

May 2021 Issue 10

# The We Turned Out Okay Playbook

by Karen Lock Kolp, M.Ed.

Doing what works for you and your family...

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

## **The truth... About lying.**

Welcome to Issue 10 of the *We Turned Out Okay Playbook*!

In the pandemic, lies and lying have come up both personally and professionally for me. Not in huge ways – but frequently enough that I felt an entire issue of the *Playbook* was warranted on this important topic.

When my youngest was seven or eight years old, all he wanted in the world was to play a game on our tablet, Clash of Clans.

The lengths to which he would go to play this game! Jason is an incredible negotiator and always has been. He's got a lawyerly mind, which sees every loophole, every

opportunity for getting what he wants. Even if it means manipulating those around him. Even if it means lying.

So we made some ironclad rules:

The tablet will be in use between 3-4 PM, and again between 6 and 7 PM. Other than that, no tablet time.

Immediately Jason started chipping away at those rules.

“But I really want to use the tablet to play music, Mom... that’s where the piano app is.”

“I want to make a video of my bears. Can I please use the tablet to do that?”

“Will you watch this YouTube video with me? I know you’re going to love it!”

What’s the parent of a self-directed learner to do? These were all extremely valid uses of the tablet. One of the reasons both my sons are so into creating music and mastering instruments today is because of these goofy little apps that they used as children. We still have one of those bear videos and I watch it to remember Jay’s childhood... Also, connecting over YouTube videos is something that as a parent I am forever grateful for. Just last night Jay and I re-watched a couple of favorite videos – at my invitation.

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Naturally I gave him permission to use the tablet outside of our established hours because these were important tasks and amusements.

For me, this is where the lying began. I say that because immediately I began telling *myself* a lie: “I am in complete control of my son’s tablet usage.”

I saw my relationship with Jay as “I’m in charge. He must obey me.”

But that’s not how he saw it.

Jay knew that I would look away eventually. He knew there would come a chance to play Clash of Clans, outside of tablet hours, without my permission.

And so, he bided his time.

During this time I had the opportunity to go away with some girlfriends for a weekend of fun and frolic and frivolity. I got home late Sunday after two nights of extremely limited sleep, with a sore neck from dancing and barely any voice from laughing and celebrating. (It seems strange that I even did that, after 14 months of Covid!)

That night all I wanted was my cozy bed and a cup of tea. I headed for bed very early, almost the same time as approximately eight-year-old Jay. Tea in hand, I went in to say good night to him. I found him just wrapping up with the tablet, what at the time I assumed was some sanctioned activity, even though it was outside of regular screen time hours. I leaned in to give him a kiss and he said “Mom, that’s funny... Clash of Clans was open on here. I don’t know why, it isn’t usually.” And he fiddled with the tablet until that particular game was closed for the night.

I hugged him and left the room with my tea... and realized I had just been completely hoodwinked.

Jay’s a great liar, but his tell is giving too much information. He drew my attention to the peculiarity of having Clash of Clans open on the tablet. If he had left it alone and not said anything, I would never have known.

I turned back and said “that’s not really what happened, is it Jay.” His eyes got all wide and he looked so intently at me; later Jay told me he did that because he learned that the way to get away with a lie is to look someone straight in the eyes and they will think you’re telling the truth. And it almost worked – for a moment I questioned myself.

Then I remembered with certainty that this was a lie. I held my ground.

A moment later his face crumpled, he began crying.

What, Ben and I asked Jay, did he think we should do?

I forget exactly what the “punishment” was for Jay’s lying. I do know that bringing him in on it was helpful, helped him to see how wrong it is to lie, and that it does bring negative consequences.

Jay shared that he felt a certain amount of relief in being found out. He was carrying on a charade that he felt terrible about, and had been living in fear for weeks if not months that he’d be found out.

As Jay has grown, he’s shown himself to be one of the most principled people I know. He understands that he has the capacity to lie, and get away with things. But he doesn’t like the feeling. He likes to be truthful, he likes to be trusted and feel that he can trust those around him.

Here is the truth about lying: Children lie. All children. Even if they don’t tell big huge bouncers, they still lie.

Just like their parents.

Often, the lies we tell ourselves are about how we wish the world would be. But the truth is, the world is how it is. Acknowledging that is a great first step to creating a better world.

Fortunately we do have the power to recognize the lies, and build the world how we wish it would be.

This month we spend our time doing just that – building the world out in the way we most prefer. We do that by looking at the truth, and understanding our own power.

Let's dive in!

## May 2021 At-a-Glance & Calendar Expansion

This month we look at mistruthin' – and exchanging it for the truth – four ways:

- When kids lie
- When kids hear your words as lies
- How you might be lying to yourself
- Putting all the lies to bed, and exchanging them for up to three important Core Truths you will take into family life

You'll finish out the month creating a Core Truths Playsheet to help you remember what the most important truths are – to you, and to your family.

Happy May – Enjoy!

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
2. When kids lie	3. Listening...	4. Listening...	5. What to say to yourself when you hear it
9. When kids hear your words as lies	10. Listening...	11. Listening...	12. What to say to yourself when you hear it
16. How you might be lying to yourself	17. Listening...	18. Listening...	19. What to say to yourself when you hear it
23. Core Truths	24. 1 <sup>st</sup> Truth Circle	25. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Truth Circle	26. 3 <sup>rd</sup> Truth Circle
30. High/Low/Hero/Funny	31. Reflecting back, looking forward		

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Ideas
		1. Playing, enjoying kids and yourself	
6. What else?	7. One insight	8. One action	
13. What to say to others when you hear it	14. One insight	15. One action	
20. What else?	21. One insight	22. One action	
27. Where the Truths meet	28. One more insight	29. One more action	

## Let's jump into May 2021!

**May 1:** Happy Saturday! For today, play. Enjoy being with your kids and enjoy yourself through open-ended play.

Week 1: When the Kiddos Lie

**May 2:** This week we consider the lies that kids tell! You'll learn to listen for lies (and truth), and figure out what to do when your child tells a lie.

Today: has your child ever told you a whopper? Why were they motivated to do this? What was happening that caused them to invent something, rather than have you understand the truth? Draw, doodle, or write about it all in this space...

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**May 3:** Listening for truth and lies. Today and tomorrow you'll pay attention to your child's words – and also body language, and what they leave unsaid.

Pull on your observer hat and be as objective as you can in your observations; share about them here in this space.



**May 4:** Listening for truth and lies, continued. Keep on your observer hat, and as you do – as you observe spaces where your child tells a lie – attempt to notice what comes up in you when they stretch the truth. Do you remember lies you told as a kid? Do you remember what the consequences were, how you felt inside?

Do your best to separate your childhood experiences with the truth from what is happening currently, right in front of you. Share what comes up for you about any and all of this in this space.

**May 5:** What to say to yourself when you notice your child lying.

It's been several days of intense observation! You may have noticed feelings of anger, frustration, or sadness – or even admiration, pride, or the impulse to laugh – with your child's lying (or truth telling).

Today and tomorrow you'll spend time crafting something to say to yourself when you sense your child is being less than truthful.

What's the first thing you feel you'll need to do when you catch your child in a lie? It may have to do with taking a deep breath, reminding yourself that everything is better when you remain calm, or something else; use this space to craft a little saying or mantra for these situations.

**May 6:** The next thing to say to yourself when you hear your child lying.

Often, the first step of breathing or otherwise bringing calm into this situation can best be followed by a moment of self reflection. What might you say to yourself as the second step in handling your child's lying? Write, doodle, or draw about this just below.

**May 7:** One insight. This week, with the focus on truth and lies, may have brought up a lot of thoughts, questions, and feelings... What's one insight that you have gained in thinking about your kiddos, and lying? Share about it in this space:

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**May 8:** One action. Great work this week! What is one action you will utilize going forward, when you think about you, your kids, and truth-telling? Share about it here.

### Week 2: When Kids Hear Your Words as Lies

**May 9:** Sometimes, our children hear what we say (however true or not it is) as lying. Thinking back on your own childhood, did this ever come up? Was there a time or situation where you were so sure your parents weren't telling you the truth? Write, doodle, or draw about that situation in the space below:

**May 10:** Listening for kids' understanding of your words, Day 1.

Today, cultivate an awareness of your child's thinking on this value of truth/lying. Has the idea of "truth" or "lies" come up with your child yet? If so, share what happened in this space. If not, what might you do or say if your child accuses you of lying?

**May 11:** Listening for kids' understanding of your words, Day 2.

Pull on your observer hat and consider an interaction you've had with your child today, but on a meta level. What was going on around this conversation? What were your motivations, or your child's, during the interaction? Write, doodle, or draw about it in this space, attempting to stay as objective as possible (I know how hard that is!)

**May 12:** What to tell yourself when your child accuses you of lying...

Boy, can this feel frustrating! We can feel called out by our child, we can see so many nuances that they do not have a hope of understanding.

As a result sometimes we can lash out, say or do things we regret, without first stopping to look at the situation from their perspective.

What's one tiny thing you can tell yourself, if you find yourself in this situation?

**May 13.** What to tell others, when your child accuses you of lying...

Once you've established something you can tell yourself – something that helps you stay calm, or objective, or reminding yourself of some other key value in your parenting – it's time to jot down a few quick ideas of what you could say to others (in particular, the child who is making the accusation.)

Often, the best thing we can do is ask a question. What's one question you might ask that person, if you find yourself in this situation?

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**May 14.** One insight. Looking back on this week of truth and lies, what is one insight you had regarding the differences that can sometimes occur between you and your kids, when they think you're lying?

Share about this insight just here:

**May 15:** One action. Based on the work you've done this week, what's one action you will take going forward?

Share about this insight here:

## Mid-Month Check-in

Looking back over the last few weeks, what strikes you about anything you've written so far? Are there any common themes or patterns that you recognize? Share about them in the space below, whether in writing, drawing, or doodling:

Common themes, patterns, other insights...

### Week 3: How Might You be Lying to Yourself?

**May 18:** This week you'll consider some ways that you might be less than truthful with yourself. For today, reflect on one time in the past where you feel you weren't completely truthful with yourself:

**May 19:** Listening to ourselves, Day 1.... For today and tomorrow, listen to your inner dialogue. Put your observer hat on and do your best to be objective. What are some of the things in the course of the day that you say to yourself? Share your thoughts about them here:

**May 20:** Listening to ourselves, Day 2... Spend today tuning in once more to your own inner dialogue. If you catch yourself being less than truthful simply notice that. Share your thoughts on how you frame things inside yourself in this space:

(Remember as you go through this exercise, “sunlight is the best disinfectant.” We cannot make changes until we know what we’re actually seeing. Many hugs from me as you do this difficult work. It will be worth it : )

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**May 21:** What to say to yourself when you catch yourself being less than truthful. Just as we’ve done these last few weeks, it’s time to brainstorm a few simple things you might say to yourself if you notice that you have not been telling yourself the whole truth.

It is tempting to be really hard on ourselves; I am encouraging you to transcend that and instead use these words that you’ll tell yourself to be as gentle and loving with yourself as you possibly can. Coming from that place of love and gentleness, what might you tell yourself in this situation?

**May 22:** What else?

What else might you say to yourself – keeping in mind the loving and gentle nature of this exercise – when you find yourself not being quite as truthful as you would wish? Share your thoughts in this space:

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Week 4: Core Truths

**May 25:** Introducing the Core Truths Playsheet... Which you can check out on page 19!

This week we translate your learning over the course of this month into a simple, yet powerful, set of Core Truths. For today, check out the Playsheet if you wish (but don't write anything into it quite yet).

**May 24:** First Core Truth. In the circle on the Core Truths Playsheet marked "1<sup>st</sup> Truth," return to Week 1 of this *Playbook*. What are some insights you learned during that week? Write, doodle, or draw about them in the 1<sup>st</sup> Truth Circle.

**May 25:** Second Core Truth. Return to Week 2 of this *Playbook*. What resonates most, regarding when your kids hear your words as lies? Write, doodle, or draw about these in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Core Truth Circle in the Playsheet on page 19.

**May 26:** Third Core Truth. Return to Week 3 of this *Playbook*. What stands out when you think about the ways that you may not be as truthful as you'd like with yourself? Share about these in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Core Truth Circle in the Playsheet on page 19.

**May 27:** Where these Truths meet. In the Core Truths Playsheet on page 19, it's time to fill out the fourth and central circle! That's the circle where these truths meet. When you look at what you've been thinking about all month, those truths that resonated so strongly that you put them into the other circles on this Playsheet, what is the central idea at the core of them all? (It can be more than one... try to keep the central ideas at 3 or less.) Write, doodle, or draw about these Core Truths in that central circle in the Playsheet.

**May 28:** One last insight this month... Return to the Playsheet on page 19 that you finished filling out yesterday. This simple document represents true power in your life! What's one insight you've had as you created the Core Truths Playsheet? Share about that insight here:



**May 29:** One final “tiny action” this month... You have done some great work, thinking on family life, truth, and lies this month! Based on all your learning, if we take it out to a very high level, what is one action you will take in light of all your newfound knowledge? Share about it in this space:

**May 30:** Time for some fun! Turn to the Playsheet on page 18 and play a game of High/Low/Hero/Funny with your family : )

**May 31:** Reflecting back, looking forward!

## End-of-the-Month Roundup

**What will you use and remember, from this epic month of parenting?** Share your thoughts in the box below:

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I will use and remember...

And get ready for June's *Playbook*! It's going to be a great month!

## Playsheets

If you know me, you'll know I'm 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!

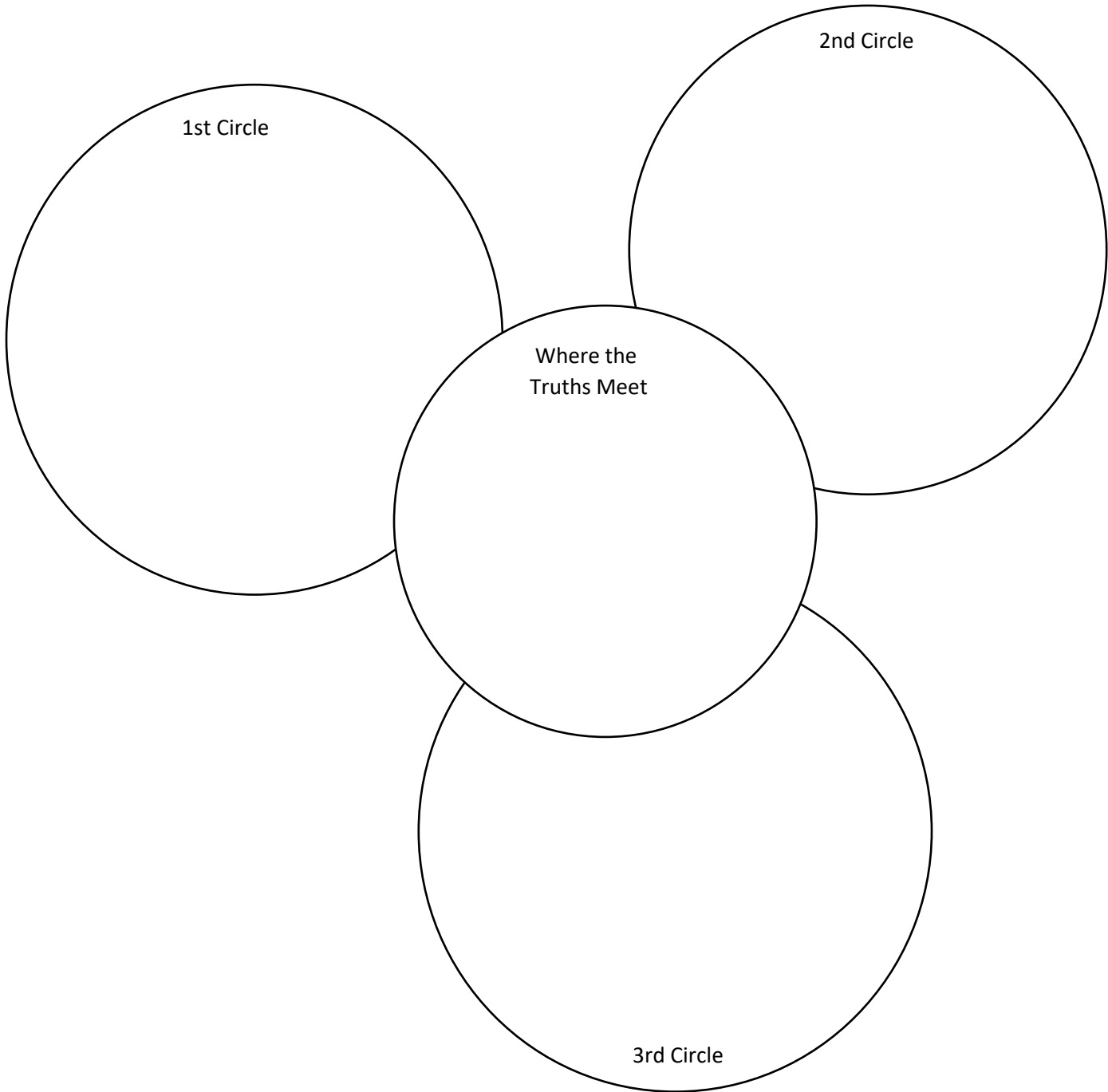
**Playsheet 1: High/Low/Hero/Funny...** In each issue of the *Playbook* we play this family game, where everyone shares about the best thing that happened to them that day, the toughest thing about that day, and who was a kindness hero for them that day – and/or, what entertaining or funny thing happened?

We play this game each and every month so you can enjoy looking back on your child's highs, lows, heroes and funnies over your *Playbook* subscription! This gives you a record over time so you can see how they change and grow.

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Family Member	High	Low	Hero	Funny

**Playsheet 2 – Core Truths**



## Ask the Child Development Expert

“My daughter is driving me nuts with lying – “yes, of course I brushed my teeth mommy,” “yup, my dirty clothes are all in the hamper.” They are such obvious lies, she must know she’ll be found out! How do I stop this behavior?”

– Emma, teacher, mom to a six-year-old girl

**Hi Emma! First,** let me say how much I appreciate you writing with this question. You are certainly not alone! At some point in a child’s development, they often tell lies. Not because they’re bad children. Instead, this comes from a wishful place – they just wish so much that they didn’t have to brush their teeth, or put their clothes away.

It’s so tempting to want to come down hard on lying, isn’t it? Instead, I am going to suggest that you approach your daughter’s lies with as much empathy as you can possibly muster.

20 Help her understand what is actually true, versus what she wishes was true. Tell her “I wish things were the way I want them, too. You are not wrong for wishing!”

Help her understand also: “it is wrong to lie. It can hurt us, and it can hurt others.” Help her imagine what might happen if she didn’t ever actually brush her teeth, but only told herself and others that she did... She’d have some pretty grody teeth, pretty quickly! Her teeth would stop working for her, they would get cavities, and they would hurt.

Being gentle instead of coming down hard on kids with these small, everyday lies is a good idea for now. Plus it will have an added benefit, in that it develops a bond of trust. There’s a saying in my world: “little kids, little problems; big kids, big problems.” The challenges that an adolescent faces – the stuff older kids are tempted to lie about – goes well beyond teeth-brushing and chores. Fostering trust in these younger years means that, as your daughter grows, there’s a greater likelihood that she will trust you as an advisor when she begins facing these bigger challenges.

I hope that’s helpful! Cheers and big hugs! – Karen

**Dear reader, what challenges are you facing right now?  
Use this chart to help you map out the challenges and what you could do about them.**

	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
	6.
	7.
<b>Thoughts... conclusions...</b>	<b>... Insights...</b>

## Hello from The Dream HQ

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

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

It is raining cats and dogs here as we stand out in front of the Big House. A good, soaking rain, the sort that "makes the flowers grow."

But not necessarily the kind that we want to be standing in!

So we head up the front walkway, past gardens that are full of tulips, moss phlox, the beginnings of irises and other flowers awakening from long winter. Even in the pouring rain it's beautiful in the front yard of the Big House. Ascending the steps onto the veranda, we see a sign affixed to the front door:

"Play in the dirt! Plant some stuff! Enjoy spring!"

Follow signs to the greenhouse <3"

Oooh, we think, there's a greenhouse here! We decide to see what playing in the dirt is all about here in the Dream HQ, so we open the front door, remove our raincoat and rain boots, hanging them on the stand just inside the door, and changing into the warm indoor shoes we find left out for us.

Sure enough, signs guide us all the way through the Big House, through the foyer with its majestic staircase leading up to (among other spots) the Cookies & Books Room, past a formal dining room, a ballroom, through the kitchen and the door we find there that leads directly into the greenhouse.

The greenhouse itself is a wonder, warm on even the coldest days, and ventable if it gets too warm. There are tables for seedlings, thriving tropical plants, places to sit and enjoy wondrous living greenery, without being exposed to the wilder

elements of nature itself. There is even an orange and lemon grove here, with lovely and comfortable cast-iron patio seating!

What draws our eye most today: a large, long table strewn with potting soil, trowels, and pots of all imaginable designs, shapes, and sizes. Also, seeds and seedlings of nearly any plant we can imagine – we walk over and find pots and planting equipment for some of our absolute favorite flowers, fruits, and vegetables.

We spend the day planting, and enjoying the thought of a wonderful season's bounty (as these seedlings will be distributed all over the Dream HQ.) Roses, carrots, garlic scapes, berries; Dahlia bulbs, hosta, tomatoes and beans; potting soil, compost, and some of the loveliest and funnest pots imaginable.

We do get our hands quite dirty, that's for sure!

And then we clean up at the greenhouse sink, leaving our newly potted beauties in a section indicated "for the Dream HQ volunteers to distribute over the whole valley."

As we are drying off our hands we notice: in the orange and lemon grove, a beautiful porcelain tea set has been set out. There are scones and our favorite cookies, as well as raspberries, strawberries, and oranges right from this grove.

We sit down and enjoy tea in the greenhouse.

As we do, the rain makes a lovely sound on the greenhouse ceiling and walls. We smell the fresh, green smells that mean good stuff growing. We taste delicious food and drink on our tongue. We feel relaxed and whole, enjoying this time, fully present in this moment. Best of all, we know we can return – to the greenhouse, to the planting, the fresh and lively feeling here – anytime we wish.

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

## What's coming up in the June *Playbook*?

Ever have a hunch, or get a gut feeling? Next month we explore the part that intuition plays in our lives.

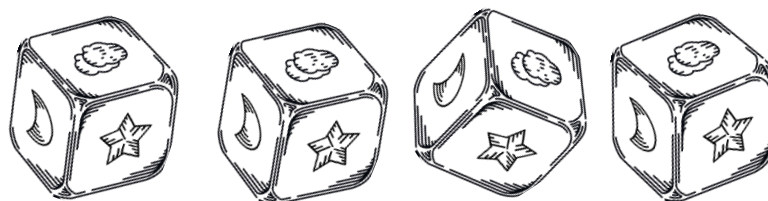
It's super easy to underestimate intuition, to discount what our gut tells us. But in 2021 I learned something that's stayed with me: intuition is simply pattern recognition. So high-level that our brains may not even recognize it for what it is.

Gut feeling – intuition – is helpful in our parenting, in our work, and in growing toward who we were meant to be at a super deep level. We explore intuition next month – my gut tells me it's going to be awesome!

Coming soon, right into your mailbox...

Have a great May and we will see you next month!

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