

THE BRAVE LEARNER

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Finding Everyday Magic in
Homeschool, Learning, and Life

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A TARCHERPERIGEE BOOK

PART TWO



Casting the Spell

The Superpowers of Brave Learning

What is most important and valuable about the home as a base for children's growth into the world is not that it is a better school than the schools, but that it isn't a school at all.

—JOHN HOLT

Parents say: "I want my child to love learning." What they mean: "I want my child to cooperate with my lesson plans sans eye roll." Children say: "I want to have fun!" What they mean: "I want to care enough to commit video-game-level energy to this thing you expect me to do."

"I *want* to learn geometry" is what we prefer to hear. "I *have* to take geometry to get into college" is what we settle for. How can we get a little more want-to into their have-to?

A superior curriculum for the irksome subject is not necessarily the solution, as tempting as it is to research products all the livelong day. A better investment of time is to consider *how* your kids learn rather than *what* to teach them. Learning is made possible not by better programs, but by better experiences—what education reformer William Reinsmith calls "educational intimacy."¹

It turns out there are a bunch of principles that help kids learn—that

bring about that intimate encounter with all manner of subjects, skills, and topics. I know long lists are intimidating to implement. Don't worry. I got you! I'm about to give you an easy system for eating this elephant one bite at a time.

I've happily wrangled these principles into three groups of four Superpowers for education. You don't have to apply them all to each subject every day, forever and amen. Flip through these chapters when you sink into the quicksand of tedium or resistance. Sample the Superpowers one at a time, one per month, over the course of a whole year to get started. Are you breathing easier yet? Good!

The twelve Superpowers are:

- * The Four Forces of Enchantment: surprise, mystery, risk, and adventure
- * The Four Capacities for Learning: curiosity, collaboration, contemplation, and celebration
- * The Four Ports of Entry: mind, body, heart, and spirit

* HOW TO USE PART TWO *

Read it. Enjoy it! Then apply it. For quick studies, apply the Superpowers one per week (a twelve-week crash course). If you're the kind of person who hates a schedule (hey, friend, me too!), dip in and out of these chapters as you see fit.

THE "ONE THING" PRINCIPLE

Go slow to go fast. As you implement any new "thing" in your home-school, take it *one at a time*.

1. **Prepare.** Pick one item/idea/program/principle. Next, practice it, purchase related materials, make copies, organize, think about the concepts, read the instructions. Get to know "the new thing."

Take time right in the middle of your day. It's okay to hire a babysitter or to park your kids in front of the TV. Give yourself the gift of preparatory time when you're at your best.

2. **Execute.** Clear the schedule on the day of the activity (no dental appointments, no meals to prepare for your friend who just had a baby, no co-op classes). Skip other lessons—math, history, and Latin—to focus on your one thing. Turn off your phone, shut down your computer, don't answer the door.
3. **Enjoy.** Be here now. Focus on the reactions of your children. Observe them: Are they engaged? Don't think ahead to what you will do tomorrow or next week. Enjoy the experience!
4. **Reminisce.** Next week, remember with fondness what happened during your "one thing" moment. Talk about it! Solicit memories from your kids. Remembering warmly builds momentum in your homeschool and shapes your family culture.

As you invest in your homeschool one thing at a time, you create space for the next thing. You'll have energy to "feather in" additional programs or practices, giving each the "one thing" treatment. You'll provide a *quality* education to your kids, not just a *harried* one. Your children will come to believe that when you introduce a new idea, it's likely to be a good one. Those happy experiences build trust. Remember: sometimes the most sacred moments in our days with our children show no outward educational value.