ideas and stories. Here is an example of what that might look like:

Parent: Why do you have seven bikes?

Child: Because I have seven dogs who all like to ride them.

Parent: Seven dogs who like to ride bikes? How on earth did you train them?

Child: I took them to that place downtown, Paws & Pedals.

Parent: Did you have to redesign the bikes so dogs could ride them?

Child: A little bit, depending on the length of their legs.

The activity is fun to do verbally and can elicit a lot of laughs. But as illustrated above it can also be fodder for storytelling and it stretches the imagination in ways that can then be applied to other questions like:

What can we do to reduce the amount of time we spend on screens?

How can we manage the laundry so it doesn't always pile up like this?

What are some ways we can create more space when we're getting annoyed with each other?

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The Speak Truth Fellowship is a year-long program for secondary teachers grounded in the evidence-based methodologies of Inspired Teaching and Ford's Theatre. Fellows learn to foster lively and insightful student-led seminars on issues that matter. They do this by building improvisation, inquiry, oratory, and performance skills.

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Space is limited and preference will be given to educators who work within Washington, DC.

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Special thanks to Paul Public Charter school for donating the space for this event.

Challenging Behavior? Try the ABCDE's!

Psychologist William Glasser defined five core human needs "which provide motivation for all that we do." We've framed them according to these terms: Autonomy, Belonging, Competence, Developmental Appropriateness, and Engagement. And, we've added Fun.

Because humans learn and grow best when our needs are met, often when we're not thriving these unmet needs can be at the root of the problem. Identifying these unmet needs can be the first step to addressing them. As we strive to meet our children's academic and socioemotional needs, we're wise to address our own as well. This website offers a deep dive into each of the ABCDE's but we offer a brief overview here.



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