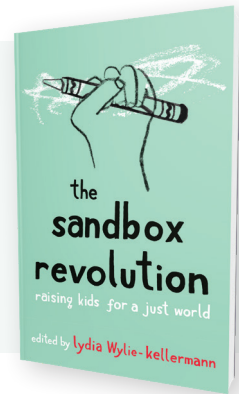


the sandbox revolution: raising kids for a just world

edited by lydia Wylie-kellermann

Study Guide



It is a complex time to be a parent. Our climate is in crisis, and economic inequality is deepening. Racialized violence is spreading, and school shootings are escalating. How do we, as parents, cultivate in our children a love of the earth, a cry for justice, and a commitment to nonviolence? Where do we place our bodies so we teach our kids that resistance is crucial and change is possible? What practices do we hold as a family to encourage them to work with their hands, honor their hearts, and nurture their spirits?

The answers to these questions are big and small, personal and political. And so often, these intimate decisions about raising kids are kept private. We carry an isolated silence when what we all really hunger for is the wisdom, support, and imagination of community.

We hope this study guide can open up space for vulnerable and creative conversations at your book group, church group, neighborhood club, or dining room table.

**** While this book may be most relevant for parents and grandparents, we believe the book and study guide can nurture a much wider circle. All of us in one way or another are entwined with the lives of children, and we each carry a desire for justice for their future. Our understanding and commitment will only grow as we widen our tables of conversation and our definitions of family.

CHAPTER 1: WHAT MAKES A FAMILY? INFERTILITY, MASCULINITY, AND THE FECUNDITY OF GRACE

BY NICK PETERSON

“Titles like uncle, auntie, and cousin were not just about respect but ways to affirm the ability to make family, to extend love’s reach, and to claim others as our own—to nurture family into existence.”

DEFINITIONS

Nuclear family: Parents and their descendants. Considered a social unit.

Made family: When family is not determined by blood alone, but by care and compassion with ambiguous borders.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the cultural expectations and pressures when it comes to the definition of family? How can we widen the boundaries of family? Whom can we name and claim? How can we claim elders and adults without children?

2. How has each of our experiences of body and gender impacted the children around us?
3. How do we need to shift our own habits, internal expectations, or understandings in order for the children in our lives to feel alive in their bodies, loved in their families, and able to make their own borders welcoming?

ACTIVITIES

1. Diagram the *made* family you had growing up. Diagram the family you are a part of now. Let it be expansive and generous with those whom you claim.
2. Write a letter to someone you consider part of your made family whether they know it or not. Nurture, embrace, love those ambiguous boundaries through your handwritten love note.

CHAPTER 2: MONEY

NURTURING A FAMILY CULTURE OF GENEROSITY AND JUSTICE

BY SUSAN TAYLOR

“When economic systems within our homes are rooted in justice, we are teaching our children what they need to know to navigate money in a larger universe.”

DEFINITIONS

Capitalism: An economic system in which private companies control wealth and resources. Property and profit are valued over people.

Hospitality: Welcoming, offering generosity, or sharing resources with guests, visitors, or strangers.

QUESTIONS

1. How do we talk to kids about money? What do we most want them to know? How are we each modeling that for them?
2. What money-related commitments do we make toward justice? How do we include children in the way we meet those commitments?

ACTIVITIES

1. Write your family history around money. Go back multiple generations if you can. Reflect on how it affects how you relate to money today.
2. Look at your family budget or your spending in the last month. What are your financial priorities according to your spending? Does it reflect your values?

CHAPTER 3: EDUCATION

LEARNING AT THE SPEED OF TRUST

BY KATE FORAN

“What if we started with the premise that children want to learn? How do we move at the speed of trust in our relationships with learners themselves, their bodies, and their families? How do trust in children’s resilience and trust in community allow for freedom and growth?”

DEFINITIONS

Unschooling: An alternative form of homeschooling that encourages self-directed learning and exploration of each learner’s natural curiosities and interests.

Emergent strategy: A concept developed by adrienne maree brown, describing a pattern of action that moves with adaptability, exploration, and trust.

QUESTIONS

1. How do we build political will for publicly funded communities of learning that support freedom and self-determination for all kids, especially BIPOC kids?
2. How does each of our social locations impact our decisions around education?

ACTIVITIES

1. Listen to a podcast from Fare of the Free Child (www.raisingfreepeople.com/podcast).
2. Write a poem about a particular moment of witnessing a child learn something new.

CHAPTER 4: WHERE TO LIVE PUTTING DOWN ROOTS AND BEING KNOWN

BY FRIDA BERRIGAN

“All this rootedness, all this fecund front yard growth, didn’t just happen. It was a decision. And it might be the most radical act of my forty-six years: to know where I stand and to stand there under the rainbow peace flag that snaps from our flagpole.”

DEFINITIONS

Place-based learning: Rooting oneself in one’s local community, including the land, creatures, people, and history that it holds.

Gentrification: A profit-driven process of housing displacement, in which lower-income residents are driven out of their neighborhoods as wealthier developers and renters move in.

QUESTIONS

1. Are you *from* a place? How do you benefit from a sense of place? Do you benefit? If not, why not?
2. Does place identity mean something to the children in our lives? Do you learn anything from their rootedness?
3. Some of us can “feel at home” anywhere. Is that a good thing? Where is privilege in that unrooted sense of place?

ACTIVITIES

1. Create a land acknowledgment. Who are the Indigenous people who first lived on this land? How can you honor and share that land acknowledgment? Can you hang it by your front door? Share it with your kids or wider community?
2. Learn something new about the history of the place where you live. Where does your street name come from? Was there a stream that used to run past your house now pumped into the sewers? What was its name? Or look up census data on your home from fifty years ago.

CHAPTER 5: SPIRITUALITY

ENTRUSTING OUR CHILDREN TO THE PATH

BY DEE DEE RISHER

“I believe that parents should intentionally explore with their children the deep spiritual roots of being human. What tradition and what shape that takes will be as varied as we are as parents. The journey has no right answer. Instead, it is about raising the questions and living toward a path that carries us to meaning.”

DEFINITIONS

Privilege: Structural social power that is granted to all members of a dominant identity group (along lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, nationality, age, citizenship status, education, etc.).

Public witness: A form of faith-based action on the streets that critiques structures of violence as it seeks to transform them.

QUESTIONS

1. How do we each articulate the spirituality we want the children in our lives to feel?
2. What are each of our experiences with churches and spiritual communities in our own histories? Did they have toxic impacts? How do we find tools and create sacred space in light of our past experiences?

ACTIVITIES

1. Put aside some time and create space that is holy—whatever that means to you.
2. Squander time with a child. Spend some time that has no agenda, just being with and listening to a child.

CHAPTER 6: MOVING BEYOND NORMATIVITY

FAMILY AS A HAVEN FOR AUTHENTICITY, SELF-EXPRESSION, AND EQUITY

BY JENNIFER CASTRO

“I work to cultivate within them a secure and whole sense of self. I want them to be true to who they are—confidently, uncompromisingly. Because it’s from that place, I believe, that they can live what author Brené Brown calls ‘wholehearted lives’: free and uninhibited, without the compulsion to oppress others or allowing themselves to be oppressed.”

DEFINITIONS

Authenticity: Living fully into one’s own sense of self and values.

Equity: A process of social justice that prioritizes meeting everyone’s individual needs to live a full, healthy life.

QUESTIONS

1. What transformations have happened in each of us that put us in a more powerful position to parent kids, embracing all of who they are?
2. How do our families provide space to push boundaries around gender?
3. How do we create a safe, loving environment for kids to express themselves?

ACTIVITIES

1. Write a love letter to your body.
2. Offer an authentic apology to someone.

CHAPTER 7: RAISING ANTIRACIST WHITE KIDS SOME RULES NEED TO BE BROKEN

BY JENNIFER HARVEY

“It couldn’t be more important that we find explicit ways to teach our children the difference between what is lawful and what is right. Our morality must be rooted in loyalties to justice, humanity, and truth that run deeper than our loyalty to law.”

DEFINITIONS

Breaking white silence: Talking early and often about race, racism, and antiracism.

Antiracism: An active effort against racist policies, practices, and beliefs.

QUESTIONS

1. What is most challenging about teaching kids in our lives to question authority and even rules and laws?
2. Are there other generic, universal messages that we unwittingly pass on and need to rethink in a commitment to the antiracist socialization of white children and youth?

ACTIVITIES

1. Journal: Take some time to reflect back on a moment in your life when you had the opportunity to “complicate” a notion or call out racism, and you didn’t. Write out different ways you could have responded in that moment.
2. Jennifer Harvey says, “Find yourself some people.” Write a list of your people. Who are the people you can have on speed dial who can help hold you accountable, brainstorm possibilities, and love you as you practice courage?

CHAPTER 8: RESISTING PATRIARCHY MESSY, BEAUTIFUL INTERDEPENDENCE

BY SARAH AND NATHAN HOLST

“And while Sage is not old enough for me to explain the way I am attempting to resist patriarchy, I know he will be increasingly watching how I parent—when I show up, how I show up, and how it relates to my parenting together with Sarah.”

DEFINITIONS

Patriarchy: Institutionalized sexism.

Socialization: The process that all children go through as they learn what behaviors and beliefs are acceptable in the culture they are growing up in.

QUESTIONS

1. When we think about our own relationships, where does patriarchy most show up?
2. Where are the places in our relationships affected by patriarchy that we most want to shift? What are the barriers to making that happen? What support could each of us use to make those shifts?

ACTIVITIES

1. Pay attention to the gender influences the kids in your life are seeing. What messages on TV, ads, music, etc. do they encounter?
2. Is there a conversation you have needed to have where you claim your voice and needs? Let this be a nudge of encouragement and a blessing of courage to go for it!

CHAPTER 9: ABLEISM

OPENING DOORS AND FINDING TRANSFORMATION

BY JANICE FIALKA

“We have learned by trial and error, tears and sleepless nights, that breaking the silence and having the difficult conversations are necessary to cultivate our compassion and connections to one another.”

DEFINITIONS

Ableism: Structural discrimination and personal prejudice against people with disabilities; the belief that people with typical abilities are superior.

Disability justice: An intersectional framework that moves us toward collective liberation by centering people whose bodies have been oppressed and marginalized.

QUESTIONS

1. How can we (or our family, school, community, etc.) begin to be more intentionally inclusive of others with disabilities? What do we need to do, read, converse about, or connect with?
2. Think about your communities, schools, neighborhoods, and faith-based organizations. Who is not at the table? Who is not connected? How might you begin to include others who are not present or engaged?
3. When in your life have you risked breaking the silence? How did you feel, and what happened as a result?

ACTIVITIES

1. Read a book written by an author with a disability or watch a documentary about disability justice. Pay attention to what comes up for you.
2. Is there someone in your life who is having a hard time, but you aren't sure exactly what to say? Consider reaching out with Janice's advice. She says it was most helpful to hear things like: “I am guessing you are going through a lot right now. I'm not sure exactly what to say, but I want you to know I care about you and your family. Let me know if there is anything that I can do or say that would be helpful.”

CHAPTER 10: HONORING EARTH

HEALING FROM THE CARCERAL MIND AND CLIMATE CRISIS WITH JOYFUL INTERCONNECTEDNESS

BY MICHELLE MARTINEZ

“I say, ‘Look up at the magical winds that make the trees dance.’ And we run and find joy in a space. We are trying to build centripetal force for a center of gravity, wherever we are. Joy—because they deserve to understand what it feels like. As a mother, it’s a struggle.”

DEFINITIONS

Environmental justice: The intersectional response to environmental racism, which is the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on people of color (see ejnet.org for more information).

Decolonization: The long-term and many-formed process of divesting from colonial power and restoring Indigenous cultural, governmental, and land sovereignty.

QUESTIONS

1. How do we disentangle from the legacy of industrialization and reclaim our connection to the earth? What are the forms of domination of the human body, and how do they extend to cultural domination over the earth?
2. How can we engage in the beautiful struggle, with our children, our memory, and our prayers, to hear the knowledge of our ancestors on Indigenous lands?

ACTIVITIES

1. Connect with a local Environmental Justice organization. If you are able to, consider supporting them by amplifying their work, volunteering your time, or giving financial resources.
2. Get yourself outside. Pay attention to that centripetal force of joy upon this sweet earth.

CHAPTER 11: THE POWER OF STORY

SUBVERSIVE LESSONS FROM GRANDMOTHER OAK

BY RANDY WOODLEY

“For one day, parents may need to answer to their children for leaving the story untold.”

DEFINITIONS

European worldview: A way of thinking largely formed through the Enlightenment and colonization; tends to enforce individuality, binary thinking, and disconnection from community/land.

Seventh Generation: The Haudenosaunee/Iroquois principle that all decisions should be made with the well-being of the next seven generations in mind.

QUESTIONS

1. How do stories play a role in our families? Who creates them? Who listens? What words do they weave? How do we honor the stories the children in our lives share?
2. What and who are represented in the images, stories, and authors of books in our homes?

ACTIVITIES

1. Experiment with children's story. Write down or tell a story to a child. Or listen to the story of a child, honor it, and help them write it down.
2. Journal: "Tell me the stories that connect you to this land."

CHAPTER 12: BUILDING COMMUNITY CHOOSING LIFE IN THE CERTAINTY OF DEATH

BY MARCIA LEE AND EN SAWYER

"Perhaps community is how we choose life in the certainty of death. Perhaps as we heal, we heal others. As we parent, we are parented. As we give, we are given. Perhaps that is enough."

DEFINITIONS

Beloved Community: Based on Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision; a society based on justice and love for all.

Interdependence: Living in mutual relationship and respect with other beings.

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to choose life in the face of death? How has this circle struggled with questions about whether to bring children into the world in this historical moment?
2. What are ways we can choose to prioritize wealth of relationship over wealth of money?

ACTIVITIES

1. Offer some support to a new parent: time, wisdom, hand-me-downs, babysitting, a hot meal.
2. Journal: Are there ways you wish you could restructure your life that prioritize community? Play out your dreams on paper, imagining what that could look like.

CHAPTER 13: RISK AND RESISTANCE THE COST AND GIFTS TO OUR CHILDREN

BY BILL WYLIE-KELLERMANN

"To stand on the side of justice often means that we have to take some risks. Some of these are modest. Others momentous. None are easy. They can be fraught with angst, uncertainty, and second-guessing. We worry about our kids. But we also worry about what they will learn if we don't act."

DEFINITIONS

Nonviolence: Resistance to injustice that holds a principle of not harming another human being particularly through the use of violence.

Liturgical direct action: A form of protest that is rooted in shared, public worship in the streets, often aligning with the Christian liturgical calendar.

QUESTIONS

1. Are there risks we would be taking if not for our children? How do we reconcile that? Are there ways we should push through those fears for the sake of our children?

2. Are there moments when we need to honor our children’s courage and clarity, even if it terrifies us?

ACTIVITIES

1. Journal: How do you think about your own death and the death of those in your family? How do you want to return to the earth? What decisions do you need to make ahead of time and say out loud in order to resist the cultural expectations around treatment, dying, and burial?
2. Resist! Gather some kids, make some signs, and find a way to get into the street around injustice that matters to you and your local community.

CHAPTER 14: HOW DO I HEAL THE FUTURE? RECLAIMING TRADITIONAL WAYS FOR THE SAKE OF OUR CHILDREN AN INTERVIEW WITH LEONA BROWN BY LAUREL DYKSTRA

“How do I heal my family? How do I heal the future? How do I raise my kids in a way that my mom wasn’t raised? I wanted to break that cycle.”

DEFINITIONS

Residential schools: Government-sponsored schools that violently separated Native/Indigenous children from their parents and assimilated them into United States/Canadian culture.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission: An official body tasked with acknowledging past violence and injustice perpetrated by the government, in an attempt to bring some form of healing or restoration from the harm.

QUESTIONS

1. How are medicine and health care part of your family’s story?
2. What traditional ways in your own ancestral traditions would be helpful to revive for the sake of the children in your life?

ACTIVITIES

1. Learn the names and medicinal uses for some new plants within walking distance of your home.
2. Journal: How am I working to heal my own trauma so as not to pass it down generationally?

CHAPTER 15: CONFESSIONS OF A BAD MOVEMENT PARENT RAISING CHILDREN FOR AUTONOMY BY LAUREL DYKSTRA

“Cultivating a family culture of recognizing joy, of unabashedly loving what you love, is no small thing.”

DEFINITIONS

Catholic Worker movement: Founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in the 1920s; a Catholic

anarchist network that participates in houses of hospitality, soup kitchens, farm work, and nonviolent direct action.

Queer: A gender identity or sexuality evoking difference from heterosexuality or cisgender.

Cisgender: When one's gender identity corresponds with the sex assigned at birth.

QUESTIONS

1. How might you encourage cultures of “good enough” parenting or those that decrease parents’ isolation and scrutiny, and increase parents’ sense of self and community care?
2. What are the values you most want to impart to young people? What do you love? How can we cultivate places where young people can deeply and unabashedly love what they love?

ACTIVITIES

1. Journal: What are the values you learned from the adults who raised you?
2. Write a family motto.

