

SimpleJoySaralAnand

THE INSTITUTIONAL GUIDE · FREE

One steady practice, when the adults keep changing.

A self-study guide for staff in group homes, foster & kinship agencies, shelters, and schools serving children in care. No trainer required — read it once, run your first session this week.

The Placement Continuity Protocol

“Don’t be awed. Create awe.”

No Entrepreneur Left Unsprouted.

START HERE

Why this exists — and how to use it

Children who move from placement to placement often lose the one thing that builds a mind: a steady adult who keeps showing up and takes their thinking seriously. This practice is built to be that thread — reliable, repeatable, and able to travel with the child from home to home.

The whole method, in four words: **Breathe · Ask · Write · “Tell me more.”**

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

It needs no trainer. Read it once — about twenty minutes — then run one session this week from the one-card summary near the back. Any staff member can run it. There is a companion slide deck for presenting this to a staff team in a 45-minute session; this Guide is the working document each staff member keeps and runs from.

Who runs it

Any staff member or caregiver. No clinical training needed.

Where it fits

Group homes, foster & kinship care, shelters, and schools serving children in care.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

We do not call these children “at-risk”

For forty years we have watched what that label does to the child who overhears it. It tells them what they are before they ever get to decide.

THE REFRAME

Here, every child is an **entrepreneur-in-waiting** — a mind that notices, wonders, and builds, waiting only for one steady adult to ask the right question. Nothing about the child needs to be fixed. Something in the child needs to be asked.

The language you use is part of the intervention. Change it in your notes, your meetings, and your voice.

THE WHOLE PRACTICE

Four words you will never outgrow

This is the entire method. Everything else in this Guide is only a way of doing these four things — the same way, every week — until the child trusts that this time, and this adult, are steady.

BREATHE

Three square breaths, together.
The session is safe and different.

ASK

One question. Then wait —
silence is fine.

WRITE

The answer, word for word, in the
child's own notebook.

“TELL ME MORE.”

The only prompt you need. It
opens everything.

Do these four, the same way, every week. That steadiness is the intervention.

STEP ONE · EVERY SESSION

The 90-second ritual: Box Breathing

Begin every session the same way — three slow, square breaths, together. It tells the child *this time is safe and different from the rest of the day*. Never skip it; the signal is half the work.

ONE CYCLE — DO IT THREE TIMES

- 1 **Breathe in** through the nose — count to four.
- 2 **Hold** — count to four.
- 3 **Breathe out** through the mouth — count to four.
- 4 **Hold** — count to four. That is one cycle. Do three.

Count out loud together the first weeks. When the child starts it unprompted, the ritual has taken root — and so has the trust underneath it.

THE ENGINE

The Five Questions

Use **one** per session. Ask it, then write the answer exactly as the child says it — never tidy or improve it.

- 1 What did you notice today that you had not noticed before?
- 2 What problem did you see today that nobody seemed to be solving?
- 3 If you could change one thing about something you used today, what would it be?
- 4 What did you try this week that you had not tried before?
- 5 What is one thing you want to build or make or offer that does not exist yet?

THE ONLY THREE THINGS YOU SAY BACK

You never grade and never fix. You say one of just three things — then write down what comes next:

- “That is interesting.” • “Tell me more.” • “What made you notice that?”

BUILT FOR STAFF TIME

The 45-minute session

One child, one regular time and place. The whole session, start to finish:

5 min	Settle	Arrive together. Three cycles of Box Breathing.
10 min	Notice	Ask one of the five questions. Write the answer word for word.
15 min	Go deeper	“Tell me more.” Explore one small idea the child raised.
10 min	One try	Name one small thing the child will attempt before next time.
5 min	Close	Read it back. The Idea Notebook stays with the child.

Same child, same time, same place. Sameness is the gift you are giving.

The Placement Continuity Protocol

The single most important rule for children who move: the practice must not restart from zero each time they do.

THE NOTEBOOK BELONGS TO THE CHILD

Not to the home, the agency, or the staff member.

IT TRAVELS WITH THE CHILD

To every new placement, in their own hands.

THE NEXT ADULT CONTINUES

Reads the last page aloud and asks the next question. No fresh start.

HAND FORWARD THE PRACTICE

Not just the file. Continuity of one steady ritual, even when the adults change.

WRITE IT INTO YOUR PROCESS

Add one line to your intake and discharge steps: *“Does this child have an Idea Notebook? If yes, read the last page. If no, start one.”* That single line is what makes the continuity real.

GETTING IT RIGHT

Do this • never that

ALWAYS

- Start with breathing, every time
- Ask one question and wait — silence is fine
- Write the answer word for word
- Say “tell me more” and mean it
- Keep the same time and place
- Let the notebook belong to the child

NEVER

- Grade, score, or correct an answer
- Offer a “better” idea than the child’s
- Rush or skip the breathing
- Treat it as therapy or assessment
- Call the child “at-risk”
- Start a new notebook when one exists

When in doubt: breathe, ask, write, and say “tell me more.” That is never wrong.

SEE IT IN ACTION

A notebook that survived three placements

Meet **Yasmine, age eleven**, who moved three times in eighteen months. The words in teal are the staff's. This is a composite of many real cases — it is here to show what continuity looks like when it works.

PLACEMENT 1 · A GROUP HOME

A night-shift worker started the practice. First entry: *"The vending machine eats coins but the sign says it doesn't."* He just wrote it down and said, "Tell me more."

PLACEMENT 2 · KINSHIP CARE

Yasmine arrived with the notebook in her bag. Her aunt was told one thing: *"Read the last page, ask the next question."* No fresh start. The thread held.

PLACEMENT 3 · OUR AGENCY

Her caseworker: *"By the time she reached us, the notebook had been through three placements. We didn't start over. We just read the last page and asked her what she'd noticed since."*

WHAT THE FILE COULD NOT CARRY

By month four, Yasmine brought ideas unprompted and asked to reread old pages. The file recorded her moves. The notebook recorded *her mind* — and it never restarted.

Three homes, three sets of adults, one unbroken conversation. That is the whole aim.

MEASURING CHANGE

Observe growth — without a risk score

You never reduce a child to a number. You watch for signs the entrepreneurial mind is waking, and note them in plain language, dated.

NOTICES MORE

Brings things unprompted; “I saw that...”.

SAYS MORE

Longer answers; volunteers ideas.

TRIES THINGS

Acts on an idea between sessions.

RETURNS TO THE NOTEBOOK

Asks to read old pages; adds on their own.

These four signs, in plain dated notes, tell you more than any score.

KEEP THIS BY YOU

The whole session, on one card

Photocopy this page and keep it where you run the session.

ONE SESSION · SIX STEPS

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1 · Breathe | Three cycles of box breathing, together. |
| 2 · Ask | One of the five questions. Then wait. |
| 3 · Write | The answer, word for word, in the child's notebook. |
| 4 · Deepen | "Tell me more." / "What made you notice that?" |
| 5 · One try | Name one small thing to attempt before next time. |
| 6 · Close | Read it back. The notebook stays with — and travels with — the child. |

FROM READING TO DOING

Start this week

Everything here can be done in a week.

- ☐ Choose one child and a regular weekly time and place.
- ☐ Give the child an Idea Notebook that is theirs to keep (pages at the back).
- ☐ Read the one-card summary once more.
- ☐ Run one 45-minute session from the card.
- ☐ Note what you observed — in plain words, dated.
- ☐ Write the continuity rule into your intake and discharge steps.

THE ONLY REAL SECRET

Run it again next week — same child, same time, same place. Steadiness is what the child has been missing, and steadiness is the one thing this practice is built to give.

The Idea Notebook — 8 weeks

One is started for each child and belongs to them. Photocopy the next four pages, or staple sets into a small book. It travels with the child to every placement.

Each session: 3 × Box Breathing · One question · Write it word for word · “Tell me more.”

IDEA NOTEBOOK · SESSION 1

Child _____ Date _____

WHAT THE CHILD NOTICED — WORD FOR WORD

“TELL ME MORE...” / ONE SMALL TRY

STAFF OBSERVATION — IN PLAIN WORDS

IDEA NOTEBOOK · SESSION 2

Child _____ Date _____

WHAT THE CHILD NOTICED — WORD FOR WORD

“TELL ME MORE...” / ONE SMALL TRY

STAFF OBSERVATION — IN PLAIN WORDS

IDEA NOTEBOOK · SESSION 3

Child _____ Date _____

WHAT THE CHILD NOTICED — WORD FOR WORD

“TELL ME MORE...” / ONE SMALL TRY

STAFF OBSERVATION — IN PLAIN WORDS

IDEA NOTEBOOK · SESSION 4

Child _____ Date _____

WHAT THE CHILD NOTICED — WORD FOR WORD

“TELL ME MORE...” / ONE SMALL TRY

STAFF OBSERVATION — IN PLAIN WORDS

IDEA NOTEBOOK · SESSION 5

Child _____ Date _____

WHAT THE CHILD NOTICED — WORD FOR WORD

“TELL ME MORE...” / ONE SMALL TRY

STAFF OBSERVATION — IN PLAIN WORDS

IDEA NOTEBOOK · SESSION 6

Child _____ Date _____

WHAT THE CHILD NOTICED — WORD FOR WORD

“TELL ME MORE...” / ONE SMALL TRY

STAFF OBSERVATION — IN PLAIN WORDS

IDEA NOTEBOOK · SESSION 7

Child _____ Date _____

WHAT THE CHILD NOTICED — WORD FOR WORD

“TELL ME MORE...” / ONE SMALL TRY

STAFF OBSERVATION — IN PLAIN WORDS

IDEA NOTEBOOK · SESSION 8

Child _____ Date _____

WHAT THE CHILD NOTICED — WORD FOR WORD

“TELL ME MORE...” / ONE SMALL TRY

STAFF OBSERVATION — IN PLAIN WORDS

PARTNERSHIP

Where to go from here

FREE TRAINING & MATERIALS

Everything in this Guide is free to use and copy across your organization. The companion slide deck runs a 45-minute staff session. Free episodes and family materials are at simplejoyfamily.com.

PARTNER WITH US

If your agency wants to build the Placement Continuity Protocol into its intake and discharge process across sites, we help at no cost. Reach us at simplejoyfamily.com/institutional.

“Don’t be awed. Create awe.”

Entrepreneurs are not born. They are ingrained, nurtured, and raised.

No Entrepreneur Left Unsprouted.

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