

February 2021 Issue 7

The We Turned Out Okay Playbook

by Karen Lock Kolp, M.Ed.

Living and thriving no matter the circumstances...

You can do this. Let's get started!

Five Questions, Asked and (now, at last) Answered

Welcome to Issue 7 of the *We Turned Out Okay Playbook*!

In summer 2020 I decided to try an experiment, writing down one question each day for a whole month – and not looking back at them until much later. Until today in fact.

Now I'm bringing you in on that experiment.

Just before I do, let me share some background.

A coach I really admire, Rich Litvin, posted a podcast episode in 2020, in which he invited a coaching client of his to write down one question each day for one month. As a result of their conversation I had one of those moments of sheer insight. I decided that I just HAD to do this. I had to see what would spontaneously come out of me, by writing down one question I had each day for a month.

I have no idea what happened with the coaching client Rich was speaking to; no idea what the outcome of that experiment was supposed to be for that client. (Although knowing Rich, I bet he shared this conversation not only to help his own client, but to spark an idea in his listeners.)

All I knew was that it felt like exactly the right frame of mind to keep me going in summer 2020, when I was super worried about the pandemic, the rise of white supremacy, the American election which was due to take place very soon, the people I serve, and how we in our home would keep going, mentally, emotionally, and in terms of earning a living.

So, what questions and resulting insights popped up for me under those circumstances?

Let's find out!

I will look at these questions right now – as I say, I haven't looked at them at all since writing them down all those months ago – and I will choose five to share with you. I'll choose those that feel most resonant for right now. I'll share some insight around these five questions and what solutions, if any, occur to me.

2 This feels exciting, and scary as I literally bring you into my thought processes. It feels exhilarating – super fitting, because EXHILARATED is my 2021 Word of the Year.

Okay, here goes! Give me some time to look them over... and... yes!

7/29/20: How can I ride the cognitive dissonance/flux waves?

The idea of “riding the waves” became shorthand in the Ninja Parenting Community for acknowledging the ups and downs of 2020, when longtime NPC member MamaLlama began using it to describe her pandemic experience.

When I connected with a friend during that time, sharing what it's been like to live in an area so known for its racial intolerance that it's been called “the deep south of the north,” she wrote “that must create so much cognitive dissonance for you.”

So in late July as I tried to understand how to ride those waves – how to not just stay afloat but also make some meaning of it all – this was the question I wrote down.

While I'm still searching for the answer to this one, simply asking the question gave me a sense of my actions, my daily choices, and how important they were.

7/30/20: What does it really look like to slow the f* down?**

The insight for me with this question: as early as late July I was already looking for ways to slow down. I was already wrestling with this problem, even though it would only become clear months later, when I landed in the hospital in late October (with diverticulitis), how recklessly fast I was traveling through life. “Problems grow as big as they must in order to be acknowledged,” Luca Dellanna writes in his book *100 Truths You Will Learn Too Late*. So true!

Here is what it has looked like for me to slow the f***down:

- Diving into hobbies or learning that I absolutely love; I’m currently obsessed with knitting socks!
- Replacing empty calories with nutrient rich, fiber-filled foods
- Bringing opportunities to feel exhilarated into my life
- Going to bed early, and creating a routine in the hour or two before bed that feels peaceful and positive
- Avoiding (most) news, most of the time; the way it’s reported creates worries in me, mostly about things over which I have no control. Instead I fill my time – again, mostly – with slower-paced and more positive activities

What, you may wonder, do most of these things have to do with slowing down? For me, slowing down does not mean moving in slow motion or spending lots of time sleeping in bed. It’s about being truly present in my life in a mindful way; that’s the insight here.

8/8/20: How can I help folks see, and reach for, what they most want?

The short answer: connection, connection, connection.

It is of course a bit more complicated than that. But everything I do comes down to helping loved ones, podcast listeners, coaching clients, and those who read my writing – including you, here, now! – feel a connection with me that motivates them to keep going.

I want to help you feel seen and heard and cared for, to know that I truly care about you. Also, connecting you with your dreams is important. What you most want is worth reaching for. Because you are worthy.

The other insight here reflects back on me, taking care of myself and treating myself well. That's showing myself to be worthy; when I can do that, I model that for others. In asking this question I've learned that taking care of myself helps others see and reach for what they most want. So cool!

8/20/20: What is possible for families because of Covid?

In the midst of everything feeling so wrong, and so different from anything that has come before, this question occurred to me because I began to wonder, what *good* might come of this?

I still think about that today. Times of flux and uncertainty, times of suffering and worry, can affect us positively. I think it's because we learn. We are always learning no matter where we are in our life!

So the insight here is that awful as it's been, Covid represents an opportunity for learning. The parents I work closely with aren't letting that opportunity pass them by. They're thinking now about what changes they'll keep when things return to normal.

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8/30/20: When do I start looking for answers? Or have I already?

This was the last question that I asked. Looking back, many of the questions I asked had already been answered when I wrote this one out!

It's as if simply asking the questions brought the answer more clearly into my vision. This is the insight that led me to give this issue of the *Playbook* the structure that it has.

I hope you use it to help you ask the questions that will bring you a clearer vision to your own answers.

Along the way I ask you to pay attention to your children's questions as well – but more about that as we get into the Calendar Pages.

Let's dive in!

February 2021 At-a-Glance & Calendar Expansion

I am so excited to share these Calendar Pages with you – they are your opportunity to ask your own questions as well as look back and see what significance they take on afterward.

You're encouraged to chart your children's questions, as well.

Kids ask so many questions, and this month's *Playbook* acts as a net, catching words and phrases you might've missed. Catching and viewing their questions in a way that, perhaps, you have not before.

“Asking questions is a good way of finding something out.” – Big Bird from *Sesame Street*

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I hope you'll take inspiration from this quote and use this month's Calendar Pages to get a sense of who you are, and who your kids are too! That's how you will know how to move forward <3

Turn the page for your February 2021 At-a-Glance Calendar – you'll notice I have left it completely blank.

Use it however you wish – as a place to jot down your questions, your children's, or any observations you notice.

Happy February – Enjoy!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
	1.	2.	3.
7.	8.	9.	10.
14.	15.	16.	17.
21.	22.	23.	24.
28.			

8

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Ideas
4.	5.	6.	
11.	12.	13.	
18.	19.	20.	
25.	26.	27.	

Let's jump into February 2021!

This month, we're doing things a little different.

Each day of the month is a fresh opportunity for you to write down your questions, your children's questions, and your observations.

I'm excited and I hope you are too!

Stay tuned for a check-in midmonth, so you can think back on the questions and insights so far.

Okay, here we go!

February 1: Questions...

Insights...

February 2: Questions...

Insights...

February 3: Questions...

Insights...

February 4: Questions...

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Insights...

February 5: Questions...

Insights...

February 6: Questions...

(February 6) Insights...

February 7: Questions...

Insights...

February 8: Questions...

11

Insights:

February 9: Questions...

(February 9) Insights...

February 10: Questions...

Insights...

February 11: Questions...

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Insights...

February 12: Questions...

Insights...

February 13: Questions...

Insights...

February 14: Questions...

Insights...

Mid-Month Check-in

Looking back over the last two weeks, what strikes you about your questions 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...

February 15: Questions...

Insights...

February 16: Questions...

Insights...

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February 17: Questions...

Insights...

February 18: Questions...

(February 18) Insights...

February 19: Questions...

Insights...

February 20: Questions...

Insights...

February 21: Questions...

(February 21) Insights...

February 22: Questions...

Insights...

February 23: Questions...

16

Insights...

February 24: Questions...

Insights...

February 25: Questions...

Insights...

February 26: Questions...

Insights...

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February 27: Questions...

Insights...

February 28: Questions...

(February 28) Insights...

End-of-the-Month Roundup

Reflecting back, looking forward! **What will you use and remember, from this epic month of parenting?** Share your thoughts here:

I will use and remember...

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

Playsheets

Similar to January's issue, there is just one Playsheet this month: High/Low/Hero!

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.

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

Play multiple times this month, or perhaps a long game that lasts more than one one day; this edition of High/Low/Hero isn't tied to a specific day of February. Enjoy!!

(The Playsheet continues on the next page :)

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Family Member	High	Low	Hero

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Family Member	High	Low	Hero

Ask the Child-Development Expert

Hi Karen, We have quite a few challenges unfortunately.

My son has ADHD and I'm trying to get him to do workbooks in the evenings and it's not going so well. His meds help him at school but not when he's at home. I'm reading parenting books and trying to change my ways. I am trying to not ever spank anymore and not be a yeller. Sometimes the kids only listen when you threaten a spanking or actually do it. I feel horrible after and so do they.

My son is always making this high-pitched noise every time he gets aggravated and it's so loud and annoying. He's also becoming a lot more emotional and very quick to cry. Not that I don't think boys can cry but it's happening so often.

My daughter who is four thinks the world revolves around her. My son will go out of his way to do things for others and give others things and share but she is very selfish.

I've started to get the kids involved in chores but that isn't going the greatest either because some nights are just too hectic to even ask for their help.

Thank you for any advice." – Megan, Mom of 2 young children

Hi Megan – thank you for sharing your biggest frustrations. I am full of hugs and empathy for you... I do have a suggestion, one that I hope you'll find helpful in some or all of these situations.

My idea may be a little counterintuitive, but it's one I have seen work again and again. It's simply this: Do your best to remember that *they* are doing their best.

We can take our children's misbehavior so personally (I have certainly done this myself. I did this week actually LOL.) But stepping back and saying "my child is doing their best" can help us remember that the big emotions they feel are impeding them from showing their best behavior.

When we can remember that, we then can do our best to validate those feelings. So try helping your kids name their feelings with words. And then let them know that you understand. That sometimes you feel the same way.

It seems so paradoxical, but when we do this, it often clears the path for kids to better behavior. Just because they know we've got their back.

I hope that helps – wishing you well Megan, cheers!

Extra Space for More Questions :)

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	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
	6.
	7.
Thoughts... conclusions...	... Insights...

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:

The lovely glade is enveloped in a beautiful, extremely thick layer of snow. There's got to be three feet of snow on the ground!

It makes everything look so peaceful. We envision all the forest creatures curled up in their cozy homes, all the birds warm together in their nests, everybody snuggled up and safely resting.

Lots of snow also does something to the sounds that we hear. Or don't hear, as the case may be – sound is just muffled, with that lovely post-blizzard, still and peaceful silence.

As we look around we notice the beauty of the landscape, snow covering the paths up into the North Woods and the waterfall. Snow covering the fire pit and on Long Lake for as far as we can see. We also notice: it's really cold! We think, perhaps today isn't going to be the best day to be outside for long!

Then, we turn our gaze to the Big House. There's a path that begins right at our feet and has been shoveled directly up to the front door, and just now it looks so inviting. The snow crunches and squeaks as we work our way up the path, up the stairs onto the front porch, and into the Big House.

As we remove our snowy outer layer and exchange our boots for some lovely slippers that have been left for us by the door, we hear laughter coming from the back of the house.

Curious, we walk that way, passing the dining room, the ballroom, the grand staircase that leads up to (among others) the Room of Cookies and Books. Just as we come to a wide, arched doorway we notice a sign next to it: "Bread baking today! Come to the kitchen and bake some bread with us!"

Well, now we can't resist. As we open the door the laughter gets louder and we realize that there are quite a few people in here... Folks of all different ages, shapes and sizes, and speaking many different languages.

They are having a ball, talking and laughing (even across languages) and sharing their different recipes and techniques for bread-baking.

Here are two women making steamed dumplings at one stove. In the neighboring oven another woman pulls a loaf of challah bread out, braided and perfectly cooked. We see her check her digital thermometer to make sure it's exactly the right temperature before setting it to cool on a rack sitting on a long, flour-dusted table.

Across the room an elderly couple mixes and kneads what appears to be sourdough bread, while a younger man uses left over sourdough starter to make the most delicious scallion pancakes we've ever smelled.

There are French brioche rolls cooling on the table along with the challah bread. And croissants next to the brioche rolls, next to Italian peasant bread, next to a lovely seeded dark rye... There's even a special oven way at the end of the kitchen where bakers are making delicious pastries with gluten-free, wheat-free flour.

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In short, it's awesome!

All the bakers invite us to take part. We grab an apron – its pattern features adorable forest creatures from the North Woods – wash our hands, and prepare to learn about how to make our favorite kind of bread.

Later, when all the breads, bagels, and treats are lovingly arranged on the big wooden kitchen table, we find a seat among our fellow bakers. We each choose a piece to begin, perhaps spread it with butter, jam, or cream cheese, and toast all of our new friends.

Then we sit together, talking (again, across languages) and feeling included and loved and peaceful. We feel at home in the great big kitchen in the Big House.

And we can come back here whenever we wish, to find all of our new friends, or even just the ingredients and an oven ready for us to have a time of quiet, bread-baking fun. The kitchen, we now know, is ours to utilize however we want –

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

What's coming up in the March *Playbook*?

We are using the March issue of the *We Turned Out Okay Playbook* to take stock.

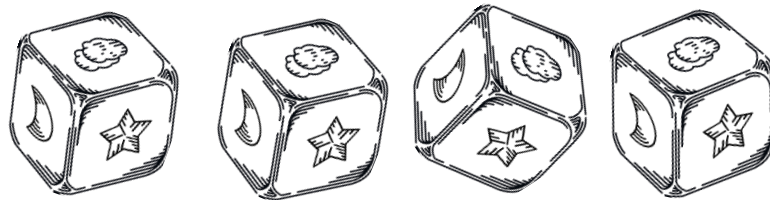
It's been a hard pandemic year. Our lives changed completely and utterly last March. So, let's take a look at where we really are. What are our stores looking like – of emotional resilience, of mental health, of ideas for fun time with kids, and more?

Because inevitably, taking stock sparks ideas that will make each of those areas better.

Coming soon, right into your mailbox!

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

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