

Welcome to the
**KIDS THESE DAYS
BOOK CLUB**



KIDS THESE DAYS:

BOOK CLUB PLAYBOOK

You are wired to do hard things. You can do those hard things so much easier when you remember this: You are wired for connection.

I have said this often throughout this book-writing process: there is a difference between being motivational and being transformational. My hope in writing this little playbook for Kids These Days is that if you, and the winners you have chose to surround yourself with, want to squeeze every ounce out of these pages, I wanted you to get just a little bit more—maybe just enough to not only motivate you, but to transform you. The secret sauce that inspired me to actually put these words down on paper, and hopefully provide insight, hope, motivation, and heck TRANSFORMATION to you sweet souls brave enough to walk along side me, all came from you. When someone suggested they might want to do a book club with Kids These Days—I cried. So if you're reading this: thank you. And here's just a few more words—written just for you.

You can use these suggestions by yourself or in a group. When I created this, I envisioned a group of people gathering in person (preferably) to discuss the content, while hovering over great wine and amazing food (a charcuterie board is my choice). That's the ideal situation. But tucked in your bed with a cup of tea will also suffice.

GETTING STARTED

- Get a physical copy of Kids These Days. As I type this—the audiobook is in the works. That is my favourite way to consume books. For the purpose of our Club, a physical copy is super helpful to take notes and refer back to when we talk about the hard stuff—and the joy. Always the joy.
- Gather your friends. Remember—if you sit with the winners, the conversation is different. You can plan to gather once, and talk through the whole book (just refer to the summary questions highlighted for each chapter), or you can meet weekly (more wine and cheese) and go through the book one chapter at a time.
- There's no right way to do this. Read it all at once or go chapter by chapter. Or—if you're like me—show up at the book club and learn more about the book. Your friends might even inspire you to read it your (own damn) self!
- This is mostly designed as guiding questions; however, there are a few direct questions I'd like you to answer throughout, so have a paper and a pen ready so you can write down a few things that set your soul on fire.
- Let's crush it, team. All we need is you. You—just you—are (more than) enough.

CHAPTER 1

(RE)CONNECTING BACK TO THE BEGINNING:

WHY YOU CHOSE THIS HOLY WORK OF EDUCATING OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS

*If you've lost
your purpose,
you've lost your
passion.*

Whether you're a parent or an educator (or both, you amazing soul) here are some things I want you to ponder as you read through this first chapter. This first chapter is where I talk about all the things I have learned along the way. Many of my lessons came when I was at the Alberta Children's Hospital. Working alongside a whole cast of amazing players just trying to do the best they could. It's where I met some of my most influential mentors. They taught me to look for the lesson in every family I met. To slow it down (my three least favourite words). And most of all—the relationship you create in an effort to serve others will be your greatest gift.

1. What is your critical purpose on this planet? Why are you here? (If you need a hint, I want you to consider this: We find our greatest purpose in serving others—in little or big ways—they all count).
2. What is your biggest worry about Kids These Days? What is one thing you, just you, can do to make a dent (even the slightest one) in your concern? Remember here—this isn't about changing an entire system—we're not that powerful. But never underestimate the power of one
3. Imagine if you will, how your parents would have answered this question when you were a kid. What do you think their biggest worry would have been for you?
4. Explain what emotional regulation means to you in words other than "losing your friggin mind".
5. Think about the educator, coach, or mentor who had the biggest influence on you. Write down their names. If you can, connect with them and tell them that. If they are no longer on this planet, write them a note and send the words up (burning it is a rather aggressive, yet powerful option). What do you remember most about each one of them. In the way you show up today, would you make them proud?

CHAPTER 2

TAMING THE CRAZY BY GETTING CRAZY:
HOW EMOTIONAL REGULATION WORKS AND
WHY IT'S THE KEY TO CHANGING THE WORLD

*First, last, and
always, it's
about the crazy.
It's about the
light-up.*

This chapter is all about understanding why the easy part is getting kids to comply. The hard part is remembering what you leave them with is the most important thing. These words reflect a little behind the neuroscience at play that makes kids (and big kids) tick. As you flip through these pages, consider these questions:

1. Why do you think we were and are so motivated to figure out (and attempt to control) the behaviour of others, particularly our children? Discuss your understanding of why, for so long, a strictly behavioural approach has taken center stage?
2. In your opinion, is there room for behavioural approaches when parenting and teaching our children? What might that look like in your classrooms or in your parenting relationships? (hint: the answer is absolutely there's room; it's not if we teach our babes, it's HOW).
3. What does your "light up" look like? Who do you find it the easiest to light up around? Who, right now, in your world, might just need a little more of your light up?
4. Talk about your understanding of Siegel's "lid flip". What does it look like when you flip your lid? Notice what gets you to flip the fastest and what and who helps you to get it back on the most efficiently.
5. Discuss the Circle of Security with your crew. What part of the Circle are you most comfortable with (a kid/husband/wife) who is on the top of circle or the bottom of the circle)? Why might that be.

CHAPTER 3

KIDS THESE DAYS: HOW I SEE THEM

I have assessed and treated 1000 kids in this country and I have never, not one time, met a bad kid.

This chapter feels like the most important platform I can stand on. Shifting the way we think about kids and their behaviour is the thing I can get most passionate about. When we see the things our children are facing these days and the destructive things they say and do to each other (often via social media), how they appear not to be engaged, or act disrespectful, we get scared. We look for reasons to try and explain it. And mostly, we try and fix it. Use these words in this chapter to consider where kids these days might be coming from and what it might mean to face a world of false connection when you're trying to figure out if you matter.

1. Talk about your understanding about my take on “three kinds of kids”: the regular lid flipper, Caillou, and Flat Stanley. Does this resonate?
2. When you think about the people you teach, lead, or love, do you find it more difficult dealing with the Calliou's of the world, or the Flat Stanley's. Any idea why that might be? (hint: often those babies and big people who get under our skin the most trigger, at least in some part, our own trauma).
3. Talk about why kids might be “attention-seeking, manipulative liars”. What happens when you think about these kids as “connection seeking” rather than “attention seeking”?
4. When you think about the kids you teach or influence in your life who you are most worried about right now, what is the difference between the hand they were dealt (the things they were born with—like neurological conditions) versus things that they acquired via their experiences in this lifetime thus far. How, if at all, do you think their experiences shape how they show up in the world?
5. How often do you apologize to the people who mean the most to you in your life? What do you think gets in the way of doing this more? (Remember, an apology with a kid or your partner cannot contain an explanation—or the word “but”—or it erases the apology). Repairing relationships is often the most important thing that will ever occur between two people.

CHAPTER 4

TRAUMA COMPLICATES IT ALL: AS IF IT WASN'T COMPLICATED ENOUGH

You can't give away something you've never received.

My biggest insights around understanding trauma and its implications in relationship came most pointedly when I started to understand trauma as a psychological injury, not a mental illness. Just like a physical injury, it requires treatment. Also like a physical injury, treatment that comes sooner rather than later often results in the best outcomes. And also like a physical injury, it's never too late to treat it.

1. What is your understanding of what it means to be “trauma informed” or “trauma sensitive”? How can you imagine having an understanding of trauma might affect your practice or how you show up with babies in your classrooms or your communities (your kids' friends, the ones you coach, the ones you see at the hockey rink)?
2. The Adverse Childhood Experiences study is one of the most profound research undertakings in the world of trauma. Discuss the 10 ACEs identified by Felitti and colleagues. (For more information on what it takes to “qualify” for an ACE is readily available via an internet search).
3. Score yourself on the ACEs scale and talk about what it takes to be resilient. Interestingly, it appears that none of the ACEs carry more “weight” than another. Any thoughts on why this might be?
4. What are some of your biggest take-aways when thinking about interacting with children with a trauma history? If you could have the people in your world understand just one thing about trauma, what might that be?
5. Talk about the differences in addressing a person who has experiences an acute versus a chronic trauma. PTSD can occur with either experience of trauma. How might your approach shift when you understand trauma as a psychological injury?

CHAPTER 5

GRIEF—THE GREAT EQUALIZER

*Death ends a life,
not a relationship.*

Mitch Albom

So far, this is the chapter our readers have talked about the most. This grief thing—I'm telling you—we need to talk about it more. When hard things come though, we would prefer to armour up; hope (often desperately) that the hardest parts are over, that we will be fine. See, the thing is, you will get through it. I promise. I will also promise you this—the waves will come again. It's how this grief thing rolls. My most profound appreciation of grief came when I learned the difference between grief and mourning. That is my biggest hope for this chapter—that you can appreciate the difference between these two and what it means to show someone how to mourn.

1. On that note, discuss what the difference is between grief and mourning. How, if at all, has this understanding changed your perception of this universal process of loss?
2. Ceremony is the gathering of make sense together with other hearts who are hurting too. Recall some of the most important experiences you have had in the ceremony surrounding your own grief and loss. What do remember about those times resonating most with your soul?
3. What do you think is most important for kids to know when they experience loss? How often do the children in your circle—either at home or at work—get opportunities to make sense of grief?
4. Mitch Albom's words "death ends a life, not a relationship" changed my life. What does it mean to you?
5. What are some things that you might do differently with those in your life who have experienced loss. If you are in a classroom with our babes, how, if at all, might your approach shift with those babes who have experienced loss?

CHAPTER 6

THE 5 KEYS TO (RE)CONNECTING:
THE ANSWER LIES IN GETTING HEARTS AND TAKING NAMES

The quick reference chapter when you want to throat punch someone.

This chapter is centered around a little list I created when someone told me that you need to have useable “take-aways” for people. Honestly—I don’t know how these things made the list. A couple of them include things I want you to think about, while a couple others are practical things I want you to do. I know this for sure about all of them, however, is that they’re fool-proof. A little bit of one of them or a lot of all of them will always, all ways, bring you and those you teach, lead, and love to a better place. Use this chapter often. It won’t steer you wrong.

1. Do you ever doubt in this life that you are wired to do the hard things? The soul-crushing, heart breaking tough ones? (by the way—we all do). What, if anything, pulls you out of those moments? What do you do, powerful one, to get those you love through these times? (it might have something to do with connection before direction—even if you’ve never used those very words).
2. Talk about the Five Keys with your crew. Which one(s) makes the most sense to you? Are there any of these that you were so good at already? How are you using them more pointedly in your life and practice today?
3. If you’ve had a chance to get someone’s eyes and say their name (particularly someone you don’t know—like a service provider at the airport or at the coffee shop), discuss your funnest reaction. If you haven’t tried this yet, see how many people in the run of a week you can get to comment on your engagement with them (it’ll happen. Trust me).
4. How do we get around the concern that using food and drink when kids are upset will “reward the bad behaviour”. Is this still a common perception in your circle? How do you think we start to shift this idea (hint: connect with them about it over a coffee and a meat tray—just a thought)....
5. How often do you use your power with parents of the kids you teach, lead, and love? Talk about some of the experiences where you might have complimented a parent on their child and what their reaction was like.

CHAPTER 7

THE CARRINGTON CONNECTIONS NETWORK FOR EDUCATORS: A MODEL FOR SCHOOL DIVISION MENTAL HEALTH

Great leaders excavate the unsaid. And they need to have a plan.

This little chapter right here is all about “what next”. I think it’s always easiest to come up with all of the problems we are facing in the world, but my (our) biggest challenge was to figure out how we respond to it. Not suggestions about what “administrators” need to do, but how do we start to think about this from the inside, out. How do we develop a language within a school district that can serve to shift the way it operates, fundamentally, so that everything from pedagogy to parental involvement will reflect relationships—first. End of story.

1. One of my biggest initiatives is the CCN model. The purpose is to provide a common language for all players in a school division, and then create sustainability within the mental health teams. Why do you think the mental health teams became our focus?
2. “Relationship knows no hierarchy” has become the foundation for our approach in all school divisions we have worked with. Discuss the benefits of having all members of an education system able to speak the same language. Talk about the barriers that a division or an organization might face as we lead with the “culture first”.
3. We often talk about what it takes to make a “great leader”. Think about some of the best leaders you have. Discuss their finest qualities with your team. Then write down what you bring to the table as a relationship leader, a culture-shifter. Remember—relationship knows no hierarchy. We just need someone to be the change.
4. Kids, are kids, are kids. This understanding gave light to the necessity to start to network school divisions with each other. Talk about the potential “benefits” and “costs” of having access to support from other Divisions’ mental health teams and administrator supports.
5. Sometimes shifting culture in any team can be a huge challenge. Write down and discuss some of the ways that you can influence the culture in your organization (hint—it can be little, or it can be huge. A few of my favourites thus far: Meat tray Mondays, a weekly commitment to positive call-home-to-the-tough-kids-parents, kindness teams). Any other ideas?

CHAPTER 8

SIX STRATEGIES TO KEEP YOU LIT THE WHOLE SCHOOL YEAR

If those of you holding our babes on a daily basis are not okay, our kids don't stand a chance.

This last little chapter was bitter-sweet for me. I wanted to leave the most powerful chapter to the end—be the one that lifted souls and kept those of you doing holy work in the game. I knew it was about to end - Since this book came out, I've heard so many tell me that they were thinking of changing profession—until they were reminded of their passion. The goal—sweet ones—is to look after you. Just a little—or a lot—nothing in this chapter will steer you wrong. It is a practice—not an end game. Keeping you in the game means we have to focus on it as often as we can. We need YOU holy one.

1. What does compassion fatigue mean to you? Do you see it in the people around you? Why, do you think. are some of your colleagues more affected than others?
2. Write down your “bottom hands”. Remember—not the people you're thankful for—per se—but the ones whose opinions matter the most to you. Who you want to show up for. Who you want to make proud. Talk within the group about at least one of your bottom hands and how you got to be so lucky to be influenced by them?
3. This whole idea of practicing gratitude and joy is often talked about these days—but putting it into action seems to be more of a challenge—and indeed—a DAILY practice. Stop for a moment right now and write down or discuss the three things, right here and right now, that you're most grateful for. Try to get creative—and search for the least obvious (not “just” kids, family, job)—but the ones that take a little effort. Why did they come into your head today, do you think?
4. If you work in a team, talk about Durkheim's concept of “collective effervescence”. What does it mean to you? What might be some of the barriers to being in the change on your current team (or in your current family) to move closer towards the idea of collective effervescence?
5. Sit with the winners was a phrase that found me at just the right time. As my world has shifted after writing this book, I am so inspired when I hang out with people who have vision and dream big. Write down the people who are your winners—the ones you know and the ones you'd like to me. Then make that shit happen.

Thank you for reading KIDS THESE DAYS. It was such a privilege to write these words and it is an honour to have you read them. I mean it. You, just you, every single day, is all we need.

xo