



HOW TO RAISE EXCEPTIONALLY CREATIVE CHILDREN

by Jim Solatie



The happy child

A child who lives with ridicule learns to fear.

A child who lives with criticism learns to condemn.

A child who lives with distrust learns to deceive.

A child who is treated with hostility learns to attack.

A child who is treated with gentleness learns to love.

A child who receives encouragement learns self-confidence.

A child who lives with truth learns to know justice.

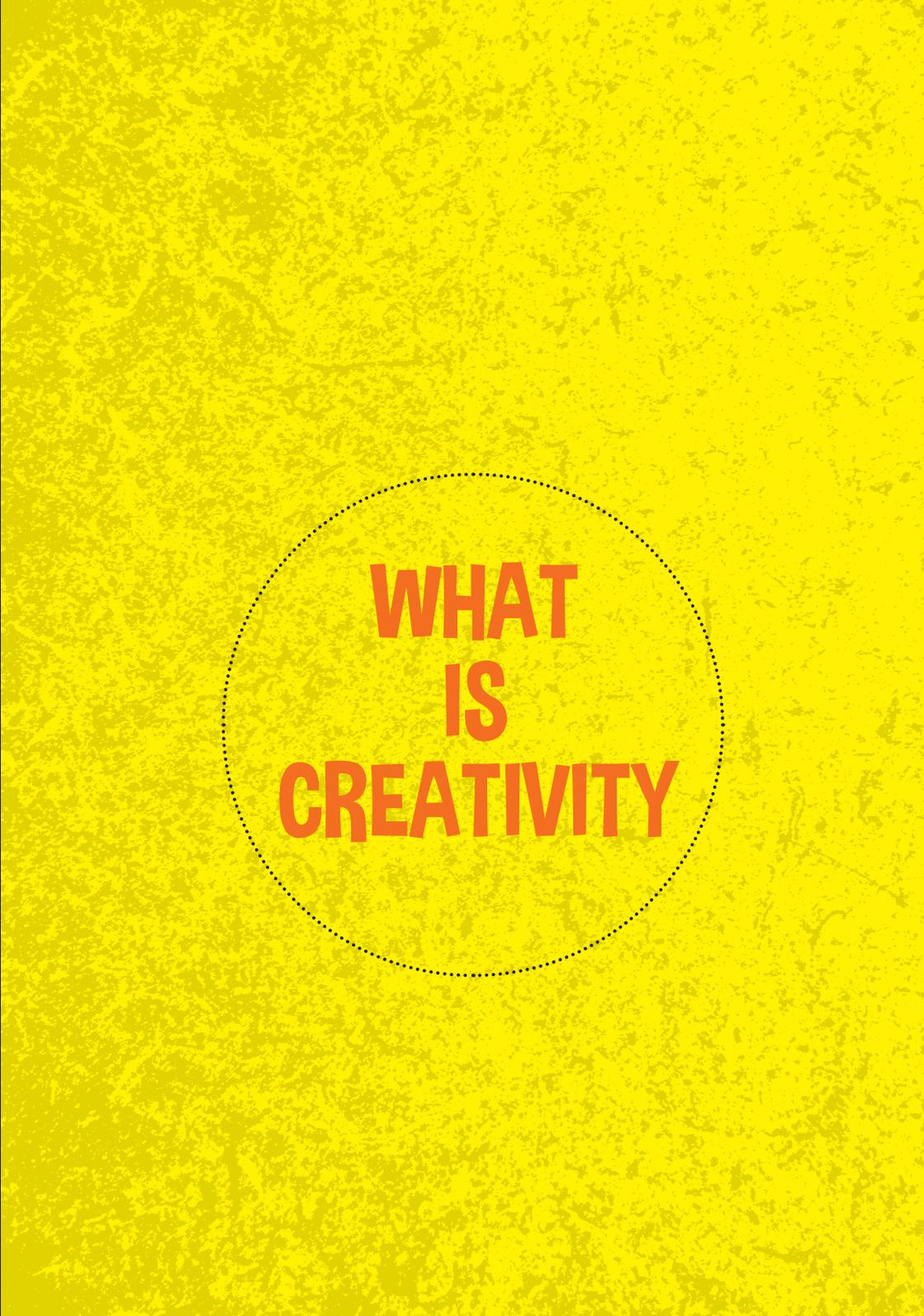
A child who lives with appreciation learns to be appreciative.

A child who lives with knowledge learns to know wisdom.

A child who lives with patience learns to be patient.

A child who is happy learns love and beauty.

Chris Baréz-Brown



**WHAT
IS
CREATIVITY**

Main themes:

Creativity is the joining of two or more thoughts in a new and different manner. The ability to discover new and unexpected connections between different items and the ability to create something new rather than imitating the old.

In creativity there is no right or wrong. There is no single right way to do things but rather many different approaches, all of which lead to different end results. The more different ways there are, the greater probability there is of coming up with something completely new and unique.

Teaching a child to solve problems by turning them into opportunities makes the child's life enormously more meaningful.

Creative people have an above average ability to focus their attention and to concentrate effectively. Creative people do not want to do things they find boring or in which they do not genuinely believe.

Parents who allow their children more freedom have children who are more creative. The parents of creative children respect their children, believe in their abilities and believe in their children's uniqueness. The parents of creative children do not make unnecessary rules for the children. Instead of providing very precise directions, they teach their children right and wrong and set an example with their own behavior.

Are you or your child creative?



ight here at the beginning, let's do a one-question creativity test. Answer the following question honestly. Are you a child, or have you ever been a child?

If your answer is yes, then you are creative!

When you do math problems and get the right answer, you stop thinking about the problem. You cannot be more right than you already are. But real life is not the same. You find the right answer for a specific problem but you still keep thinking about it. You do so because you might find an even better solution for the problem.

Perhaps the most important thing to understand about creativity is that it exists in each of us. Some appear to have a bit more and others a bit less, but every person is creative in a certain area or certain way. Some people seem to accomplish more than usual in the realm of creativity, however. What is their secret? What distinguishes the more creative from the less creative? The answer is simple. Do you know? Can you guess?

Many studies have shown that the greatest difference between creative and less creative people is that creative people believe they are creative. The less creative, in contrast, do not believe in themselves. This means, then, that everything starts with good self-esteem and self-confidence. If you believe in your own creativity, you experiment, you try things, you don't fear failure, and you achieve wonders. It's that easy!

Unfortunately, too often we adults require children to conform to society's rules and to behave in the generally approved manner. As adult influence and societal pressure increase, the child sees less and less reason to be interested in different things, to be curious and approach new phenomena in a creative, open-minded way. To avoid this loss, it is important to know ways to encourage children to maintain their inborn creativity and excitement.

Definitions of creativity

What is creativity, then? Creativity means searching for alternatives. Recognizing new ways of seeing. Experimenting with different approaches. Creativity is thus something other than analytical thinking, intelligence or mastery of information.

The difference between ordinary problem solving and creative problem solving lies precisely in this distinction. Usually we are content to find a solution for a problem. The first solution is good enough for us. But is it enough? Usually, yes, but in really important matters the first solution should not satisfy us. Different solutions exist for every problem, and some are better than others. They cost less, or they are higher quality, easier, more effective or more beautiful. There is no reason

to assume that the first solution is the best. This is at the core of creative problem solving. We come up with dozens of solutions for the problem and only then select the best one from among them.

How is creativity defined? Pause a moment and think how you yourself would define creativity. Your definition may well be the best of all.

There are many different definitions of creativity. Here are some of my own favorites:

- The ability to make something new instead of imitating something old.
- The ability to find new, unexpected connections between different things.
- An idea that all experts consider crazy when they first hear it but which everyone else considers self-evident once it has been accomplished.

There are many good definitions, and they do not exclude one another. Creativity is thus connecting two or more ideas in a new and different way. The capacity to find new and unexpected connections between different things and the ability to make something new instead of imitating something old. You don't have to be the first person in the world to realize something. It is enough that this discovery opens up for you a new perspective, opportunity or approach.

Creativity requires the courage to think and to do as you wish, without worrying about criticism or disparagement from other people. Creative people do not continually think about the level they attain and they are not always comparing themselves to others. The important thing is that creativity bring joy and meaning to life. Creativity is also when a three-year-old daughter tells her mother, having noticed a hole in her mother's blouse: "Mommy, now a lovely little breeze can flow through there".

In creativity there is no right or wrong

A good example of children's natural creativity can be found in the tale of Peter and the physics lesson. The teacher says to Peter: "If I give you this barometer, how can you figure out the height of the church tower next door?"

Peter thinks a minute and then replies with self-assurance: "Easy! I'll go to the minister and give him this handsome barometer if he'll tell me how high the tower is."

The teacher replies: "Wrong, wrong, Peter. Now tell me seriously how you would solve the problem."

Peter goes on: "Well, I could climb to the top of the church tower, drop the barometer, and calculate how long it takes to fall to the ground. Knowing the earth's gravity and acceleration, I could calculate the answer."

The teacher is clearly not pleased with Peter's response. The problem here is that the teacher expected one certain answer. To the teacher, there was one single right

answer and a lot of wrong answers. Nevertheless, Peter had been able to solve the problem in a completely new way.

All our life we have been taught to do things the right way. This begins at home, continues in school and accelerates even more in the working life. There are generally approved ways to do things, and those who diverge are not looked upon with approval.

But in the world of creativity, things are different. There is no single right way to do things. There are countless different paths, and all lead to different end results. In creativity there is no right or wrong way, just many interesting alternatives.

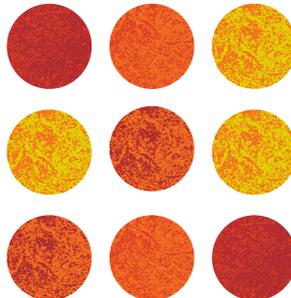
A little while ago when I asked elementary school children to come up with some interesting new drinks and drink packaging ideas, the following were among their suggestions:

- A bottle with a straw wound around it. You put one end of the straw into the bottle and you drink from the other end.
- A freezable bottle that you can freeze and the liquid inside gets cold just right. You could take this bottle with you, frozen, to the beach or on a car trip. The drink would stay cold and drinkable longer.
- Protein water with more protein in it than carbohydrates.
- Honey water in a bee-shaped bottle.
- Melon water the same lovely red as the fruit and with a fine melon taste without the seeds.
- Drink powder, different-flavored drink powders in small bags that you can use to flavor your water yourself, the way you like it. The little bags would be like sugar packets in restaurants and the flavors would be lemon, lime, cranberry, pineapple, watermelon, apple, blueberry and cranberry.
- Crazy chemist's bubbling carbonated soda in test-tube shaped bottles. These would come in all different colors and could be sold in places like science parks.

One cannot call these ideas right or wrong. Each contains possibilities for who knows what sort of new product.

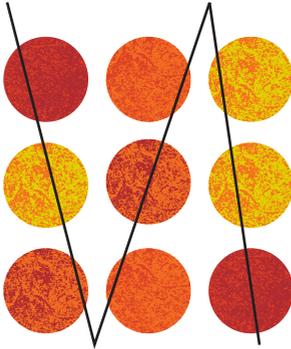
Nine balls

Try this. Connect the nine balls in the picture using three straight lines, without lifting your pen from the paper.



There are several solutions to this classic puzzle. All are equally right. And equally interesting.

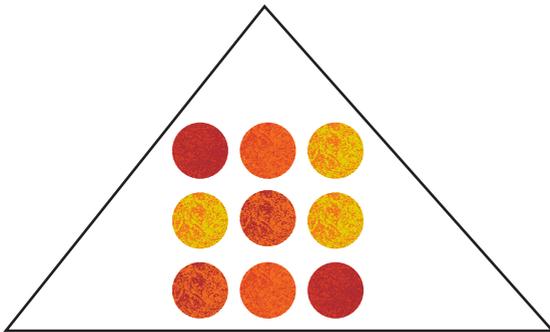
The problem is easy to solve as soon as you step outside of your own box. It's not for nothing that we speak of 'out-of-the-box-thinking'.



You can also choose a wide marker or brush and draw one broad line over all nine balls. Other lines are not needed then.

Alternatively, you could draw the nine balls on a different piece of paper and fold the paper in such a way that all the balls overlap on the edge of the paper. For this solution, too, one line is enough.

Elementary school students in Inari's North Sami and Inari's Sami schools suggested drawing a triangle around the balls. They defined the work 'connect' according to their own perspective and found a new solution for the exercise.



This exercise shows in its own brusque way just how restrictive thinking can be. Most people assume that you need to stay inside the square formed by the circle. They also think that the lines should be drawn through the center points of the circles. Neither restriction, however, was mentioned in the assignment. We are masters at coming up with extra rules, even though there are already more than enough rules in place.

A world of opportunities and solutions

If there is no right or wrong in creativity, it also does not contain negative problems. All problems can be turned into positive opportunities.

How can problems be turned into positive opportunities? It's very easy as long as we permit ourselves the chance to examine the problems from a new perspective. Children should perceive problems as opportunities, as solutions waiting to be implemented. Parents need to be able to help them learn this skill. In fact, the new millennium is carrying us toward a different world where things can no longer be examined from the same point of view as before. For this reason it is good to practice turning traditional problems into opportunities with the child right from the start. Compare the following examples:

Negative problem definitions:

- I don't understand English grammar.
- I don't have enough money to buy a new CD.
- I hate washing my hair.
- I am too short to become a model.
- I wasn't chosen for the top team.
- I don't have any friends.

Positive possibilities:

- Who can help me understand English grammar?
- What can I do to earn money to buy a new CD?
- How can I make washing my hair more fun?
- Are there sectors looking for shorter models? Or can I come up with a different interesting career?
- What can I do in order to enjoy being on the B team? Or how can I make sure I'm chosen for the A team next season?
- How can I make friends? Where could I go to meet new people?

Compare the change in way of thinking. Amazing, right? It feels a lot better if you can do something about a problem. You don't need to mope, you can use your energy to change the situation.

Solving a problem actually starts with defining the problem. A child finds much more meaning in life when the child is taught to turn problems into opportunities. Children then feel they have more power to have an effect on situations, and their lives become easier.

A traditional Chinese fable illustrates the importance of defining the problem. When Si Maguang, minister of the North Song Dynasty and famous historian, was a child, he was playing in the yard with friends. There was a huge ceramic vase beside them - so big that a small person could have fit inside it. The vase was full of water.

The children thought it was very funny when all of a sudden a wild little boy ran to the vase and climbed up to sit on its edge. He sat on the top of the vase looking content and rocked back and forth. The other children understood the danger and told the boy to come down. Their pleas fell on deaf ears. Soon the thing they feared did come to pass. The little boy fell into the vase. There was so much water and the boy was so small that he sank completely under the water. The other children panicked. Some began to shout, and someone ran for help. The rest tried to tip the vase over, but in vain. It was too heavy. Somebody managed to push a stick into the vase, but the little boy was too short to reach it. Si Maguang kept thinking. Soon he came up with an idea. He picked up a large stone from the ground and threw it against the vase with all his might. Bang! The vase shattered and the water rushed out onto the ground. The little boy survived with only a fright.

Si Maguang defined the problem precisely. The goal was to get the boy out of the vase. To save the little boy, the most crucial thing was to get the water out of there.

What are creative people like?

The concept of creativity is different in the Western countries than in the Eastern countries. In Europe and the USA, creativity has traditionally been understood as 'big leap creativity'. Attention has focused on exceptionally talented people and real geniuses. In Asia, the concept of creativity represents more the idea of 'creative use of a small leap', a view disparaged in the West. This book encompasses both creativity concepts. The practical small leap creativity is useful for solving everyday matters in new ways. A great river grows out of small brooks; every little bit helps. Solving everyday challenges creatively leads to a deeper understanding of creative thinking. Thinking creatively becomes a way of life, and nothing is impossible anymore.

The following descriptions of creative persons are based on the writings of three famous creativity scholars: the excellent text *Creativity*, published in 1996 by University of Chicago Psychology Professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi; *Info Cramps*,

published in 1998 by Finnish creativity researcher Jussi T. Koski; and 'Growing Up Creative', by American Teresa M. Amabile.

- Creative people do not necessarily perform amazing feats in their childhood, but most creative people have already shown exceptionally strong curiosity and interest in something as children. Charles Darwin, for instance, had an unbounded passion for collecting beetles. Even as a child, Steven Spielberg burned with enthusiasm for producing his own mini-movies.
- Creative people have an above-average ability to concentrate and focus. Creative people do not want to do things they find boring or in which they do not genuinely believe. They do not generally waste time and energy trying to solve impossible problems. They have a sense for what can be accomplished and what cannot.
- Creative people understand complexity and accept that many things are not simple. Creative people take a broad perspective. They try to see as many connections as possible between different things. They take advantage of fresh perspectives and try to examine matters from unusual angles that most people usually overlook.
- Creative people feel passionate about certain subject areas and they are aware that time is limited. They are apt to push aside all other 'unnecessary' matters. Creative people determine for themselves on which problems they will work. They focus their energy on goals they set for themselves, unlike the majority of people, who, regardless of where they live, pour most of their time into serving objectives set by others.
- Creative people control their own use of time. They are able to resist the social pressures imposed by generally accepted norms. They are independent, even obstinate individuals. They adapt the environment to serve their aims rather than adapting themselves to the environment.
- Creative people have often felt themselves to be outsiders at some point in their lives, especially during childhood or adolescence. Often, precisely this outsider experience has led them to question the official truths and traditional customs. This has increased their desire to free themselves from prevailing views and has spurred them to reassess assumptions and to question what once appeared self-evident.
- Creative people are full of energy, but they also know how to withdraw into quiet and rest. What is important is that they themselves determine how they use their energy and that they maintain control of their own resources. External bodies do not control how creative people use their energy.
- Creative people want to submerge themselves in the projects in which they are involved, but creative people also tend to sociability. They have features of both extroverts and introverts. A creative person also has a precise memory. The more one is able to remember, the more plentiful the basis for conceiving new ideas.

- Creative people like to keep a number of possibilities open for as long as possible. They don't accept the first possible solution right away, if the schedule allows time to consider other more creative approaches. Moreover, creative people are able to put off critical assessment. The fundamental prerequisite for creativity is ideation without criticism, including self-criticism. If you worry about how to make something happen even while you are coming up with new ideas, revolutionary new ideas do not see the light of day. Creative people know how to separate these two phases.
- Creative people are both humble and proud at the same time. They understand the importance of knowledge and tradition, but also the significance of chance and fortune in their accomplishments. Creative people are often so immersed in their own projects that their previous successes do not interest them much. Of course, they realize that, compared to other people, they have indeed achieved considerable amounts.

Parents of exceptionally creative children

When we compare the homes of creative children with those of less creative children, we discover some interesting differences. In the late 1980s a study was conducted in California concerning the parents and homes of creative children. The results of the study are shown in the following table.

Parents of exceptionally creative children

Attitudes of the children's parents:

- I respect my child's opinions and encourage my child to express them.
- I believe a child should have time for thinking and dreaming.
- I let my child make many decisions by herself.
- My child and I have warm, intimate moments together.
- I encourage my child to be curious and to question things.
- I make sure my child understands that I respect what she wants to achieve.

How were the parents as the child were growing up:

- Warm and encouraging.
- They enjoyed the situation.
- They enjoyed spending time with their children.

- They praised and encouraged their child.
- They were able to build a good relationship with their child.
- They encouraged the child to be independent.

Parents of less creative children

Attitudes of the children's parents:

- I teach my child that she will be punished one way or another if she is bad or does something wrong.
- I do not permit my child to get angry with me.
- I try to keep my child away from families with very different values from mine.
- I do not permit my child to question my decisions.

How were the parents as the child were growing up:

- Gave very precise instructions for doing things.
- Controlled everything.
- Provided ready solutions.
- Received the children's ideas and suggestions critically.
- Were at times ashamed of their child and did not encourage the child enough.
- Found themselves often involved in power struggles with the child.
- Gave up in difficult situations.
- Were impatient with the child's upbringing.

How you can identify children's creativity?

Creativity appears in many different areas of life, which might make creativity difficult to identify. The following six questions offer you tips about in which areas your own child is particularly creative.

- How has your child surprised you?
- How does this child differ from your other children or children you know?
- What things does the child like best?
- In what is your child at his or her very best?
- In which areas does your child presently display the most creativity?
- In what areas do you think your child will be most creative as an adult?

If you would like to understand your child's desires better, ask your child to complete the following ten items:

- I am 30 years old. I finished school a number of years ago and have been working for several years. The year is
- My profession is:
- I live:.....
- I like the following things best of all:
- At work I am particularly good at:
- At home I am particularly good at:
- In my own life I like best of all:
- I am a thirty year old, who:
- The most important thing I learned from my parents was:
- The thing I like best about myself is:

Of course it is easy to deduct from everyday observations what the objects of the child's passion and creativity are, but it is also worthwhile to talk with the child about the subject. Conversations often help the child herself to discover and analyze things. When the child recognizes her own interests and strengths herself, she can also move forward with them more easily. It is also easier for the family to support her.

Summary

In creativity there is no right or wrong, just many different approaches. They may all lead to different end results. In creativity there are also no negative problems. Everything can be turned into a positive challenge and opportunity. It is even easy, as long as we remember to study the problem or challenge from a different perspective, too.

When we compare people who have accomplished a great deal in the realm of creativity with so-called ordinary people, we discover a significant difference. Creative people have very strong self-assurance. They believe themselves to be exceptionally creative. Therefore, they are ready to take risks and to experiment. Sometimes they don't succeed. In fact, most of the time they don't succeed. But every now and again they do succeed! The majority of people, however, do not believe in their own creativity. They think they are 'just' ordinary people, perhaps hard workers but nevertheless, as for creativity, rather unendowed. If you believe in your own creativity, you experiment, you try things, you don't fear failure, and you achieve wonders!



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Creativity requires the courage to think and to do as you wish, without worrying about criticism or disparagement from other people. Creative people believe in their own ideas even when other people think them crazy. The ultimate result may be something that everyone considers self-evident and over which they wonder why no one thought of it earlier.

Once a newspaper publisher fired a young worker whose name was Walt Disney. The publisher felt that Disney had not offered good ideas in his job. One day Disney was hired by a small church. He would sketch in the churchyard, where he saw a mouse. Disney was delighted with the tiny animal and used it as a model, giving it the name Mickey Mouse.



We, **Pia** and **Jim**, are the authors of this free guide.

Together with our two children **Mikaela** and **Tom** we are also the creators of the Dibidogs , an award winning global TV series for children. The very first TV animation in the world which is created by children themselves.



We spent years in exciting TV and children's entertainment business, travelling around the world and talking about childrens ' creativity and the role of parents in supporting creativity. We as parents enjoyed discussions about parenting and raising children in Finland. During those discussions as big idea was born.

You are now holding your free guide with concepts and tools about raising truly creative children. We believe creativity of children is the heart and engine of successful adulthood. And you as a parent can do a lot to support your child to maximize his or her potential and enjoy a happy and prosperous life!

We are truly passionate about sharing practical guidance, offer tips and hints, and inspire everyone in learning positive parenting from Finland. If you like to find out more about Positive Parenting from Finland, please visit our web site

www.futurecode.fi .

*Reimagine
Parenting!*

