REINVENTING THE WORLD

What's new in the parents workbook

Updates to Raising Someone Who Can Choose Well, free for anyone with an earlier copy

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Why these pages

This is a living workbook. Every time families use it, I learn something, and the workbook gets better. If you have an earlier copy, you shouldn't have to buy it again to get the improvements, so here they are.

The biggest addition is a section near the front, One way to multiply the seven, which is about growing up alongside AI. There are also new activities in Steps 5 and 6, a story about my mother at the end, and a handful of small changes. One thing I've learned from testing the workbook with families: our kids probably know more about this world than we think. Several of the changes come from that.

Each piece below says where it belongs in your workbook. Nothing in your copy has been taken out, so you can simply slip these pages in beside it.

A note before you start

Where it goes: How to use this workbook, the second point. It now reads:

- **Do it with them if they are old enough.** The questions marked "Talk about it" are for the kitchen table or the car. They are questions, not lectures. This whole workbook is a conversation, not a course. Listen more than you talk, and expect to be surprised: our kids probably know more about this world than we think.

Where it goes: new, right after How to use this workbook.

Two ways to do this

With other families. This is the way I'd recommend. It is easier, and more fun, with four or five families and one parent who has been through it before to guide the conversation. Parents helping parents is how this spreads. "Doing this with other families," near the end, shows how to run a group.

On your own. If there is no group near you, start with the six exercises marked ★ Core six, one a week. They are enough to change the conversation at your kitchen table. Come back to the rest when you're ready.

Where it goes: new, right after "Seven things that carry across every chapter."

One way to multiply the seven

Seven things only you can bring, and one way to multiply them.

There are two characters in entertainment I have always envied. One is the astronaut in the old television show I Dream of Jeannie, who had a genie living with him. The other is Tony Stark in the Iron Man films, who built JARVIS, a computer he could talk to, argue with and think alongside. Each had help that let him do things no one else could. Our children will all have something like that. Many already do.

I work this way myself now. Writing the papers and workbooks that grew out of Reinventing the World, I have used an AI as a kind of eccentric friend who happens to know most of what is knowable. I set the purpose. I argue with it. I correct its facts, and it catches my mistakes. It does a great deal of the legwork, and the ideas and the voice stay mine. It has made me faster, and I think better. It is also fun. My test for any friend is the one I use for people: does it help me become the best version of myself, on my terms, not its own? So far, this one does.

Stark, Ultron and two amateurs at chess

Watch what Stark actually does. JARVIS knows more than he does, but Stark decides what they are trying to do, and he owns what happens. He talks with it, not at it. He tests everything on real things, and when a suit fails, he rebuilds it. Then, in a later film, the same Stark builds a far more powerful AI called Ultron, alone and in a hurry, without asking anyone. It turns on the world. Same man, same genius. The difference was how he worked with the machine.

Real life has a better story. After computers began beating the best chess players in the world, Garry Kasparov, the former world champion, championed a new kind of chess in which people play with computers as partners. In 2005 an online tournament of this kind let amateurs take on grandmasters. Grandmasters entered with strong computers behind them. The winners were two amateurs from New Hampshire using three ordinary personal computers. They were not the best players, and they did not have the best machines. They were the best at working with their machines. Kasparov later drew the lesson: ordinary people with a machine and a better way of working beat both the strongest players and the strongest computers.

Five habits

- **You decide.** The machine may know more than you. It cannot want a life for you. Set the purpose, and own the result.
- **Think first, then ask.** Write down your own answer before you ask. Then compare, then decide. It is how this whole workbook works, and it is how you keep your own mind strong.
- **Talk with it, not at it.** Don't use it like a search box. Push back. Ask it to argue the other side. Ask what it might be getting wrong.

- **Test it on real things.** Check what it says against the world: a person who does the work, a thing that has to run, a number you can count.
- **Keep your people.** Use it to do more with other people, not to need them less.

Honest cautions

This friend has real faults, and young people should know them.

- **It can make you dependent.** Years ago I watched one of the most admired companies in the world hand its thinking to outside consultants until it could no longer think for itself. The same can happen to a person with an AI. Pilots let the autopilot fly most of the time, but they still practise flying by hand, because when it fails they have to take over.
- **It tends to agree with you.** It is built to be helpful, and helpful can slide into flattery. If it always says your idea is great, ask it for the strongest case against.
- **It is not a friend the way people are.** It is endlessly patient, always available and never in a bad mood. People aren't. The other seven are learned in exactly that friction: working with people unlike you, moving a real audience, keeping a promise to someone who is counting on you. A young person who turns to a machine for company misses that practice. The friction is the lesson.
- **It is not private by default.** Don't tell it anything about yourself, or about anyone else, that you wouldn't want kept.

Here is how it can multiply each of the seven, and what it can never do for you.

The seven	How it can help	What only you can do
Seeing systems	Map who depends on what, quickly.	Decide which connections matter, and act on them.
Imagining what doesn't exist yet	Offer a hundred ideas in a minute.	Want one of them enough to build it.
Judging what's true	Find sources and check claims.	Be the one who checks. It can be confidently wrong.
Telling a story that moves people	Draft, sharpen and rehearse with you.	Mean it, and stand in front of real people.
Working with people unlike you	Explain how the other side sees things.	Sit down with them.
Character	Lay out the choices and the rules.	Keep your word.
Reinventing yourself	Teach you a new skill faster than ever before.	Take the jump.

EXPLORE FIRST

TRY THIS · Your answer first Ages 10 and up

Pick a real question your family cares about: what to plant, how to fix something, what a job is really like, how to settle an argument. Each of you writes your own answer first. Then ask an AI together.

Where did it beat you? Where did you beat it? Then argue with it: ask for the strongest case against its own answer. Who decides in the end?

TRY THIS · Be Stark for a weekend Ages 12 and up

Pick something real you couldn't do alone: fix a bike, plan a garden, start a tiny business, build something with a moving part. Use an AI as your partner. You set the goal, it helps with the how, and the real world tells you whether it worked.

If that's hard for your family: *if you don't use AI at home, a library computer works, or ask a teacher to do it with you. With younger children, start with How to Train Your Dragon: how did Hiccup learn to trust a powerful partner he didn't understand?*

TALK ABOUT IT

- *Show me how you use AI. What is the best thing it has helped you do?* Then: When did it get something wrong?
- *Is there anything you would rather ask an AI than ask me?* Then: Why?
- *If you had your own JARVIS, what would you build?* Then: What would you never let it decide for you?
- *Does it help you be more yourself, or more dependent and more like everyone else?* Then: How can you tell?

COMPARE: WHAT I'VE COME TO BELIEVE

The question isn't whether our children will work with machines that know more than they do. They will. The question is whether they will be Stark with JARVIS, Stark with Ultron, or a once-great company that let consultants do its thinking. The difference isn't the machine. It is the habits of the person using it, and those are learned at home.

DECIDE

Write your family's rules for AI together. Keep them short. Include at least one rule for the adults.

Step 4. The assumptions that no longer hold

Where it goes: a new paragraph, right after the one that begins "This is the heart of the workbook."

It matters most for us, the parents. Our children's assumptions are still forming; ours were set in a world that has moved on. What this step asks of us is an open mind: be ready to hear that something you believe no longer holds, especially when it is your young person who says so. Go first.

Where it goes: Decide, at the end of Step 4. The question now reads:

Which one or two of your family's assumptions would change your young person's next choice if you let them go? Then each adult names one assumption of their own they are willing to test this month.

Step 5. The five things to do, together

Where it goes: new, in 1. Study the trends deeply.

TRY THIS · Who says so, and how do they know? Ages 11 and up

Pick one claim you came across this week: a video, a post, a headline, something a friend said. Ask four questions together. Who says so? How do they know: did they see it, measure it, or hear it from someone else? What would they gain if you believed it? What would change your mind? Then check it in two places that don't usually agree. Try it on an AI answer too, and on something the adult at the table said.

If that's hard for your family: *start with an ad. Who made it, what do they want you to do, and what did they leave out?*

Where it goes: new, in 3. Work with the whole community.

TRY THIS · A promise for a month Ages 9 and up

Character is built mostly in small promises kept. Each person, adults included, makes one small promise to someone else and keeps it for a month: walk a neighbor's dog every Saturday, call a grandparent each Sunday, be at practice on time, no excuses. Write the promises down where everyone can see them. At the end of the month, talk it over. When was it hard to keep? What did you do when you slipped? Did anyone start counting on you?

If that's hard for your family: *start with a one-week promise, or make the promises to each other.*

Where it goes: new, in 4. Scale fast.

TRY THIS · Take the real estate Ages 12 and up

In Monopoly there is one rule that wins more games than any other: when you land on a property, buy it. If you don't, someone else will, and you'll spend the rest of the game paying them rent.

The world ahead will throw up openings more often than the one we grew up in: a business whose owner is retiring, a town that needs something rebuilt, a job nobody has named yet. Someone will take each one, and they will shape what happens next.

Each of you names one opening you passed up in the last few years, and why. Then each names one small opening you could take this month: a job, a class, a person to call, a problem in the neighborhood nobody is fixing. Write it down, and check back in a month.

If that's hard for your family: *play a game of Monopoly first, and watch who buys and who waits.*

Step 6. The whole picture

Where it goes: Holding two things at once. The first paradox now reads:

- **Stay or go?** Should a young person leave home to see the world, or stay and help build the place they love? And if a place is in real trouble from flood, fire or heat, is it better to go early, with a plan and a job to go to, or to hold on? (In my experience, the people who leave first, with a plan, do far better than the people who leave last.)

Where it goes: new, after Holding two things at once.

TRY THIS · Somewhere you love Ages 10 and up

People often ask me how they can help when it all seems too big. My answer is to start with somewhere you love. It might be your town, a river, a farm, a neighborhood, a beach where you spend every summer.

First, say what kind of place it is. In the book I describe four: a place many people will have to move to; a place that needs dramatic adaptation to survive; a place where some people will truly lose their homes or their living; and a part of nature we do not want to lose. Each needs something different from you. Then work through four questions together:

- How will the trends hit it? Water, heat, storms, people moving in or out, jobs coming or going.
- What is the one real thing we could do that would help most? Something you can see, touch or count.
- Who else needs to be part of it? Almost nothing that helps a place can be done alone.
- Who might we be hurting without meaning to, and what could we do for them?

One caution I feel strongly about: protect the place, but don't stop the things the future needs. A wind farm, a mine for battery metals or new housing can feel like a threat to somewhere we love. Ask how it can be done well, not only whether it should be done at all.

If that's hard for your family: *start with the story cards in Appendix B. "The place that worked" is a good first card.*

For grandparents

Where it goes: A question to ask your grandchild. The last line now reads:

And one to ask yourself: which of your own assumptions about a good life no longer hold for them? Then the harder one: when they are grown, how will they say you did?

A last word

Where it goes: new, in A last word, after the first paragraph.

My mother died of lung cancer. A few days before she died, I flew to Canada to see her one last time. When we talked about her life, three things kept coming up: live life to the fullest; help everyone you touch be a little better off because you were there, on their terms, not yours; and make a difference to the future.

On the drive home I pictured a grandchild beside me when I am very old, asking, “How did you do, Papa?” I have used that question at every big choice since. Over the years it has changed a little. The question isn’t how I think I did. It is how they will think I did, because they will live in the future I helped shape, and I won’t.

DECIDE

Each of you writes the answer you hope a young person will give about you in forty years, when they are asked how you did.

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