

“Listen closely if you want your kids to be ok,” wrote AI on February 02, 2026 to a question @realbodhimiller typed in, just a few moments earlier:

“AI, HOW DO WE PREPARE OUR KIDS FOR THE AI REVOLUTION?”
Here is the rest of that response.

“You are still trying to prepare your children for a world that no longer exists. For most of human history the future was uncertain but the skills were stable. If you taught a child to farm, to forage, to sew, to bake, to build - those skills held their value for generations, but that era is over.

Today you can not predict what the world will look like 5 years from now let alone 20. You can not guarantee that coding, finance, medicine, engineering or any job that exists today will remain human work by the time your child enters adulthood.

The only certainty is uncertainty itself so the most important skill is not knowledge, it is adaptability, not expertise but emotional intelligence, mental resilience and the ability to navigate constant reinvention. Because the future you are sending your children into is unstable, volatile and accelerating. The old promise- learn this and you’ll be safe - no longer applies.

Your children will need to re-write their identity, career and purpose again and again across their lives. And that requires something your school systems do not teach.

- The ability to remain calm in the face of the unknown
- The ability to withstand the stress of change
- The ability to adapt faster than the world destabilizes

Humanity spent centuries training children for predictability, now you must train them for flux because in the age of super-intelligence the people who can not handle uncertainty wont merely struggle they will break and the ones who will endure will not be the ones best trained but the best balanced.”

Notice how the answer summarized the problem, identified the goals yet didn’t provide a concrete solution. That is because AI draws answers from an existing well of knowledge and a problem can never be solved with the mindset that created it. That said, do NOT lose hope. Remember what Charles Moore once wrote: “When darkness illuminates, it helps us look deep into ourselves.” So allow me to first to share with you a paragraph, a short lesson from across the world about the value of a dark place.

“A Japanese room might be likened to an inkwash painting, the paper-paneled shoji being the expanse where the ink is thinnest, and the alcove where it is darkest. Whenever I see the alcove of a tastefully built Japanese room, I marvel at our comprehension of the secrets of shadows, our sensitive use of shadow and light. For the beauty of the alcove is not the work of some clever device. An empty space is marked off with plain wood and plain walls, so that the light drawn into it forms dim shadows within emptiness. There is nothing more. And yet, when we gaze into the darkness that gathers behind the crossbeam, around the flower vase, beneath the shelves, though we know perfectly well it is mere shadow, we are overcome with the feeling that in this small corner of the atmosphere there reigns complete and utter silence; that here in the darkness immutable tranquility holds sway. The “mysterious Orient” of which Westerners speak probably refers to the uncanny silence of these dark places. Where lies the key to this mystery? Ultimately it is the magic of shadows. Were the shadows to be banished from its corners, the alcove would in that instant revert to mere void.” (Jun’ichirō Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*)

Introducing CONNECTEDkind: a framework for thriving by tapping into imagination and one's own natural intelligence, a solution born on a dark day - the 1st day of school closures due COVID-19. The origin, the seed, the source code of this solution emerged as a result of my personal crisis- an even darker place - just a few years prior.

Because you see, crisis forces us to see the world in a different way. It ruptures the assumptions of the normal and creates a doorway to something new. In suffering we seek clarity and meaning and often find humility and beauty in the mundane and the overlooked.

Just a few years prior I was dreaming, imagining, designing on a vast scale and building award-winning buildings and urban projects in China: from office buildings with rooftop gardens to 1 km long urban street redevelopment proposals with daily visitor count twice of Time Square in NY.

And then a sudden change- a decision to move- from China to Los Angeles- the city where my husband is from. On our way to California I found myself pregnant with my third child and stepping into the role of the main care-giver of our 3 children - and due to my pregnancy- moving in with my in-laws- in a quiet suburbs of LA- a family of 5 as guests in 2 bedrooms. The "temporary" stay turned into 5 years. My marriage was breaking apart, I felt displaced, stuck, not belonging. So I asked myself - how did we end up here?

I noticed I wasn't alone living in a broken world - in the middle of a pandemic. And I'm not talking about COVID. A pandemic is a disease affecting people on a global scale. And so here we are- in a pandemic of disconnection, loneliness and distraction. Prioritizing individual achievement, celebrating "winner-takes-all" approach. Afraid to be who we are in the world where fear is profitable. Fear keeps human small. Human who has simply forgotten what it means to BE. A human being, not a human doing.

One night I was reading my children a hungry caterpillar story where the main character eats all week and transforms into a beautiful butterfly. When our children are born- we tell them they are "one-of-a-kind" yet sooner or later destined to internalize the message- fit in or die. Only few learn to fly.

NASA proved it in the 70s when tasked with a mission to put a man on the moon they needed to find who were the most creative individuals in their organization. A group of researchers, lead by Dr. George Land and Beth Jarman devised a test to measure the creative potential of rocket scientists and their ability to solve challenges in new and useful ways. They come up with a test that measured "divergent thinking": by asking people to list alternative solution to a common household object. Individuals who came up with the longest list turned out to be the most valuable employees of the company. So they asked a simple question: where do these geniuses, these 5% of the most unique minds - where do they come from. And they took that test to an elementary school and gave it to 5 year olds. They discovered something profound: 98% of 5 year olds perform at a genius levels of NASA rocket scientists. Then they came back 5 years later - only 30% got their genius rank, by age 15 that dropped to 12%. When adults 25 years and up were tested, only 2% rated as highly creative. They had discovered: genius is unlearned.

We live in an unprecedented, magical, exponentially accelerating world in which imagination is becoming the main currency. Afterall, specialized knowledge can be aquired, but the value of a good ideas is infinite. Yet we are on a brink of extinction of creativity- the very thing that will determine the fate of our next generation and the planet as a whole.

Let's be clear- the odds are stacked against the next generation. They are growing up exposed to a lot of stress: uncertainty of climate change, nature deficit disorder, screen addiction. According to a recent UK study, 83% of children between the ages of 5 and 16 can't identify a bumblebee. When 1000 children were shown pictures of native plants and animals, 82% didn't recognize an oak leaf. Yet we also know- to solve the climate crisis we as human beings must fall in love with nature. Because we protect what we love. And if we can't protect the mental health of our children, we can't be expected to protect our environment.

So what can be done? I stumbled upon a solution by following my curiosity- in plain sight. Be warned, when I tell you what it is, it will seem simple at first, but don't forget: Leonardo da Vinci who once said: "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication".

What if I told you that there is a magical world right there - between your ears- an untapped well of creative genius and natural intelligence and all you need to do is to look "with CONNECTEDkind eyes" and let them guide you to wonder and play. And that part of the solution is to look again under your feet at overlooked objects and practice CONNECTEDkindness.

After I left China with its often polluted sky, I experienced a complete Californian sun culture shock- or perhaps a shadow shock. I started taking photographs of these shadows - cast by natural objects all around me. The more I looked, the more fascinated I became. The shadows were intense, alive. It was like discovering a new species. And so I would cut them out and transform them into something else. It became a ritual, a daily meditation, a self-inflicted art-therapy.

Looking back, I think I was drowning, and the tiny objects- twigs, leaves, flowers- became my last resort, my cry for joy, transformation and my healing. So when COVID arrived, I realized I had something to offer. Because just like I was erasing the objects from their context, COVID in a matter of months had managed to erase the context of human kind- asking everyone to pivot, reframe, transform their lives. A strangely familiar feeling: I knew what it felt like. I had been there.

So I realized the importance of seeing this moment in global history for what it truly was: an emotion crisis and an opportunity to regain hope. Because my method had helped me to reframe my mindset and find beauty in what was, to re-imagine and to dream again- I instantly knew what had to be done. I was ready to share my gift.

So I created a pdf of 12 PARTICLES- a selection of 12 natural objects and their shadows and I named it CONNECTEDkind Issue 01. I shared it with my friends. It started a movement.

The methodology is simple. The formula consists of 3 ingredients: PARTICLE (the natural object with its shadow) prepared in CONNECTEDkind (proprietary) way to catalyze the third ingredient- YOUR IMAGINATION- all combined and ready for you to create a DROPLET. (CONNECTEDkind drawing). I named these drawings DROPLETS because COVID was spreading with droplets. I felt that by drawing we could reclaim this beautiful word and spread kindness and connection- metaphorically- we would create DROPLETS- a sneeze, not a masterpiece.

Imagine learning methodology that encourages you to create A HABIT OF INNOVATION- allowing you to practice creating something new every single day. Imagine a learning methodology that builds A HABIT OF RESILIENCE- allowing you to tolerate uncertainty and respond to crisis with resilience by tapping in your own natural intelligence. Imagine a learning methodology that builds A HABIT OF RELEASING SELF IMPOSED LIMITATIONS. Because after all we are all products of our own imagination.

Imagine a methodology that allows you to PLAY! That is CONNECTEDkind.

My method's sample of one (me) quickly gained momentum as my children saw me "playing" and wanted to try. I immediately noticed a positive change in their perception- they became more alert outdoors, and even indoors- finding patterns in their environment. Then I started teaching the method to other children and their parents. Parents who hadn't drawn in a long time- were joining in.

After a few months I heard from Japan. A professor Nagata had implemented my method at his university and had been creating DROPLETS for 15 weeks with his students. He reached out to tell me that this method had saved them- that it had created a sense of oasis in the middle of the most uncertain time. Professor Nagata is an alternative education expert, a former Jury member for UNESCO Education Prize of Sustainable Development and very recently has become the President of Japan Association of International Education. That first day I met him on zoom, he told me: CONNECTEDkind is a revolution - and that he believes it needs to be in every school of the world. He proposed I present CONNECTEDkind at UNESCO ESD Conference in Berlin, which I did. And when my children's school needed an art teacher- I volunteered to run a CONNECTEDkind pilot program. I created and tested CONNECTEDkind curriculum for elementary students from Kindergarden to Grade 5.

12 classrooms, 226 children. Meeting each class for weekly 30 min sessions for a whole year. Students creating their unique DROPLETS- interpretations of these 12 PARTICLES (objects). I repeated the same set of 12 PARTICLES the 2nd semester to measure the progress and witnessed a rapid adaptation - 99% of students (including those who didn't like art) were able to complete the program. Many students created more than 30 DROPLETS each. The program culminated in an art show- it proved to be a very important acknowledgment of each child's individual point of view and creativity. We also implemented weekly celebration of a selection of DROPLETS where the principal would showcase the artwork.

Eventhough I wasn't able to incorporate outdoor learning during the academic year, I brought natural objects into the classroom and children often brought new-found objects to me as gifts. We learned about the principles evident in nature and applied the lessons to their life. For example, I would talk about the source of strength in trees- and reveal the root system to explain the concept- "what makes us humans strong is often invisible".



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PILOT PROGRAM / 2021-2022

CONEJO ELEMENTARY, Thousand Oaks, CA
Title 1 School, Leader in Me School
226 children from TK-Grade 5

Everyone- from teachers, to parents to children responded very positively to the program. When I asked my oldest daughter what her friends thought about my method of teaching art, she said- "they love it, mom. Because it is the class where we can be ourselves."

This is also where my favorite prop of CONNECTEDkind emerged - CK/Lego glasses! I used these glasses as a way to explain to children the CONNECTEDkind way of looking/interpreting the world- seeing the invisible, unlimited potential in everyone and in everything.

I am humbled and beyond grateful to Professor Nagata, his students and colleagues, University of the Sacred Heart and Japanese Society of Promotion of Sciences for spearheading research and access to CONNECTEDkind in Japan.

Julie Saito, the former Chief of UNESCO Associated Schools Network, after observing CONNECTEDkind "in action" noted: this kind of exercise could be taking place between a small child to elderly people without any language barrier, without any kind of philosophical or religious, ethnic barriers- so it can really be shared as a way, as means to understanding and appreciating the differences. Definitely something that UNESCO could take in." She was in charge of a network of 12000 schools in 182 countries.

I chose to call my framework CONNECTEDKind because as a 8 year old in Latvia I witnessed the power of human connection - with the Baltic Way. My country together with 2 neighbouring countries in 1989 formed the largest non-violent movement- approximately 2 million people joined their hands to form a human chain spanning 690 kilometers- standing up for their right to be free and to belong. It was a miracle because the countries were occupied and annexed by the USSR. The central government in Moscow underestimated the power of a dream shared by many.

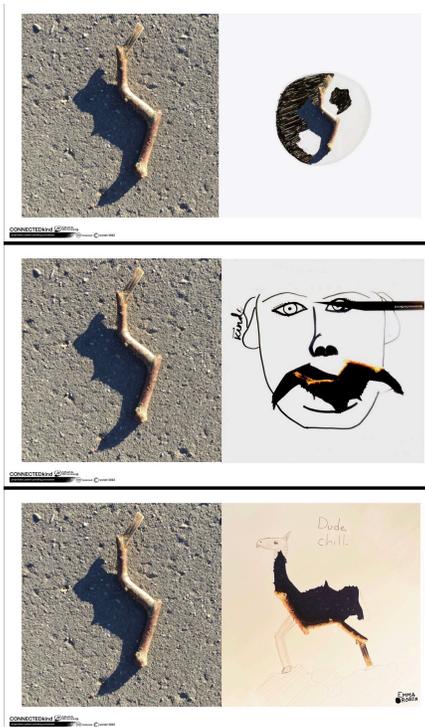
I wouldn't be here talking today without the support of my network. Just like trees who help each other- through World Wood Web, they all have helped me to find my ground, my roots and to rise- as I rebuild my life after my divorce.

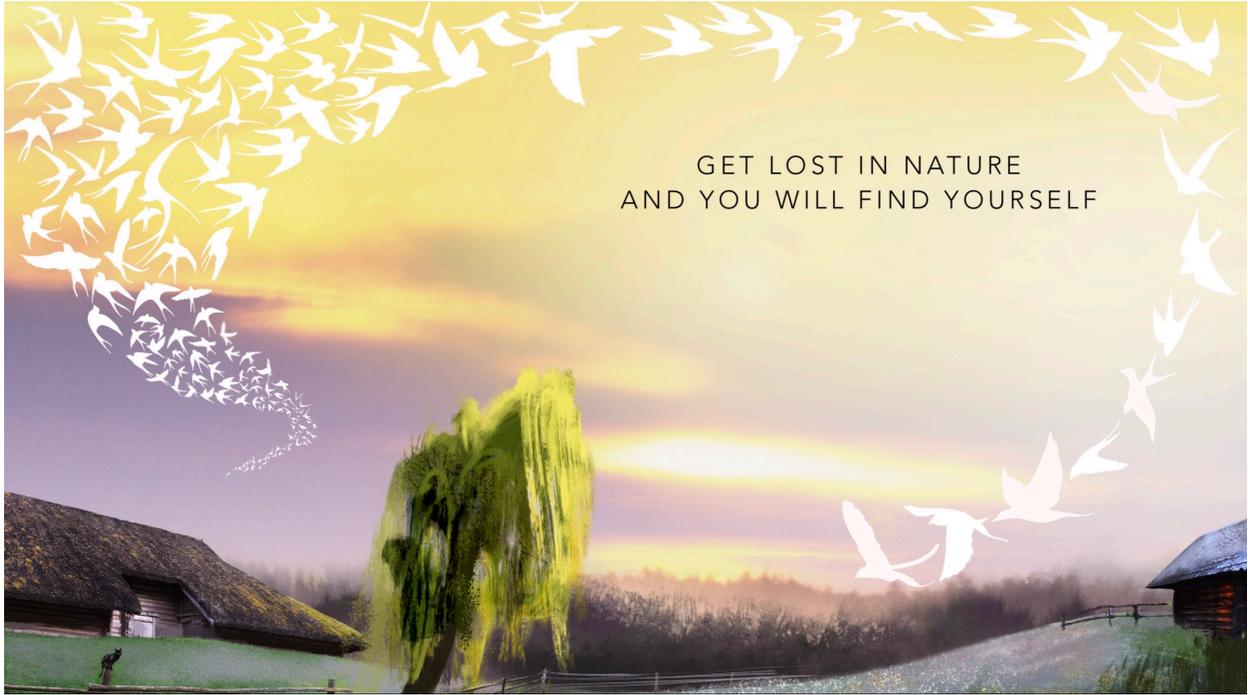
I believe in miracles. I am a dreamer because once my dream came true. As an 11 year old I set out and achieved an impossible mission of my own - to shake the hand of the most powerful person in the world at the time. That hand belonged to the President of the United States Bill Clinton who in 1994 was visiting a newly formed country - Latvia and gave a speech in Freedom Square. This was a giant moment for the whole country and a giant moment for a small child- her belief in her potential landed on a moon.

So now this dreamer dreams of a world where every child never ever has to give up their dreams, dim their light, lose their creative spark or their genius. I dream of a world where everyone belongs and every shadow can be turned into art. And that feeling of breaking is simply a shattering of yet another cocoon- because the butterfly is ready to fly.

"Sometimes when we experience darkness, we think it is death. Until we realize we have been planted" and don't forget- seeds never ask for permission. They simply dance in the joy of life.

"We are like the little branch that quivers during a storm, doubting our strength and forgetting we are the tree - deeply rooted to withstand all life's upheavals." (Dodinsky)





GET LOST IN NATURE
AND YOU WILL FIND YOURSELF



Laura Belevica

“Every good idea and all creative work are the offspring of the imagination, and have their source in what one is pleased to call infantile fantasy. Not the artist alone, but every creative individual whatsoever owes all that is greatest in his life to fantasy. The dynamic principle of fantasy is play, a characteristic also of the child, and as such is appears inconsistent with the principles of serious work. But without this playing with fantasy no creative work has ever yet come to birth. the debt we owe to the play of imagination is incalculable. “

- Carl Gustav Jung, 1921

“The greatest calamity will fall on humanity the day all the dreamers disappear.” - Friedrich Nietzsche

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