

December 2021 Issue 17

The We Turned Out Okay Playbook

by Karen Lock Kolp, M.Ed.

Helping you do what works for you...

Instead of treading the conventional path. Let's jump in!

In Training

Welcome to Issue 17 of the *We Turned Out Okay Playbook*!

I've been thinking a lot on where I was in my mindset, the month before I started creating this *Playbook*.

It was June 2020, a month where every step seemed to be the wrong step. The pandemic, politics, and racial injustice – among so much else – weren't merely insidiously upsetting but on-the-surface terrifying.

During that time, one constant good in my life was the private coaching community I had founded 3 years earlier, the Ninja Parenting Community. The folks in there would bring their biggest challenges, and get the parenting help they needed to keep going. It

was a fun place – with summer camp, and virtual sleepovers – where I felt connected no matter what was happening around community members, or me.

I started wondering, what more could I do to help them? And others like them. Folks who shared all the same fears that I did, but who knew there must be some good in the world somewhere.

Another constant good in my life, at that time and also for several years prior, was the Dream HQ. Nearly 20 years ago I was certified as a yoga instructor, and got really good at group meditation, leading yoga classes into a guided relaxation in which we'd all feel better once we returned to the present.

It started with the room of Cookies and Books. Then Joy and Honey introduced themselves to me. And somewhere in the pandemic, these two ideas collided into the Dream HQ. It made so much sense. It felt right on an intuitive level that two such forces for good would exist in this magical realm, where anyone who knows about it could always return.

I began doing nightly meditations, preparing my mind for sleep and good dreams, by visiting the Dream HQ myself. I would wish that I could share Joy and Honey, and their realm, with others. After all, I found such solace there.

When the idea came to me to create this *Playbook*, it seemed like the perfect spot for them.

And so I began talking with coaching clients and friends and family. I would ask, what do you think about this idea, a workbook that is also a place for a guided meditation? People shared that they would welcome a resource that would help them take their mind off their troubles and take control of their lives.

Haltingly at first, I wrote ideas for the *Playbook*. Then a “sh**ty first draft” (following author Anne Lamott’s idea that “everything I ever wrote, I started with a sh**ty first draft.”) Then a better draft. Then one which I shared with a few members of the Ninja Parenting Community. The encouragement kept coming, and I began to feel a call. That call overcame my imposter syndrome, my “who-do-I-think-I-am” fears.

I began to see that this was something I could do to help. That it would help not just me but others as well. Finally, I understood that it would be wrong to hold back. So I kept going.

I invited folks to subscribe, to try out the *Playbook*. The response was amazing! I'll never forget when my friend Janine Halloran, a nationally recognized parent educator, told me "This is a life raft for families." She told me how she herself had used the *Playbook* to gain some control over her life and to feel better, no matter what challenges the pandemic placed in her way.

I threw myself into the writing and production.

In addition to throwing myself into the Ninja Parenting Community, and in addition to taking an excessive amount of responsibility for the folks in my household.

You may remember the results. In October 2020, having placed myself last on the list for many months, I developed complicated diverticulitis and spent a couple days in the hospital. I upset a delicate balance within.

Case in point. My 20-year-old picked me up from the hospital, got me home and settled in my favorite chair and was sitting with me when I said "Max, I'm so sorry, I don't think I'm going to be able to keep going with the Student Café [the little café I had developed to keep their spirits up while physically away from their classes and friends]." Max said "Mom! You just got out of the [bleep]ing hospital! Please don't worry about that. We will be fine."

I knew that. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I knew that my ability to restore that delicate balance - by prioritizing my own needs - would help those I loved too. In the year since I understand more and more that what I role-model in this regard matters far more than what I "do" for these loved ones, in my private and professional life.

When I shared in the Ninja Parenting Community that I had made the super difficult decision to close it, I was expecting hellfire and damnation. Instead, every single member was amazing. "We care about you. Thank you for looking after yourself and being a good example" about sums up their feelings.

I still hear from folks who miss it. I still miss it!

But closing it was the beginning of an important journey for me, into myself. I've learned that I work best when helping one person at a time transform their life. That's where I am in flow and where I can make the most difference. And have the most fun!

I've learned that individual relationships matter most to me. I've taken myself away from Facebook, and Instagram and other social media, because those were not about

relationships. I know this because they left me feeling sad and unconnected. I've learned that likes are not translatable to fulfillment. But conversation is.

Creating this *Playbook* has been one of the joys of the last 18 months. It has contributed to my positive energy, just as my coaching practice has.

On this journey into myself I've paid attention to my enjoyment and what lights me up and fulfills me. Writing the *Playbook* has been squarely there.

As we went along I realized something, and again that something made me sad... The *Playbook* was only meant as a short-term monthly subscription. There would come a time when I'd be finished with it, and intuitively I would know that time.

Well, here we are.

Making creative decisions like this, similar to deciding to close the Ninja Parenting Community, has been hard and sad. Yet also empowering.

I get to focus my energy in the places that feel most fulfilling.

By saying "no" to things that no longer feel that way, I create space for new ideas. As a coach of mine, Dan Blank, would say, I "go back to the well."

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I have learned to return to the well in another important way: getting rest.

Taking time to daydream, read fiction. Draw, cook, pastel-paint. Hike and climb and ski. See friends, or be by myself.

But it's so hard to do that.

To get myself there I've learned to think of rest days as training days. I know that, after I'm done with this particular "workout" of getting rest, I'll be ready to jump in and focus my energy again on the things that feel most fulfilling.

On friendships; on family; on coaching clients; on writing and other types of creation.

On me.

In an upcoming episode of *We Turned Out Okay*, I'll speak with coach Garrison Cohen. He shares his thoughts on "selfish generosity," where he makes the lives of everyone around him better – by taking time for himself.

That's what I mean by being "in training."

In this final edition of the *We Turned out Okay Playbook*, you and I both will be in training. Getting the rest we need. It may not always look like we think it's going to look, but it will be the key that unlocks the door to a satisfying and fulfilling life.

Let's dive in!

December 2021 At-a-Glance & Calendar Expansion

This month we (and I'm including myself in here) focus on the beautiful and the challenging, regarding rest! We will...

- Reflect back on how we got here
- Consider that rest doesn't always look the way we think it will
- Believe our experience
- Return to the well.

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Before we jump in, I want to share my gratitude and sincere thanks to you, for being with me along on this journey.

We've come so far together.

I know I would not have been able to make it without you.

Because you are amazing.

Happy December – enjoy!

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
			1. What was...
5. What's changed?	6. How does that make you feel?	7. Rest, Part 1...	8.
12. Rest, Part 2...	13.	14.	15.
19.	20.	21.	22.
26.	27.	28.	29.

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Ideas
2. Your life like...	3. In June...	4. 2020?	*Play High/Low/Hero/Funny anytime you wish this month! It's on page 18.
9.	10.	11.	*Look back at past editions of H/L/H/F... What strikes you?
16.	17. Rest, Part 3...	18.	
23.	24.	25.	
30.	31.	J1 Happy New Year <3	

Let's jump into December 2021!

Week 1: What was your life like in June 2020?

December 1: Think back to June 2020. That's when I first began creating this *Playbook*, and things were so different then. We'll take these next few days to look at just how different.

What was your life like then? Write, doodle, or draw about that here:

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December 2: What were your biggest struggles then?

December 3: What were your biggest fears?

December 4: What was holding you back most?

Week 1, Part 2: What's Changed?

December 5: Come to present, and reflect on your mindset now, compared to what it was in June 2020. What's changed?

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December 6: How does that make you feel?

Week 2: Rest, Part One

December 7: Consider your Inner Child. Picture them in your mind. Often your Inner Child looks a lot like you did as a kid... Write about, doodle, or draw your Inner Child here!

December 8: What does your Inner Child like to do?

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December 9: What does your Inner Child find fun?

December 10: When is your Inner Child completely exhausted, wrung out, unhappy, done?

December 11: Often what our Inner Child loves doing, our adult bodies and minds find extremely restful. Also, what exhausts our Inner Child tends to exhaust our adult bodies and minds.

In other words, “rest” can look very different than how we think of it!

Reflecting back on these last several days, and what you’ve written here, what does rest look like for you?

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Week 3: Rest, Part 2

December 12: Just in the last month it has come to my attention that I have spent a good 40 years not believing my experience.

Here is how that happened.

When I was 7 years old, I was sexually abused. The abuser, a distant relative, went one step further and threatened my life if I ever told anyone. No one was there to help (despite the fact that my mom was just upstairs.) Severely traumatized and anxious for the first time in her life, Little Karen took on the responsibility of becoming a survivor, rather than a victim... and she did that all by herself.

At age 12, I attempted to tell my loved ones that I had been sexually abused. They *did not hear me*; that's how I've always thought of it. My parents were concerned that someone was molesting my brother, and all eyes were on him when this conversation came up. When I shared what I had experienced, I was told "that can't have been what happened. It can't have been like that."

A decade later, when I was 22, I was able to share about my experience and what I survived in a way that my parents heard and understood. Which was excellent! Our relationship has been better ever since, and I have gone on to live a wonderful life.

But there was a downside, and I've only realized the existence of this downside in the last month. It wasn't just that I wasn't *heard* by my parents. It's that I wasn't *believed*.

I've discovered that "not being believed" is very different than "not being heard." It's resulted in me, under the surface, not believing myself. Not believing that what I am actually experiencing is true and happening and valid.

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Understanding this was so tough at first. I felt feelings I've not felt in years, as I have looked at the incidents and fallout afresh and comprehended the implications of not being believed. It's led to beautiful things, conversations with those I love in which I've shared feelings and thoughts around not being believed. I have asked loved ones the question, "Was there ever a time when you felt not believed by me?" Sometimes the answer has been yes. And we talk about that. I apologize. And I ask, if they ever feel not believed by me again, to please tell me.

Believing our experience means not powering through if our body cries out against that. It means recognizing when we need rest. (Sometimes, it means giving ourselves permission to go pee now rather than later!)

Each day this week, try to keep 'belief in experience' in mind.

Utilize the calendar space in here to share your questions, emotions, and ideas in any way that feels right.

During the week, do you notice times when you don't believe your own experience? What might you do differently, now that you recognize that?

How does believing your experience promote rest for you? Share in these pages...

December 13...

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December 14...

December 15...

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December 16...

For the Rest of December... Rest, Part 3

December 17: Returning to the well. Today: what does your “well” look like? Is it one of those classic covered wells, like a wishing well? Is it a free-running stream down a mountain? Is it a natural spring, burbling down rocks? Is it the ocean, sharing up gifts with each tide? Draw an image of your well in the space below.

December 18: Each day for the next several days, transport yourself to your well... Enjoy a peaceful time here, simply being. If you'd like, share about your experience in the corresponding dates below.

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December 19:

December 20:

December 21:

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December 22:

December 23:

December 24:**December 25:**

December 26-31: Translating our reflections at the well into a vision board.

Gather your supplies – magazines, wrapping paper or cards with fun images, pictures you’ve printed off the Internet, bright markers, colored pencils, and some tape or glue...

We’ll spend the rest of December creating a vision board (or adding to one we’ve already started :)

Turn to Playsheet 2 on page 19, the first of a series of empty pages for you to design and envision your future. I’d love to see a picture of your vision boarding! Please share with me, karen@weturnedoutokay.com. (Mine is at the end of this *Playbook*.)

And get ready for 2022! It’s going to be a great year!

Playsheets

I am very much not a fan of worksheets. But I really wanted you to have a place to collect your thoughts in a worksheet kind of way, so I developed these Playsheets instead!

Playsheet 1: High/Low/Hero/Funny... In each issue of the *Playbook* we play this game, where everyone shares about the best thing that happened to them that day, the toughest thing about that day, and who was a kindness hero for them that day – and/or, what entertaining or funny thing happened?

We play this game each and every month so you can enjoy looking back on the highs, lows, heroes and funnies over your *Playbook* subscription!

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Loved One	High	Low	Hero	Funny

Playsheet 2 – Vision Boarding Baby!

Hello from The Dream HQ

The column where each month we visit a wonderful place for mindfulness and relaxation: Karen's Dream Headquarters.

We appear in the glade of the Dream HQ, and we take in the view:

It is either very late at night, or very early in the morning, depending on how we wish to view time. We are in the treehouse – a previously unexplored place in the Dream HQ – lying in the most comfortable hammock, which sways gently in an equally gentle breeze.

In the woods around us we hear peaceful nighttime sounds, crickets, tree frogs, the hoot of an owl.

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From our hammock, the view is east. We see the tiniest crescent moon appear on the eastern horizon, preceding the dawn that will arrive in due time.

The sky is completely clear, and filled with stars. Looking northward we see the constellation, special to the Dream HQ, which reads “Everything’s going to be okay.” Suspended just above the Big House – we are in the woods behind the back gardens and maze of the house – we see the constellation that appeared a few months ago, spelling out the words “Come to present.”

(If we were standing in the gardens behind the Big House we would see one more of these beautiful thought-constellations, the one that reads “All shall be well.” Even though we can’t quite see it from our current vantage point, we know it’s there.)

There are tiny lights sprinkled throughout the maze in the back garden of the Big House. Similar lights adorn the house itself.

Looking around inside the treehouse, it's such a fun space. It's as if a tree grew itself to provide comfortable seating, tables, and suspension for hammocks within its gigantic trunk, as well as the spiral staircase to get in here! Fairy lights create beautiful images on the ceiling.

It's so peaceful and quiet here, as we lie so comfortably in our hammock.

We begin to wonder, why are we awake anyway? It's so late... or early... Everything is hushed, almost as if waiting for something to begin.

Quiet as a whisper, it does.

Joy, a larger-than-life woman and her friend and companion, Honey, a winged horse, are suddenly standing together bathed in fairy light on the lawn behind the Big House.

They begin by playing together. In time, their play becomes a beautiful, spontaneous – yet perfectly orchestrated – dance. Finally, their dance goes airborne as Joy hops up on Honey's back. And they fly together.

It's magical. Time seems suspended, even more so than usual here in the Dream HQ, as we watch these two friends show us, and each other, all the love in their hearts.

We find ourselves sitting up, even standing, dancing with them while watching from the treehouse balcony.

As they wrap up, they fly our way, hovering at our eye level well above the ground. Their love for us shines all over their faces, as does their thanks for the time that we spend here. Still airborne they acknowledge us with a regal bow, and fly east. Over the big house and into the coming dawn.

Who knows what they'll find out in the world? One thing is certain, this is their heart center. And we've got a standing invitation to join them in this peaceful and exhilarating place, whenever we wish.

All we need to do is close our eyes and step into the Dream HQ.

Here is MY vision board, created all the way back in June 2020...



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Thank you for being here! You rock!

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