

Getting Started and Transitioning to Self- Directed Learning

WORKBOOK



Introduction



Welcome to this workshop on Getting Started and Transitioning to Self-Directed Learning (SDE)!

Moving beyond the conventional school mindset requires a deep shift in how we see learning, trust, and collaboration. This workbook will help you unpack schoolish habits, embrace curiosity, and take practical steps to support learning as a natural, lifelong process.

Takeaways from this Workshop:

- Clear, practical steps to kickstart your journey, whether you're a parent or educator.
- A shift toward trusting young people's natural curiosity and drive to learn.
- Permission to embrace uncertainty, break free from rigid expectations, and grow alongside learners.

1. The Paradigm Shift: Why Do We Need to Rethink Learning?



Key Insight: Learning isn't something that happens to kids. It's something they do naturally. To fully embrace SDE, we must deconstruct schoolish narratives and recognize how learning actually works.

Macro: The Bigger Picture

- Learning doesn't require schools. It has happened for thousands of years without them.
- Conventional education is built on standardization, control, and compliance, rather than curiosity and autonomy.
- Most real learning happens outside structured environments: through play, exploration, and deep personal interests.

Micro: Explore Your Own Experience

- What beliefs about learning were you taught that still shape your thinking?
- How do these beliefs influence your fears about leaving conventional structures behind?

Shift Your Perspective

What fears or hesitations do you notice when considering a radically different approach to learning?

How could acknowledging these fears help you move forward?

Common Fears, Habits, and Expectations

Fears:

- Fear of kids “falling behind”.
- Judgment from family, peers, or society.
- Uncertainty about “doing it right.”
- Fear of not seeing tangible learning outcomes.

In Order to Transition to SDE We Must:

- Embrace that its not just about the young people – it’s about us too! Transitioning to SDE means de-schooling ourselves first, challenging our own need for control, structure, and certainty.
- Unlearn schoolishness and where we equate “doing” with “learning.”
- Develop new skills to replace what we have learned so we dont recreate what we are walking away from.



Small group connection prompts

Where do you see these narratives showing up in your thinking about learning?

What's one schoolish habit or belief you notice in yourself? How could shifting it change the way you relate to learning?

2. Beyond the Schoolish Mindset: Living, Not Just Learning



Key Insight: Learning is *not* something separate from life. It happens *because* we are living.

When we shift from thinking about “education” to thinking about life itself, everything changes.

Macro: The Bigger Picture

- Learning is constant and organic. It happens through movement, play, conversation, and deep engagement.
- Motivation is intrinsic. When kids have freedom, they engage deeply in what excites them.
- We don’t have to make everything “educational.” Learning doesn’t need to look like school.

Micro: Explore Your Own Experience

- What moments of deep learning have you experienced outside of a structured setting?
- How would it feel to **let go of the pressure** to ensure learning “happens”?

Shift Your Perspective

Think of a recent moment when a young person was deeply engaged in something. What were they doing, and how was learning happening?

How might this shift how you view learning in daily life?

The background of the entire image is a close-up, slightly out-of-focus photograph of green oak leaves. The leaves are vibrant green with visible veins and serrated edges. Some leaves are in sharp focus in the foreground, while others are blurred in the background, creating a sense of depth. The lighting is natural, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Small group connection prompts

Think of a time you learned something deeply without being taught. What made that learning experience so effective?

Where do you notice yourself still trying to control or structure learning? How could you experiment with stepping back and observing instead?

3. Trust, Curiosity, and Collaboration: Foundations of SDE



Key Insight: When we trust kids and let go of control, they become active, engaged learners. SDE is built on relationship, curiosity, and collaboration. Not coercion.

Macro: The Bigger Picture

- Trust fuels learning. Kids don't need to be forced to learn. They need freedom and support.
- Learning is social. Collaboration, conversation, and play deepen understanding.
- Power With, Not Power Over. When kids have agency, they take ownership of their learning.

Micro: Explore Your Own Experience

- Where do you notice **control creeping into** your interactions with kids?
- What small steps could you take to build **trust and collaboration** instead?

Explore Your Own Experience

What's one way you can shift from directing learning to co-creating it with a young person?

What practical step can you take today to strengthen trust in their natural learning process?

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Small group connection prompts

What happens when you remove pressure from learning? Have you ever noticed a child engage more deeply when given true choice?

What's one way you can shift from directing learning to co-creating it with a young person?

Activities to Apply These Insights

- **Observe & Reflect:** Spend a day watching how a child learns without intervention. Write down 3 things they do that might not “look” like learning at first glance but actually are.
- **Practice Saying Yes:** The next time a child asks to do something outside your comfort zone, pause before saying no. What happens when you trust them to lead?
- **Co-Learning Experiment:** Ask a child what they’re excited about right now. Join them in exploring it, without an agenda or expectation of an outcome.

Final Thoughts

Transitioning to Self-Directed Learning isn't just about changing how kids learn. It's about reframing our entire understanding of growth, trust, and agency.

What's one step you can take today to move in this direction?

Final Reflection

How do you feel now compared to when you started this workshop?

What is one commitment you can make to shift your mindset around learning?



We're Sari González and Becka Koritz, the founders of Radical Learning™. With over 35 years of combined experience, we're dedicated to supporting kids, parents, educators, and educational projects.

What We Do

At Radical Learning™, we humanize education by empowering parents and educators to:

- Support learning, autonomy, and agency through connection, communication, and consent.
- Challenge outdated beliefs that disempower young people.
- Embrace tools and practices that foster freedom and trust.

We offer in-person trainings, coaching programs, online courses, and consulting. Don't miss our bi-weekly podcast **Radical Learning Talks** – it's full of support for both parents and educators. And... **Get our free e-book *Raising Autonomous Kids* by signing up for our newsletters here!**

Why It Matters

The world is changing, and so must we. By questioning limiting beliefs and practices, we open up opportunities to build authentic relationships rooted in dignity, equity, and social justice.

Our Vision

Self-directed education and parenting are part of collective liberation. This work goes beyond youth rights—it's about human rights and creating a society where trust, connection, and empowerment thrive.

