

WONDER KIDS ♥ CARDS

Make Conversations *Count*

Build the confidence and
character of children you love



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www.wonderkidscards.com

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CONTENTS

Introduction	7
About the Authors	11
About the Illustrator	13
How to Play	15

Awe and Wonder..... 19

1. What senses do you use the most? 19
2. What are you aware of right now? 20
3. What inspires you? How do you feel when you are inspired? 21
4. What takes your breath away? Reminds you of beauty and goodness? 22

Connection with Nature..... 24

5. What do you see and feel when you look at the night sky?..... 24
6. How do you connect to the earth? 25
7. What did nature teach you today?..... 26
8. What natural foods do you eat to make yourself healthy? 28

9. How does the earth provide for all your needs?	29
<i>Forgiveness</i>	31
10. What can you forgive yourself for?	31
11. Who do you want to forgive? For what?	32
<i>Gratitude</i>	34
12. What made you happy today? What made you smile?	34
13. What are you grateful for?	35
<i>Harmony</i>	37
14. How do you handle bullying/meanness?	37
15. When are you aware of your breathing?	38
16. When do you feel frustrated, sad, or unhappy?	39
17. How can you handle negative comments? ...	40
18. Who do you fight with? And when or why?	42
<i>Intentionality</i>	45
19. What coincidences have you noticed?	45
20. What do you want to create in your life?	46

<i>Kindness</i>	48
21. What have you done to help someone?	48
22. Who do you see suffering or hurting?	49
<i>Learning</i>	51
23. What did you figure out today?	51
24. What questions would you like the adults in your life to ask you?	52
<i>Listening</i>	54
25. How do you listen to others?	54
26. How do you listen to yourself?	55
<i>Love</i>	58
27. Who touched your heart today? Where did you feel love?	58
28. Who loved you today? How do you know?	59
29. How do you love your pet and other animals? What happens to you when you love an animal?	60
30. Who do you love who is not around anymore?	61
31. Who have you hugged today? Who has hugged you?	62

32. How do you love yourself? How can you love yourself more?.....	63
<i>Self-Expression</i>	65
33. How do you express your wonderful self?	65
34. How do you take care of your room?	66
35. How do you show your feelings? Which feelings are okay?.....	67
36. How do you talk about yourself? How do you think about yourself?	69
37. What do you love about your body?.....	70
38. When did you achieve something that you thought you couldn't?.....	71
References	74
Acknowledgements	76

INTRODUCTION

Wonder Kids Cards – Make Conversations Count were born out of our desire to help build the levels of confidence and character required in today's world. To do this, we need to make our conversations really count. Feeling a connection to something bigger and awe-inspiring (in spirit) is natural for our children. Awe, appreciation, wonder, curiosity, openness, and questioning are inherent in the nature of a child. Our role as parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and teachers is to keep the children in our lives close to their hearts and souls – to nurture their spirituality. We can do this through simple questions and practices. We are their guides and teachers. They are ours, as well. Their answers and musings to these questions and activities will open the channel to creating more life-affirming beliefs and behaviors. We will teach each other and broaden the love and compassion in our world. This is what we all long for – no matter our age.

Many parents and grandparents do not belong to any organized religion but are still deeply spiritual. Others are concerned about how to ensure that the basic moral principles from various religious paths are instilled in their children. We have developed

this package for all of you. We have studied the basic principles that guide moral people and have identified a few that are found in all of the major religious and spiritual traditions – Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Holism, and Hinduism. These shared principles form the basis for Wonder Kids Cards.

Spirituality and its practices have been defined as follows ⁽¹⁾:

- Spiritual connection: Do you connect with the pure wonder of existence?
- Reflection: Do you reflect on your development and consciousness?
- Service: Do you try to live a life that is of benefit to others?

If you agree with these practices, then the next step is simply to integrate them into your daily routine. As with developing any habit, the earlier you start, the better, and the more consistently you practice, the better. The benefits of instilling this reflection and set of practices will be worthwhile for now and in preparing your child for the future.

The cards can provide a variety of benefits:

- Help parents and teachers guide and support their children's core integrity, inner strength, and independence
- Develop a closer and stronger relationship between parent and child, creating the time and environment to do so
- Instill a clear sense of morals with which to navigate personal relationships, as well as the community we live in
- Develop emotional intelligence, mental alertness, and curiosity in your child
- Enhance a deep enjoyment and appreciation of life and our environment
- Understand that we all have influence over our lives
- Increase love and compassion
- Build confidence and character

The practice of deep listening involves keeping compassion alive in your heart the whole time you are listening. We ask questions to help our children reflect and express themselves more clearly. Our questions and deep listening can bring our children back to themselves and make them more acutely aware of the mysteries and principles of a happy

life. We do not listen in order to judge, criticize, or evaluate. We listen for one reason alone: to offer our children a chance to express themselves.

In Buddhism it is said that love and compassion are made out of one substance, which is called understanding. If you understand then you can love. But if understanding is not there, it is impossible to accept and love someone. We hope this guidebook and card deck will deepen your understanding of your child and help your child continue to evolve. You will open doors for each other.

Fiona Blackie

Caela Farren

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Fiona Blackie, LL.M.

Fiona's desire to experience and understand cultures led her to study law in Germany and Italy as well as the United Kingdom and achieving a bachelor and master of laws degrees. She has traveled to over 60 countries and lived and worked in several for periods of time. Fiona worked for GlaxoSmithKline as one their prestigious graduate trainees. GSK is a leading pharmaceutical company, known in the industry for its exceptional educational programs. As a senior management consultant for Ernst & Young and Cap Gemini, Fiona led complex strategy and change programs for global organizations such as CBA, EDF, Boots, Santander.

Fiona is also a qualified energetic cellular healer and has several decades of experience in using many other healing and self-help modalities, including mindfulness meditation and neuro-linguistic programming. She has studied many religious, philosophical, and spiritual schools of thought. Her drive to understand how we can develop and maintain a society of healthy and happy people fires her passion for supporting and

nurturing our children in their formative years. We all need to help develop resourceful, confident, and compassionate children.

She is currently a non-executive director of an environmental education charity for children and vulnerable people. She lives in Scotland with her husband, Michael.

Caela Farren, Ph.D.

Caela has had an extremely successful, varied, and broad-based career. She has been an educator for over 50 years, teaching music, theology, career, and leadership development to students from preschool through college and post doctoral studies. As a Roman Catholic nun in the 60's, Caela developed a religious education program for children and adults for the Archdiocese of Chicago, based on the basic archetypes of earth, air, fire, and water. Her dedication to bringing spiritual practices into the lives of parents and children continues.

Caela is the founder of MasteryWorks, Inc., an organization specializing in career development (see www.masteryworks.com). She is widely known and respected as an author, designer, and organizational development consultant, and her

products and services are employed in hundreds of organizations worldwide.

She has an integrated approach to her own spiritual and human development, merging theories from quantum physics, psychology, energy healing, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity.

Caela has a Ph.D. in Organization Development from Case Western Reserve University and is a thought leader in career development for organizations and individuals.

Caela has raised 3 daughters and has 4 grandchildren between the ages of 4 and 16, who are all in the process of developing their own inner life and values. They are the inspiration for this work.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Crystal Bacchus

Crystal Bacchus has been mesmerized by color since childhood. Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, she moved to Trinidad with her family when she was 10 and started studying design at the age of 11. By 13, she was producing artwork with a distinctive, sophisticated look. Even then,

her work provided clear evidence of the strong influence that fashion has had on her since early childhood, when she looked on with fascination as her mother created an ever-blossoming array of stylish outfits. That visual experience awakened in Crystal the love of richly colored, elegantly patterned fabric that is so evident in many of her designs. Recognizing her talent, Crystal's father urged her to enroll in art school, and Crystal took his good advice. Crystal went on to earn a degree in graphic design from the International Fine Arts College, now the Art Institute of Miami.

Crystal combines her graphic design knowledge and talent with her fine art to produce beautiful and unique pieces. She is currently focusing on producing art for her signature collection "Madame Fabrique," and other watercolor fine art paintings at her art studio – Xtal Art™ Studios, Inc., all suitable for framing. She is also producing handmade greeting cards – art-cards – under the sub-brand Divine Pencil™ by Xtal Art and a t-shirt line called HipChristianChick™.

HOW TO PLAY

We've put together this card deck and guidebook to foster conversations and reflection between children and parents. Aunts, uncles, grandparents, and other adults who play a key role in a child's life should feel free to play as well. Questions are the key! When we ask questions, we never know what response we might get. You and your child will each learn more about each other. We've designed this to be engaging and fun! We want to strengthen the voice of your child as well as your relationship.

Follow these guidelines when playing:

1. Create a safe and relaxed environment so your child feels free to be honest, answer the questions, and do the activities.
2. Choose a time and place that will minimize interruptions for 10–15 minutes. Over time, you can establish a habit of drawing a card at a special time – before bed, after school, before or after dinner, at snack time, during rides to school. Drawing a card each day and reflecting together is a wonderful habit that can last for a lifetime – a daily, short meditation.

3. Have your child shuffle the deck or fan out all of the cards and pick one. You should ask the questions on the cards. Depending on the age of your child, you might want to rephrase it in a way that clarifies or elaborates. If the question seems too complex for a younger child, you might want to pick another card. Listen to your child's answer and ask other open-ended questions to further clarify thinking and responses. Do not correct. There are no wrong answers. There are only your child's answers. With older children, you might share your own answers and thinking as well.
4. Scan the reflection in the guidebook for your own learning. You will see WHY each question is important as well as some of the research and thinking that prompt the questions. This is background for you. You might share this with an older child or even have him read it if you think this will foster learning and conversation.
5. Read through the suggested activity and guide your child in doing it. Most activities can be done with materials you'll have around your home. Children's minds don't need a lot of words.

The activities have great value and will provide an opportunity to experience the principles in the guidebook. Research suggests that we remember only 10% of what we hear and 25% of what we see, but 90% of what we do – so the activities are precious and lasting experiences. You can talk about them or re-experience them when your child is especially engaged.

6. Have your child say the affirmation on the back of the card. Affirmations are the embodiment of our intentions in life. Words have power. Affirmations help us manifest our goals and dreams. You might help your child write each affirmation on a sticky note and put it where she'll see it many times during the day. Or you may make an ongoing list for the week and say each affirmation with your child daily.
7. Let your child determine when and how long the activity will last. With little ones, the time will be very short. With older children, it will vary according to the power of the question and its relationship to their own experiences.

8. Create a place to keep the card deck and guidebook so that you and your child see it daily.

We hope that you and your child will use Wonder Kids Cards to deepen your basic practices for *living a good life, building character and confidence.*

AWE AND WONDER

1 What senses do you use the most?

Our five primary senses help us interpret and communicate in our daily lives. They can also bring us pleasure, the smell of baking bread or a flower, birdsong, the soft touch of a kitten. Over time certain senses will dominate, yet it is helpful to encourage your child to use all of his senses. In addition, our sixth sense of intuition – inner knowing, using our inner eye to see, hear, or feel – tends to be less commonly referenced. Help your child remember how to call on this sixth sense. Every human is born with the ability to pick up thoughts and feelings from others. Young children are initially unable to discern between their own thoughts and feelings and the thoughts and feelings of those surrounding them in a room. You may see this happen when a toddler starts laughing or crying just because others do. Children's senses are strong, and they can be guided as to how to discern between their own and others' feelings.

Activity

Select an object nearby. Pick it up, or simply focus your attention on it. Focus on each of the senses in turn, one at a time, to see what each is telling you. You may need some help or props to help your child “turn off” the other senses, such as a blindfold to stop your child from seeing. In addition, talk to your child about times when he has picked up information or a feeling with his sixth sense.

2 **What are you aware of right now?**

Simply allowing oneself to be in the moment, without judging anything or wishing it were different, is important for one’s peace of mind. When we are present, we experience the beauty and texture of life. The present moment is all we have. Peaceful people enjoy each moment. They are not fretting about the past or future. Children live in the present. It is usually when they grow up that pressures and fears start to shape their personalities. Let your child be your guide to staying in the present.

Activity

Give your child a raisin and take one yourself. Look at the raisin as if for the first time. Feel it, look at its color and texture. What thoughts and feelings are running through your head? Note any likes or dislikes. Smell the raisin and then carefully bring it to your mouth. Chew it slowly and experience the actual taste of this raisin. How does it feel to want to swallow it? This is a taste of being in the present moment— how was it for you? Feel free to use any fruit you and your child enjoy.

3

What inspires you? How do you feel when you are inspired?

There are times when we feel totally in sync with the majesty or power of something beyond us. We're swept away! Sometimes we experience this in nature – wildflowers, waterfalls, mountains, forests, snowflakes. The natural beauty renders us silent with an internal WOW. Other times we are inspired by the actions of others – people who create artistic masterpieces, play a remarkable piece of music, give generously to support the well-being of others, or show great courage. This feeling of being inspired takes us deep into ourselves and couples

us with energy. We have a brief glimpse of a world beyond us.

Activity

Help your child recover the memories of wonder and inspiration. Make a WOW (Wonders Of this World) Board – a collage of pictures of nature, people, and other experiences that have created this sense of wonder in you or in your child. Go through magazines, look at family pictures, and draw pictures that signify these great experiences. Put the collage in a place where you and your child see it. Continue to add pictures. Help awaken the connection of your child with a greater power or source of energy.



4 What takes your breath away? Reminds you of beauty and goodness?

Beauty is all around us – a flower, a shell, a sunset, a smile, a picture, a baby's skin, a quiet forest, a majestic tree, the lull of ocean waves, a thundering rainstorm. When we stop for a minute and really take it in, our whole body shifts. We relax. We are touched. We are no longer the same. Let “WOW”

become your frequent affirmation. Draw your child into wonder and awe.

We can memorialize some of this wonder by creating a little altar in our home. We can create a sacred space to put those mementos that take our breath away – flowers, rocks, pictures, incense, bells. “The purpose of a real altar is to connect people with the wonder and benevolence of life ... the objects on the altar can fulfill that purpose.” ⁽²⁾. An altar is a special place. It’s where you go when you want to connect to your heart and find stillness for a while – to create change and transformation in your body and spirit.

Activity

Help your child create a small altar in her room bringing together the things that she loves that bring joy and happiness – colors, something she made, pictures, shells, bells, rocks, flowers, photos. Sit there with your child sometimes and talk about the beauty. Frequently ask this question when faced with something awesome: “Do you want to put that on your altar?” Help your child make this a special place.

CONNECTION WITH NATURE

5 What do you see and feel when you look at the night sky?

Children are drawn to the moon and the stars, the contrast between the dark and the brightness, and the ever-changing dimensions of our universe. They appreciate the awe and wonder of our universe. Looking at the night sky, especially on a clear night, allows them to get a tiny glimpse of the stars in our galaxy and a hint of the myriad stars in other galaxies. Our skies are constantly changing with time yet remain constant in our changing world. This experience is one way of feeling infinity. Opening our children up to this infinity inspires wonder, awe, and deep reverence for the invisible source of all life.

Activity

Sleep or walk out under the stars and see the dazzling beauty, immensity, and grandeur of the sky. Be silent. Let the wonder and immensity of the sky and universe fill your body. Breathe in and out

and fill yourself with wonder. After several minutes, share your experience with each other. What did you feel? What did you see?

6 How do you connect to the earth?

It is important to stay physically connected to the earth. The earth's magnetic field can help our bodies and minds stay healthy. In order to get the synchronizing effect from the earth, we need to be barefoot on the earth as much as we can. However, technology can interfere with our ability to stay close to the earth's natural energies. More and more research points to the possible negative consequences of manmade electromagnetic frequencies. Electricity and its intense wireless frequencies and their resulting electromagnetic fields can cause fatigue, headaches, and illness. Our bodies were designed to coexist harmoniously with the natural frequencies and energies emanating from the universe and our own planet. But we need to educate ourselves and our children on actions they can take to protect themselves from manmade sources of electromagnetic pollution. ⁽³⁾

Activity

First thing in the morning go outside and welcome the new day with your child. Have your child take off his shoes and go barefoot in the dew and grass to feel the earth and make a connection. Make sure that your child gets plenty of time outdoors in nature – walking, biking, and playing.

With older children, discuss and locate all the sources of possible electronic field pollution in your home – for example, radios, computers, mobile phones, televisions, lights. Remove your child from these electromagnetic fields, especially at night when sleeping. Have your child “turn off” at night. Ensure that your child gets plenty of sunlight and does not spend inordinate time using electronic devices. With older children, you can research ways to dilute the negative impact of electromagnetic pollution.

7

What did nature teach you today?

Spring is the season of growth. Every day we see new sprouts pop up from the earth seeking the light, sending nourishment back to the roots so

growth occurs. The seeds, bulbs, and buds that lay dormant in the winter transform slowly into grass, flowers, bushes, leaves, and new twigs on trees. What's underground is nourished by the environment – especially the light of the sun. In a similar fashion the newness and talents in us develop and spring forth when we are in the light of love and positive energy. Our minds and souls seek positive energy like young sprouts seek the sun. Creating an environment of love and light for our children is our number one responsibility. What else can we learn from nature, its processes and patterns?

Activity

“Plant” a potato in a glass of water (learn how here: www.ehow.com/how_12112356_start-potato-sprout-cut-potato-water.html). Watch the daily miracle of growth as the new little tendrils and leaves sprout from the potato. Or put a houseplant in a dark cupboard for one day and then move it to a bright position in the natural light. Observe what happens.

Praise your child with a number of positive compliments and watch her light up and smile. Love and positive actions provide our light.

8

What natural foods do you eat to make yourself healthy?

Learning to eat and live mindfully is the key to experiencing health and peace. The practice of being fully present in each moment is called mindfulness – an ancient Buddhist approach to living that helps us be in the here and now. Paying attention to what we eat and drink as well as how we eat and drink brings us nourishment and health. Mindful eating lets us experience being nourished as well as to feel being “full.” Certain foods are better for us than others and our bodies tell us that. Do we feel light, satiated, full? You can help your child develop the habit of mindful eating. Shop at fresh food markets or purchase organic products. Nutrient-rich, natural, non-processed foods give us nutrients that are good for our bodies and help us avoid toxins.

Activity

Take time with your child to really experience eating – eat an apple together and chew each small bite at least 30 times. Savor the taste. Describe the taste to each other. Slow down your eating and enjoy the feeling of being nourished. Help your child savor his

food and limit the distractions of television, iPads, books, and other distractions while eating. Help him chew, taste, and savor his food and drink.

Talk with your child about healthy foods – vegetables, fruits, non-processed, non-sweetened food. Ask questions: What are your favorite healthy foods? How do they make you feel? When do you eat most mindfully and healthily – breakfast, lunch, or dinner? What would be great healthy snacks?

9 **How does the earth provide for all your needs?**

The earth provides us with all that we need: living food and water. The earth provides us with the resources to take care of all of our needs – homes, transportation, energy, warmth. We must also take care of the earth by not polluting, littering, or using too much of the natural resources. Many groups are rising up to protect Mother Earth and all her creatures. The resources we need to survive have been given to us. It's up to us to be good caretakers of the earth. We can talk with our children about how we can better take care of Mother Earth.

Activity

Go on a scavenger hunt with your child. Look around your home and identify three things that have been given for your health and comfort. What was the raw material provided by Mother Earth from whence these goods came? How did it end up in your home or food cupboard? Who was part of that journey?

Talk with your child about actions she can take to help sustain all of the resources from Mother Earth. Ideas to explore include recycling, using less water, composting, planting trees, and cleaning up parks, rivers, oceans. Create a weekly or monthly practice of discussing steps your child and your family are taking and how you are all feeling about conservation efforts.

FORGIVENESS

10

What can you forgive yourself for?

Self-approval and self-acceptance are fundamental to creating a happy and healthy life. Understanding and being gentle with ourselves helps us move out of worry, fear, or shame. We all make mistakes and do things that we regret later on. Reflection on our mistakes allows us to learn. Be grateful for what you have learned. Any guilt or shame is not necessary and can eat away at your soul. Forgiving yourself is as important as forgiving others.

Activity

Guide your child to forgive himself. Sit comfortably upright on the floor or a chair. Close your eyes. Breathe in and out – three times. Imagine yourself as you are today talking to a little you, the you that did something you want to forgive yourself for. Tell the “little you” that you are sorry he felt hurt, or shamed or guilty for what happened. Tell the “little you” there is no need to feel bad as he was doing his best at the time. Remind him that he is perfect in all ways. Say, “I forgive myself from the bottom of

my heart and know that I am perfect.” Hug the “little you” and feel the sadness disappear from your body.

11

Who do you want to forgive? For what?

Lack of forgiveness only hurts us. It can eat away at us. Accept that everyone is doing the best they can at any given time, even if you do not condone their behavior. Lack of forgiveness will be remembered and held in the cells of your body. Forgiving someone through love and forgiveness can lead to the healing of many ailments. Forgiveness is good for your health and helps you live longer. ⁽⁴⁾

Activity

Help your child practice forgiveness through this exercise: Sit comfortably upright on the floor or a chair. Close your eyes. Breathe in and out – three times. Imagine you are sitting in a safe place with the person you want to forgive. Feel the ground beneath you. Tell that person how she has hurt you. Let the person respond to your pain. Tell the person from the bottom of your heart that you want to forgive her as you know she was doing the best she could at the time. Let the person respond from

Forgiveness

the bottom of her heart. When you feel you can truly forgive her, say: “I forgive you from the bottom of my heart and I forgive myself from the bottom of my heart.” Imagine hugging each other and feel the love of the universe for you both.

GRATITUDE

12

What made you happy today? What made you smile?

Bright, happy thoughts create positive energy and light, whereas negative feelings can make us weaker. Positive emotions decrease pain through the production of endorphins. When you are happy, those around you become happy too. They share in your feeling. You can become a home for others because of your happiness. Smile. Be thankful for the smallest things. The more happiness you see, the happier you will be. ⁽⁵⁾

You can generate your own happiness by remembering things that give you pleasure – things like friends, pets, sky, ocean, grass, smells, tastes, colors, drawing, dancing, playing. Bring these into your life or simply into your memory. You'll feel the positive energy.

Activity

Create a "bliss list" with your child. What are the things that make her feel happy and blissful? Examples might include eating strawberries,

stroking a dog, brushing her hair, climbing trees, swimming in the ocean, painting, building with Legos, bicycling, or drawing. Encourage your child to do at least one thing that makes her happy every day. Hopefully, you'll find some things on the bliss list that you share.

13

What are you grateful for?

According to research, grateful individuals lead happier, more successful lives. In an experimental comparison, people who kept “gratitude journals” in which they regularly recorded the things for which they are grateful exercised more regularly, reported fewer physical symptoms, felt better about their lives as a whole, and were more optimistic about the upcoming week compared with people who recorded hassles or neutral life events. Children who practice grateful thinking have more positive attitudes toward school and their families. Gratitude creates harmony and peace around us. We need to honor the words and gifts of others. Look around to see all the gifts you might take for granted and give thanks to the givers – friends, parents, teachers, politicians, workers, etc. We are supported by

thousands of people every day, many of whom we never see or meet – extend your gratitude to them.

Activity

Have your child take a few minutes and quietly look around his room or home. See all the things to be grateful for. Name them one at a time and say “thank you.” Also, have your child start or end each day by naming seven things or people he is grateful for. Spend one day saying thank you for everything – Thank you, air. Thank you, toothbrush. Thank you, sun.

HARMONY

14

How do you handle bullying/meanness?

Meanness is when one person hurts, scares, bullies, or harasses another person on purpose. This can be through punching, shoving, spreading rumors, exclusion, or teasing. Cyber-bullying is a special type of meanness where bullies use technology to harass others (for example, on Facebook). Meanness seems to be on the rise, and we are seeing more children and young adults responding to meanness with suicide. Helping your child cope with meanness when young will enable your child to handle difficult situations in the future. Be a good role model. Observe how you react to mean-spirited people or how you talk with others when you're angry. Being a part of and witnessing respectful relationships will help your child learn how to treat others.

Activity

Ask your child if people have been mean to her. What kind of meanness has she seen or experienced? Listen carefully and hear her feelings and concerns. Having the courage to look a bully in

the eye and stand up to him is a very effective anti-bullying tactic, but it's also one that takes practice. Work with your child at home to help her learn to be assertive in the face of meanness. Practice different scenarios, and help her think of ways to stand up to any meanness or bullying.

15

When are you aware of your breathing?

To be truly here, we have to bring the body back to the mind and the mind back to the body. The breath is like a bridge that links your body and mind. If you concentrate on your breathing, then you will be centered. Unfortunately, in our daily life our mind and our body are rarely together. Our body might be here, but our mind is somewhere else. Maybe you are lost in regrets about the past or worries about the future, or maybe you are preoccupied with your plans, or with anger or jealousy. And so your mind is not really there with your body. The moment you begin to practice mindful breathing, your body and your mind begin to come together. With mindful breathing, you can bring body and mind together in the present moment. Every one of us can do it, even a child. ⁽⁶⁾

Activity

Lay on the floor with your child. Walk him through the following exercise: Put your arms at your side with the palms up. Practice deep breathing. Inhale and your tummy goes up. Exhale through your nose and your tummy goes down. Breathe in and out ten times. Then breathe to the following mantra: "Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know I'm breathing out." Ask your child how he feels. Consider how you feel yourself. This is an exercise to do every day to release stress and get centered in your body. It is a habit that will serve your child for life. It takes only a couple of minutes to accomplish this miracle of oneness of body and mind.

16

When do you feel frustrated, sad, or unhappy?

When we are stressed or scared, our breathing can become shallow or stop. Stress signals a need for action. When we are afraid or anxious, biochemicals are released in our bodies. Emotions such as stress, frustration, anger, or sadness and our inability to work with them positively can weaken our immune system. It is important for

kids to stay grounded in moments of stress, and focusing on their breath is a useful tool. ⁽⁷⁾

Activity

Have your child sit comfortably on a chair. Walk her through the following exercise: Put your hands on your heart and focus your attention on that area. Imagine that you are breathing in and out of your heart area. Feel the breath coming into that area in smooth breaths in and out. Carry on breathing through your heart and think of a happy time when you felt love for a person or a pet or did something that made you feel happy. Children can be taught to do this exercise on their own. They can use the practice when they are unhappy or scared.

17

How do you handle negative comments?

Some people relish in finding fault with others. They look for examples of imperfections or falling short of some standard they hold. This may take the form of put-downs, belittling someone, or making fun of some trait that doesn't coincide with established norms of beauty or brains. Criticisms are not necessarily true, or they may have a grain of truth in them. The person criticizing usually does it for his

or her own gain, not for our learning or betterment. Words have power. Negative assessments can lower our energy and self-esteem. Children need to learn how to protect themselves from negative, hurtful comments. We can teach them. We can help them handle criticism with dignity and grace. Be on the alert for these situations and help your child.

Activity

Talk with your child about why people, especially friends or playmates, criticize him. Ask for examples. How does he feel when that happens? Why does he think that person is trying to put him down or hurt him? What do children or parents say that make him feel upset? Get several examples. Practice responses with your child so that the child can stay centered and know he is okay in the face of criticism. “You’re fat.” – “You may think so, but I know I’m okay.” “You’re a lousy soccer player.” – “You may think so, but I’m doing my best.” The impact of a criticism on our emotional body is like having a piece of skin painfully pinched on our physical body. Each time a criticism is given or received, pinch the skin on the top of your hand to remind you of the unseen impact of these words.

18

Who do you fight with? And when or why?

Fight, flight, and engagement are the three fundamental responses to situations or the actions of others. Researchers say that fight and flight are imprinted in our reptilian brain. In the earliest evolution of our species, the fight or flight response preserved our species. They are self-defense mechanisms. The fight response is usually triggered by threat or fear of losing something or self-defense – whether real or imagined. Growing up requires that we become conscious of the threat, evaluate it, and then choose the appropriate response – fight, flight, or engagement. We also need to become aware of the situations and people that make us feel like fighting. Little ones often hit, bite, or scratch when they don't get what they want. We need to teach them appropriate responses and slowly move them beyond immediate gratification and selfishness. Older children encounter meanness, bullying, teasing, and physical aggression in sports. We can help them find appropriate methods of coping with their own feelings and the actions of others. We need to help them discover what

is really worth fighting about (not necessarily physically but with words) and what's not. Harmony can only come from engagement of differences – talking and listening and usually compromising. Shouting, hitting, verbally abusing, and demeaning only produce more violence and the desire to fight.

Activity

With your child, brainstorm a list of all the things that make him mad or disappointed – the things that trigger fighting. Ask what he was feeling at the time. Why was his viewpoint so important? What other ways could he have reacted? Does he realize why certain people trigger an aggressive or fighting response? How can he better defend himself? What themes do you see in these situations – not wanting to share, not getting what one wants, tiredness, etc.? With toddlers, you are the observer and coach. Have the toddler draw pictures of situations that make her want to fight or hit or scream. Point out to her when she is fighting or angry and help her see another way of handling the situation. The “terrible twos” are a natural time to begin this coaching – a child is beginning to define her own identity in a stronger way. As parents we are the channel for self-love, appreciation, and

Harmony

harmony. Engage your child strongly and teach through your own calm, coaching behavior.

INTENTIONALITY

19

What coincidences have you noticed?

If you keep your thoughts on what you intend to create, little miracles begin to happen. The right person for a certain situation shows up. Someone you've been thinking about calls you. You feel you need something and the person who has what you need is sitting next to you on the train. Or an article shows up that has the answer to a question with which you've been struggling. These are not accidents. You are tuned into the energy source that drives the universe. Pay attention to coincidences – the more you notice them, the more they happen and all is easier in your world. They are usually related to your intentions.

Activity

Share with each other the coincidences that you've each experienced in the past few weeks. How do you feel when these happen? How do they relate to your goals and intentions? Help your child keep a journal or list of these coincidences and talk

about them daily. This can be a wonderful dinner conversation with your family.

20

What do you want to create in your life?

Intention is a field of energy that flows invisibly beyond the reach of our normal and everyday habitual patterns. We have the means to attract this energy, and to use it to experience life in an exciting way. It is like placing an order in a catalogue and knowing the item will arrive sometime soon. The energy that drives the world follows our thoughts and feelings. People who recite their intentions daily act as if they are already true today. They are optimistic and positive. They are confident. They have amazingly high energy and are always inspired to bring their affirmations into reality. ⁽⁸⁾

Activity

Teach your child about intentions and affirmations. Act as if everything/anything you desire is already here. Ask what your child would like to manifest. What does he want to be true in his life? It might be having a pet, being in a play, more friends, doing better in school, feeling better about himself. The idea is to act as if you already are what you'd

like to become. Help your child state affirmations that bring what he intends to manifest into the present. If there is any resistance, identify it and find reasons why it can be overcome. Help him state his intentions: “I have many friends and am well liked.” “I like my body.” “I do well in school and enjoy learning.” Write the affirmations on a sheet of paper and put it on his altar or close at hand. Say the affirmations with your child before bedtime.

KINDNESS

21

What have you done to help someone?

Children are often sensitive to others' needs. When we encourage them to look around and see how they can go out of their way for others, we are helping build an attitude of kindness. The most sociable children tend to be more popular and do better at school. One study has shown that those children most willing to help others with their school work attained better results in school.⁽⁹⁾ Children who are generous and thoughtful attract kind and thoughtful friends. Kindness to others increases self-esteem and makes children feel good about themselves.

Activity

With your child, make two cards from paper or cardboard. On one, draw angel wings and write "wings." This card represents actions of kindness that help or uplift others. On the other, draw a set of weights and write "weights." This card represents actions that hurt others or weigh them down. Take turns listing today's actions and then hold up the card that best describes the impact your action had

on others. Was each an “angel wings” action (for example, setting the table, picking up trash, holding a door) or a “weights” action (for example, criticizing a friend, littering)? Consider your family, friends, neighbors, school, and the environment. Ask your child to choose one of the “angel wings” activities to do the next day. What happens?

22

Who do you see suffering or hurting?

Compassion is an emotion that arises when we see someone else suffering or hurting, prompting a desire to alleviate or reduce the pain we see. We identify with the person and feel empathy for them. The various forms of the “Golden Rule” – do unto others as you would have them do to you – are based on the concept of compassion. Compassion differs from other forms of helpful or humane behavior in that its focus is primarily on the alleviation of suffering. Scientific studies suggest that there are physical benefits to practicing compassion – people who practice it produce 100% more DHEA, which is a hormone that counteracts the aging process, and 23% less cortisol – the “stress hormone.”

Activity

Talk with your child about the suffering of someone she knows or met recently – someone sick; someone picked on, hit, or bullied; or a grandparent who has trouble walking or reading. Ask her to imagine what the other person is feeling. What would that person want someone to do to reduce their suffering? Talk with your child about what she might do to help diminish the suffering. Even a smile, a kind word, doing an errand or chore, or just talking about a problem with another person can reduce suffering. Have your child ask the other person what she can do that would help.

With older children, you can talk about people they see on the news or in a store who clearly are suffering. Why are they suffering? What might your child do to help them?

LEARNING

23

What did you figure out today?

Learning is essential to happy living. Be open to the questions and problems of every day. Know that you always have what it takes to figure things out. Feel into a problem with your intuition before attempting to solve or resolve the issue. Ask for guidance when necessary – guidance from friends, resources, the universe. Children can work out the answers to many questions for themselves. Allow them quiet, uninterrupted time to contemplate questions they come up with and that others ask of them. Actively encourage children to seek their own answers by deflecting questions back to them and suggesting helpful resources. By connecting with the universe and their inner knowing, much can be revealed – parents just need to provide the right environment and space. Talking about all the opportunities for learning and all the successes builds your child's confidence and trust.

Activity

Find a pot-bound plant – one whose roots have outgrown its pot so that it cannot grow any bigger.

What does this plant need in order to grow bigger and stronger? Work with your child to re-pot the plant and see what happens.

Talk with your child about 1–2 things he figured out today – what to wear, a faster route to school, how to build something, why dogs lick your hand, how to climb a jungle gym, how to do a math problem, sounding out a word. Ask him how he felt about his accomplishment.

24

What questions would you like the adults in your life to ask you?

Questions open doors into our being. Questions help us reflect and think – even about habitual actions. Questions can shed light on our uniqueness and our preferences. We can become more conscious of all the special aspects of our lives when others ask us questions about ourselves. Answering questions reveals who we are. When children are shy or just starting to learn about certain facets of life, they relish being asked questions, being drawn out by others. Giving voice to our feelings, our thoughts, and our desires is

important for the ongoing growth and development of children. Don't tell. Ask.

Children's views will often provide a new dimension and vantage point from which to understand the world, especially for things adults take for granted. Their fresh perspective – untarnished by years of conditioning – can provide a check on the purity of adults' thoughts.

Activity

Quiz time! How well do you know your child? How well does your child know you?

Take three stars or stickers per person. Think of three questions about yourself. For example, What is my favorite animal? What makes me sad? Who is my hero? You may choose to do this orally or use a pen and paper. See whether your parent gets them right. Award one star or sticker per correct answer. Then swap roles. Do you know the answers to three questions about your parent? Who got the most stars or stickers?

LISTENING

25

How do you listen to others?

Listening is a wonderful grounding exercise. Listening keeps the focus on the other person. You can hear what they say and, if you listen with your heart and senses, you can also hear how another person feels or what he or she really wants. You might be able to hear the deeper message that the other person wants to say but might be afraid to speak. Remember that only 7% of communication is verbal!

Most of us, and especially children, want to be listened to without being subjected to advice, philosophy, judgment, or hearing the other person's point of view. Listen by acknowledging their feelings and this will encourage children to talk more and begin to feel less confused or upset, more able to cope and to see a clear way forward. Listen with your full attention and body language. Acknowledge the child's feelings back to her: "I see," "Oh," "Yes." Paraphrasing back to the child what you hear lets her know that you've really heard her and understood what she said. You're not changing the

subject to yourself or cutting her off. Deep listening opens the other like a flower, and your child feels known and loved.

Activity

Your child can learn about listening by practicing nonverbal communication. Take a soft scarf and gently tie it around the parent's head, covering the parent's mouth. The parent now has to "say" something to the child without using words. The parent can use her body, face, and intention or feelings from her heart and mind. Have your child tell you what you're "saying." Then change roles.

26

How do you listen to yourself?

Do you ever have flashes of insight or premonitions that someone will call or something will happen? If so, learn to trust those inner flashes of creative insight. Call your friend. Pick up the book. Introduce yourself to the person next to you. These are connecting links to the energy of intention. Tuning in to your needs and desires is part of self-love. All spiritual teachers tell us that we can't love others if we don't love ourselves. Listening to ourselves

means that we really do respect ourselves and trust that we can follow our own guidance.

Children have strong intuition. As they grow up and spend more time in the world, especially with artificial influences such as technology (rather than the natural world), they begin to lose touch with their inner voice. It becomes harder for them to trust their own intuition because adults dismiss their views and the noise and busyness of the world are not conducive to tuning in to a quiet inner voice. Knowing and trusting this voice are key to developing the confidence to make good decisions in later life and negotiating a complex world. Strive to stay connected in mind, body, and spirit by using your breath.

Activity

Walk your child through the following exercise: Sit in a chair or on the floor in a comfortable position. Close your eyes. As you inhale, count it as “I am inhaling, one.” When you exhale, count “I am exhaling, one.” Remember to breathe from the stomach, letting the belly extend fully. When beginning the second inhalation, count “I am inhaling, two.” And slowly exhaling, count “I am exhaling, two.” Continue for ten breaths. After you

have reached ten, return to one. Whenever you lose count, return to one. Do this practice often with your child. Suggest that he keep smiling while breathing. This practice centers us totally and lets us be aware of ourselves.

LOVE

27

Who touched your heart today? Where did you feel love?

Humans communicate most deeply through their hearts. Research shows that feeling love from others and the universe is key to maintaining health and happiness. Maintaining a big, open heart and recognizing the boundless love that is available to us are critical to our well-being, particularly when the world can sometimes feel dark and negative. The more love you give, the more you get. Love is ever expanding and has no limits. Staying in a loving, heart-centered place counteracts fear. ⁽⁷⁾

Activity

Use this exercise with your child to create an attitude of loving kindness toward all others. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Go back in your mind and re-create the feeling of being completely loved at a particular moment. Feel gratitude for that love and remember that you are truly loved. Now imagine that love bubbling up and pouring out to a person or an animal you really love. Extend the love now to your family, then to all your friends. Include

even more people you know and your neighbors. Then include all the people in the world you don't know and even those you don't like. Include all the animals and the trees, plants, and the earth.

28

Who loved you today? How do you know?

Children who feel loved and honored in their families and communities develop higher levels of self-esteem. Because they feel loved, they live in a world of trust. They're willing to learn, take risks, and push their limits. They are not afraid. The central principle of every major religion is to love others as you love yourself. As parents, our words, hugs, loving conversations, and how we treat others are the most central influences in building our children's character. Our ability to love ourselves also provides a model for the value of self-love. Screaming, angry outbursts; lack of attention; and put-downs all deplete the natural trust children feel as well as their energy. Children who feel unloved are also most vulnerable to trauma experienced in later life. ⁽⁵⁾

Activity

Sit comfortably on the floor or a chair with your

child. Both of you close your eyes. Remember a situation where you felt loved. Who is there? What can you hear? What is happening? What do you sense? Do you see colors or hear sounds? Now that you have a sense of that feeling, let it flood all over your body and make it feel warm and fuzzy.

Can you make it stronger and stronger?

Hold your thumb between the fingers of the other hand and squeeze gently while keeping the feeling alive. Let go of your thumb. Now you can return to that good feeling of being loved anytime you like by holding your thumb and gently squeezing.

29

How do you love your pet and other animals? What happens to you when you love an animal?

Giving and receiving love with an animal is natural for children. It is a way for them to learn that you receive what you give out, as well as experiencing the power of unconditional love. Lovingly taking care of animals teaches children to be generous and responsible – especially to those who need our love and help. It shows children that all living things

are connected and that all life should be respected. It has also been proven that stroking a pet can trigger endorphins, the “feel good” chemical that relieves pain and stress and supports our well-being.

Activity

Walk your child through this activity: Let your body sink down onto the floor or a soft seat. Close your eyes. Watch your breathing as it goes in and out for several breaths. Allow your brain and head to disappear into your body. Feel very sleepy. Feel like you are a cat or dog curled up with your nose on your paws. Stay like this and enjoy it.

30

Who do you love who is not around anymore?

Sometimes people we love aren't with us physically. They've moved. They've passed away. A parent may live in a different house. Our friend may go to a different school. It's good to know that their spirit and love live on even when they are not around. We can bring them to us through our memories and appreciate them. We can feel their love when we choose to focus on it. For thousands of years

many traditions have believed that contact remains between those who have passed on and those here on earth, and various rituals have developed to support this. Much research has been carried out that proves that lack of physical proximity is not a barrier to humans communicating thoughts and feelings. ⁽¹⁰⁾

Activity

With your child, find mementos and develop rituals to help you feel the spiritual presence of the love of someone who is not around. Ask questions of that person and then be watchful for the answers coming over the following days.

31

Who have you hugged today? Who has hugged you?

Hugging is healthy. It helps the body's immune system; it keeps you healthier; it helps depression; it reduces stress and is invigorating. Hugging is a miracle drug. It is all natural – 100% wholesome. Hugging is practically perfect! Hug and hold your children often. Nothing builds the love connection more quickly.

Activity

Ask your child, how many different types of hugs are there?

Start by hugging each other like a big bear. Then a cheeky monkey. A slithery snake smothering hug. A best friend hug. An octopus all-over hug. A quiet stroking hug. Make a practice of hugging those you love.

32

How do you love yourself? How can you love yourself more?

We are all created in love and of love. It is natural for us to express love outwardly to others and inwardly to ourselves. Self-love is demonstrated by self-acceptance, particularly of our feelings. When we stop rejecting ourselves we also find we stop searching for fulfillment in the external world. It is important to engender the value of loving oneself to children. Remember that they learn by observing the adults in their life, so set an example by loving yourself. Many great teachers say that you cannot properly love another unless you love yourself. It is important for children to develop the habit of understanding, naming, and appreciating their own

strengths and capabilities as well as knowing how to love themselves.

Activity

By cultivating the “inner smile” technique, we help restore inner harmony and love for our physical bodies. Walk your child through this activity: Sit in a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Place both your hands gently on your lower stomach. Breathe in and out. Allow a smile to begin within you. Smile with your face. Allow your muscles to soften and relax. Smile with your closed eyes. Focus down into your body. Your whole head is smiling. Feel your shoulders smiling, and feel them getting warmer. Feel the smile across your back and then your chest and tummy. Your whole body is happy, warm, and smiling. Your legs are smiling. Now your knees are smiling. Your feet are smiling, they are happy to carry you around. Allow your body to relax and enjoy the loving attention. Your whole body is smiling and warm, inside and out. After a while, gradually start to move your arms and legs, and then slowly open your eyes.

SELF-EXPRESSION

33

How do you express your wonderful self?

There is nothing more important to childhood development than self-expression. A child must be able to express what she wants and feels with freedom and safety. Children who do not grow up in an environment of respect, love, and compassion often find difficulty opening up to others as they grow. Allowing your child to express her feelings, emotions, thoughts, and creativity in a safe environment is a key building block for a happy and long life. Painting, drawing, playing, acting, singing, dancing, building, and writing are just a few of the ways children can express their creativity. Encourage your child to be creative in everyday situations. Do you express wonder and appreciation, or do you sometimes judge the outputs from your child's creative processes? Celebrate your child's uniqueness in expressing herself; our diversity and uniqueness make the world go round.

Activity

How unique are you? Have your child create a picture of herself in all her beauty. Use a variety of materials. Encourage her to think broadly and not be shy. What makes her feel unique, beautiful, and excited? Add friends and family to the picture and capture all the elements that make them beautiful, unique, and different.

34

How do you take care of your room?

A great space can boost your life energy, confidence, focus, and self-esteem. It's said that our environment reflects our internal state. Whether chaotic or meticulously organized, sweet and homey or an industrial loft space, our house not only says a lot about who we are but – if it truly reflects us – we also feel more “at home” with ourselves. Your child's room can be an expression of his uniqueness and make him feel very safe and at home. Parents may have originally chosen the décor, but as children get older they can have more of a say in how to decorate their room. Has he decided what toys, books, and other things fit in the room? Does he keep the room neat and clean? This, over time, becomes a sign of respect

for oneself. You might want to read a book on feng shui. Small changes can change the energy in the whole room.

Activity

Go through your child's room with him. Ask him to share what he likes and doesn't like. Making small changes in the positioning of items can have a big impact on how a room feels. Both of you can close your eyes, connect with particular items, and get a sense of changes to enhance the room. Talk about what he might want to give away – toys, books, clothes, and other things that no longer are needed or fit. Are there ways to decorate the room differently? What would he like to add? Help your child be proud of his room because it reflects who he is. Involve your child in your own ways of beautifying and making your home special. Your child can help you decorate other rooms in the house too.

35

How do you show your feelings? Which feelings are okay?

All feelings are relevant and need to be valued and honored. If feelings are disregarded (“don't

be silly,” “you don’t really mean that,” “there is no reason to be upset”) they will get pushed down and squashed. It is important to recognize our feelings as a critical part of our emotional guidance system. They are not simply reflective of what is happening in the outside world and whether it is good or bad, but an indication of which voices we are listening to. Emotions arise from our thoughts about what has happened. A shortcut to changing our emotions is to change the beliefs we hold about ourselves and the world. Do you encourage open and honest expression and acknowledgement of all feelings? When children feel right, they will behave right. ⁽¹¹⁾

Activity

Use the following to help your child express emotions and the beliefs behind them:

Parent: “When a friend says you’re a slow runner, what do you think? What do you believe about yourself? What do you feel?”

Listen and draw your child out. Putting words to feelings is a learned ability.

Ask further questions of your child to understand what beliefs are behind her emotions. What triggers her emotions? What emotions does your child find it easy to express?

36

How do you talk about yourself? How do you think about yourself?

Your words and thoughts are powerful. Repetition of positive words creates neural pathways in the brain, thus hardwiring them into our subconscious and creating our future. Thoughts are things. People sense our aura and are affected by our thoughts as well as our words. Is it any wonder that we want to be around positive people and avoid critical or negative ones? People are more disposed to help us if we are positive, and they tend to dislike and avoid anyone broadcasting negativity. Negative thoughts, words, and attitude bring up negative and unhappy moods and actions. When the mind is negative, toxins are released into the blood, which cause more unhappiness and negativity. Keep your internal environment clean. Listen to your own talking. Negative language is often used without thinking – “I am dead tired,” “let’s kill this project.” We are also continually exposed

to violent messages on TV, in movies, and on the news. Listen to your words and actions and stay positive – in what you say to yourself and to your child. Do you use positive affirmations rather than critical statements when talking to yourself and your children? “I am fun,” “I am happy,” “I can do it.”

Activity

Try this experiment. Have your child hold out one arm straight in front of his body as strongly as he can. Get him to say a positive statement – “I am smart.” “I am fun to be with.” “I am very creative.” “I never give up.” See if you can push the arm down (usually you can’t). Then have your child say something negative – “I am stupid.” “I never try hard.” You’ll see that the negative statement takes the power away and you can easily push down the arm. Reverse roles and have the child do the same to you.

37

What do you love about your body?

The human body is a unique and wonderful creation – millions of cells constantly working together and communicating to create and sustain life. It continually regenerates and renews itself.

It can be trained to work in many different ways. It is the most miraculous tool that enables us to enjoy our time on earth. Therefore, it is vital that we cherish and nurture our bodies, as we do with Mother Earth. Respecting our physical body means accepting and loving it irrespective of its condition or our perception of its shape and beauty. The more gratitude and appreciation we show our body, the better it responds.

Activity

Encourage your child to appreciate the wonder of the human body. Find a picture of a human body (or draw one) and choose an activity in our bodies to talk about. What happens to our food after we eat it? How does it give us energy? Why do we have blood? What keeps us standing upright?

38

When did you achieve something that you thought you couldn't?

In order to achieve our goals we have to have a dream or clear idea of what we want to achieve. This must be supported by the confidence and self-belief that we can actually achieve our dreams. In some ways, we need to help our children emulate

the “Little Train That Could.” Part of this confidence comes from the knowledge that we have been given everything we need to accomplish what we want in our lives. Many times we see a possibility or make a promise when we have no way of knowing how we’ll achieve it. The passion and energy generated by a clear goal create the energy that allows greatness. Our beliefs about our own possibilities give our intentions a power and taps into the ultimate energy source. Our brains cannot differentiate between our thoughts and our actions. If we think we can, we will. If we think we can’t, we won’t. Our beliefs dictate our success. As the poet Virgil said, “They can because they think they can.”

Activity

Using our imagination is key in creating our dreams. Our dreams can be brought to life by our senses and feelings. Talk your child through the following practice. It can be used with a specific goal or as a general exercise.

Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Imagine that in front of you is a spaceship that will take you to a magical forest where dreams come true. Open the door of the spaceship and step inside. Find the driver’s seat and sit down. Push the green start

button and feel the spaceship moving upward and through the air. After a while it lands gently in a field of spongy green grass. Open the door and jump outside onto the grass. Find a spot in the sunshine and lie down on the grass with your eyes closed. You can hear the birds tweeting and leaves rustling in the trees. As soon as you lie down in this magical place you start to see, feel, and hear pictures of you achieving exactly what you want to achieve. It is fun and easy. What are you doing right now? Who is with you? How do you feel? Nothing can stop you. Play for as long as you like. Feel all the good feelings and listen to what people are telling you as you achieve your dreams. After a while you will wake up, walk back to the spaceship, and drive back to your home. When you arrive, thank the spaceship and know that you can go back to the magical forest anytime you like.

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The listed below are not our exhaustive sources of learning or inspiration. Learning and inspiration for this guidebook and deck have come additionally from Brandon Bays, A Course in Miracles, Buddhism, Spiritism, Ian Gawler, John of God, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Deepak Chopra, Daniel Goldman, Dr. David Hamilton, Eckhart Tolle, Bruce Lipton, Susan Jeffers, many schools of yoga, Jack Black...

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WONDER KIDS ♥ CARDS

Make Conversations *Count*

Build the confidence and
character of children you love