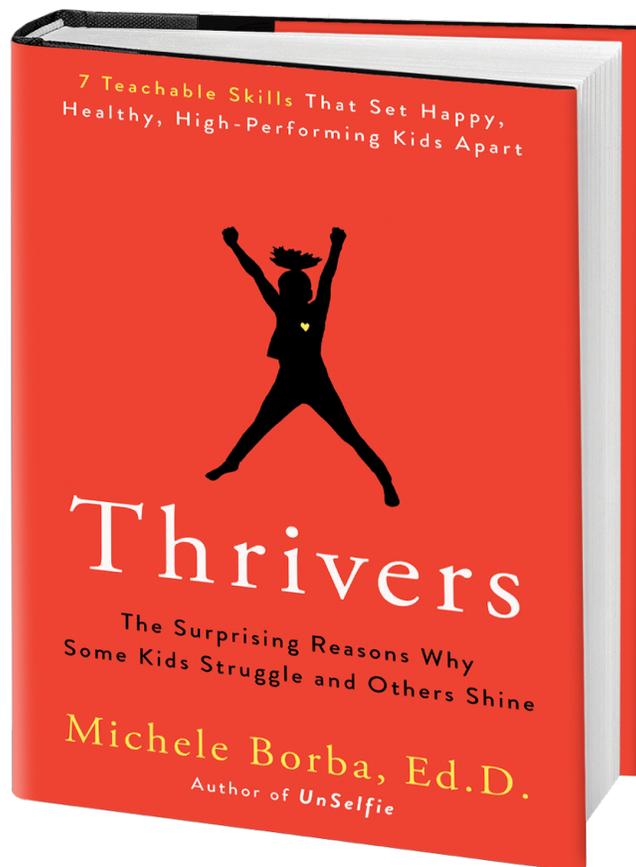


A Parent Guide for

THRIVERS

By Michele Borba, Ed.D.



***Proven practices and simple tools to
help children thrive.***

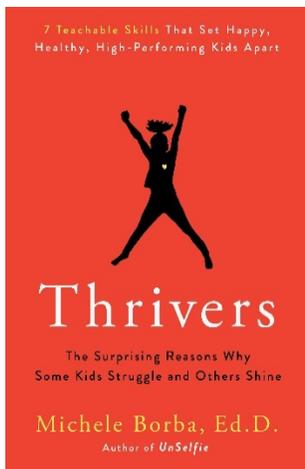
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*Thrivers: Surprising Reasons Why Some Kids Struggle & Others Shine***



INTRODUCTION: The Running on Empty Generation

KEY POINTS FROM THE INTRODUCTION of THRIVERS

- **The Generation of Strivers.** Today’s kids are less happy, more stressed, lonely, and depressed when compared to *any* generation. One in five will be diagnosed with a mental health disorder. Our uber obsession with developing kids’ cognitive strengths diminishes their abilities to shine.
- **The Seven Essential Character Strengths of Thrivers.** The difference between those children who struggle and those who succeed is not due to grades or test scores, but to seven *teachable* character strengths. Each can be taught to children from sandbox to prom. These traits are:
 1. Self-confidence: Using personal strengths to find purpose and meaning.
 2. Empathy: Understanding and sharing another’s feelings while acting compassionately.
 3. Self-control: Managing stress, delaying gratification, and strengthening focus.
 4. Integrity: Adhering to a strong moral code, thinking ethically, and leading a moral life.
 5. Curiosity: Having an open mind and willingness to try new ideas, take risks & innovate.
 6. Perseverance: Exhibiting fortitude, tenacity, and resolve to endure and bounce back.
 7. Optimism: Learning self-advocacy and encouraging hope.
- **Turning Strivers into Thrivers.** Kids who overcome adversity generally have strong bonds with at least one supportive adult and a set of learned traits that serve as protective factors. Thrivers feel “We’ve got this!” Kids who have never been learned the strengths face a huge life disadvantage.
- **The Multiplier Effect:** Character Strength are more powerful when combined with another strength.
- **Assessing Your Child’s Character Strengths.** The ultimate goal is to help children adopt each Character Strength as a lifelong habit to optimize their potential to thrive. Your first step is to determine which traits are your child’s strengths right now and which to encourage.



PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

My take away: _____

For my family: Which of the seven strengths do you see most in yourself and kids?
Which would you like to help your children learn? What is your first step?

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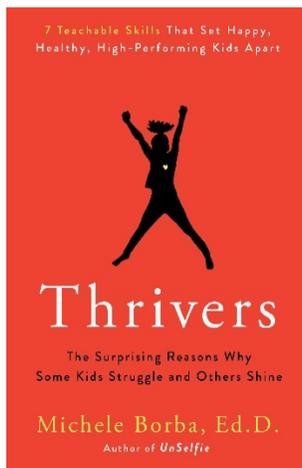


Chapter One: SELF-CONFIDENCE

Thrivers focus on “who,” not “what.” Self-Confidence is the quiet understanding of “who I am” Children strong in self-confidence recognize their strengths, accept their weaknesses and apply that knowledge to help them find the best path to life success. When potential is unleashed, a child can become the best version of himself.

KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER ONE of THRIVERS

- **Self-Confidence is the Foundational Strength of Thrivers.** All other strengths build from self-confidence.
- **Self-Confidence Is a Superpower.** Confidence leads to better academic performance, more resilience, a greater sense of well-being, and more happiness.
- **Core Assets Are Strongest Positive Qualities, Traits and Talents.** The acronym, TALENT describes common characteristics of Core Assets: Tenacity, Attention, Learning, Eagerness, Need, and Ione.
- **3 Abilities Nurture Self-Confidence:** 1. Self-awareness; 2. Strength awareness; 3. Finding purpose.
- **Kids are Happiest When in States of Flow:** Flow are those peak moments when children are fully absorbed in an activity that uses their strengths.
- **Self-Confidence Is Not Self-Esteem.** Real self-confidence is an outcome of facing obstacles, creating solutions and snapping back on your own. Thrivers are self-driven: we must unleash from helicoptering.
- **Use Nouns, Not Verbs to Amplify a Child’s Strength.** Using a noun descriptor may motivate kids to use their strength more frequently because they want to pursue a positive identify.
- **Praise Effort, Not Talent.** An ultimate goal is for children to develop a strength mind-set – the belief that if she works on her strengths they will improve and help her become her best.



PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

How would you describe your child to someone? What strengths or interests do you see in your child that could help him gain accurate self-knowledge?

My take away: _____

3 questions: Who do I think my kid is? Who does my child think she is? Who does she want to become?

Lessons for my family: How will I strengthen my child’s confidence?

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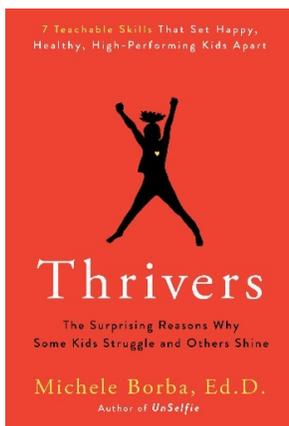
Chapter Two: EMPATHY

Thrivers think “we” not “me.” The gateway to empathy *and* thriving is human connection. Kids with strong empathy can understand and share another’s feelings, act compassionately and are more open, accepting and willing to understand views that differ from their own.

KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER TWO of THRIVERS

- **3 Abilities Nurture Empathy:** 1. Emotional literacy; 2. Perspective taking; 3. Empathic concern.
- **Empathy Has 3 Types:** A-Affective-sharing another’s feelings and feel their emotions; B-Behavioral when empathic concern rallies us to act with compassion; C-Cognitive-understanding another’s thoughts.
- **Watch Your Praise.** Let kids know they’re loved and cherished, but not better or worthier than others. Self-absorption erodes empathy, reduces prosocial behaviors, builds false confidence and boosts emptiness.
- **Emotion Literacy = Gateway to Empathy.** Kids need an emotional vocabulary to learn social competence.
- **Model 4 Ls.** Listening fully is one of the best ways to help us feel with and understand another’s views. Teach 4Ls: Look eye-t-eye; Lean in; Learn one common thing (“We both like/dislike...”); Label the feeling.
- **Teach, “Empathy Can Be Stretched Like a Muscle.”** Kids who believe that empathy can be developed extend far more effort trying to understand and share another’s feelings than those who believe it’s fixed.
- **Expecting Kids to Care Boosts Empathy.** Expressing disappointment about uncaring increases perspective taking skills. Discipline with 3 steps: NAME the uncaring act, FRAME impact, RECLAIM caring expectations.
- **Meaningful Contribution Increases Resilience.** Kids given opportunities to help others tend to become more empathic-especially if the impact of their helpful actions is pointed out.
- **Read Literary Fiction.** The right stories, books (like *Wonder*, *The Outsiders*, *The Wednesday Surprise*, *Grapes of Wrath*) films can improve children’s capacity to understand what others are thinking and feeling.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



What outside factors hinder the development of this Character Strength? What are you doing to enhance empathy in your child? What more could you do?

My take away _____

My plan: How will I help your child develop a caring mindset?

Lessons for my family: How will I discipline to strengthen my child’s empathy?

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Chapter Three: SELF-CONTROL

Thrivers can think straight and self-regulate. Kids who are strong in self-control can manage stress and regulate unhealthy emotions, can delay gratification and can stretch their focusing capabilities so to increase mental and physical strength. Controlling attention, emotions, thoughts and actions are highly correlated to resilience.

KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER THREE of THRIVERS

- **Self-Control Is a Superpower:** Research shows that self-control is a better predictor of adult wealth, health, and happiness than grades or IQ.
- **Untamed Stress Is Dangerous to Health.** It reduces resilience, increases mental health risks, and creates helplessness (“I can’t do anything about it, so why try?”) and burnout.
- **Self-Control Is Teachable.** A significant number of kids’ mental suffering can be prevented by teaching coping skills to regulate unhealthy emotions.
- **3 Abilities Nurture Self-Control:** 1. Attentive focus; 2. Self-management; 3. Healthy decision-making.
- **Use Mental Diversions.** Reduce attention temptations that rob focusing: change kids’ focus (or least appealing part of distractor), teach easy mental tricks to boost self-control, create “if-then” plans.
- **Teach ACT to Manage Emotions:** A-Assess stress; C-Calm with slow breaths; T-Talk positively to self.
- **Thrivers Develop Autonomy.** Enabling, impatience, coddling, competing, and rescuing rob autonomy.
- **Teach Healthy Decision-Making:** To help kids learn to steer their own lives. Allow choices, offer “either-or” decisions, ask: “What might happen if...”, teach “Stop, think, act right.”
- **1-2 Breaths Boost Relaxation.** Take a slow, deep breath and exhale twice as long as the inhale.

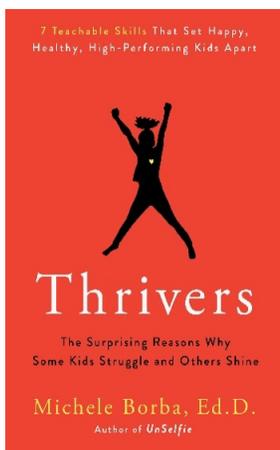
PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

How well do your children manage emotions? Which approaches (like mindfulness, yoga, meditation, and stress management) to nurture children’s self-control interest you? How might parents join (playgroups, scouting, playdates) to teach stress management and self-control practices to your children together?

Take away: Parental stress spills over. How will I model calmness to my kids?

Application: What are my child’s stress signs? How can I help her learn them?

Family lesson: What coping skill will I use with my family? How will I teach it?



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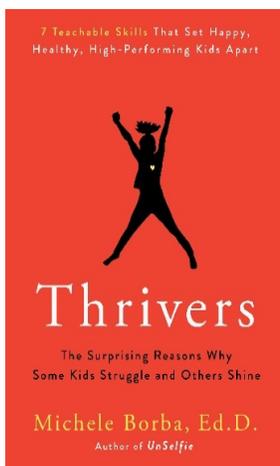


Chapter Four: INTEGRITY

Thrivers have a strong moral code and stick to it. Children who have strong integrity value and adhere to moral codes and values, are ethical thinkers, and practice honesty to lead good, moral lives.

KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER FOUR of THRIVERS

- **3 Abilities Nurture Integrity:** 1. Moral knowing; 2. Moral identity; and 3. Ethical reasoning.
- **Use 4Rs of Moral Discipline to Increase Integrity.** 1-Respond calmly; 2-Review why the behavior is wrong; 3-Reflect on behavior's effects; 4-Right the wrong to help child plan how to improve and not repeat same act.
- **Moral Development Is Not Learned in A Vacuum.** Find daily moments to discuss integrity.
- **Use Virtue Mantras.** Mantras can help children understand character. Find one about integrity that fits your family/class values, then keep repeating and explaining it in context until your kids adopt it.
- **Acknowledge Integrity.** Praise ethical behavior when your child displays it so he recognizes that you value it and he'll be more like to repeat the action.
- **Teach the 3As to Develop Moral Reasoning.** A1: Allow respectful disagreement; A2: Ask questions to help kids think about and defend moral issues; A3: Assert moral beliefs to stimulate moral views.
- **Identify Kid Service Concerns.** Service learning can help develop integrity, but the experience must be developmentally appropriate, meaningful and match the child's interest.
- **Kids Must Understand Integrity to Become It.** Help your child understand what integrity is and why you value it with the acronym, "TEACH." T-Target your touchstones; E-Exemplify character; A-Accentuate with a motto; C-Catch it (*name and describe*); H-Highlight and reinforce until child adopts



PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

What are some of the sayings, proverbs, or experiences you recall from your childhood that helped you define your values? How are you passing on your moral beliefs to your child to help her develop Integrity?

My ah ha moment: _____

My messages: How will I help my children understand why Integrity matters?

My web: What have you done with your child recently to reinforce your moral beliefs so she sees herself as a moral being? _____

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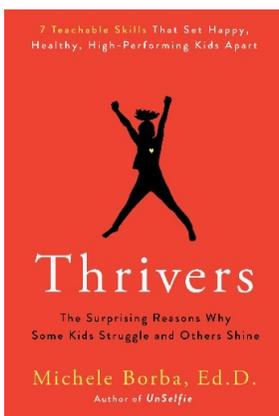


Chapter Five: CURIOSITY

Thrivers are our-of-the-box thinkers. Children who are strong in this strength are open-mindedness to new experiences and thinking, willing to try new ideas and take healthy risks to learn and so they are more likely to be innovative and expand their creative horizons.

KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER FIVE of THRIVERS

- **3 Abilities Nurture Curiosity:** 1. Curious mindset; 2. Creative problem-solving; 3. Divergent thinking.
- **Curiosity Thrives with Collaboration.** This strength flourishes when people—regardless of age—collaborate and build on one another’s work.
- **Stretch Comfort Zones.** If we want our kids to be open to diversity, they must be exposed to different opinions and learn to collaborate. Start by encouraging low risks. Stop rescuing!
- **Provide “Curious” Building Factors.** C-Child-driven; U-Unmanaged; R-Risky—a little bit out of child’s comfort zone; I-Intrinsic; O-Open-ended; U-Unusual; S-Solitude: time to contemplate.
- **Stretch Inquisitiveness.** Instead of, “That won’t work,” try: “Let’s see what happens! Instead of giving answers, ask: “What do *you* think?” How do *you* know?” “How can *you* find out?”
- **Teach Brainstorming Rules.** Each letter in SPARK stands for one rule. S-Say problem; P-Positives only. A-Add on to create more options. R-Rapid-fire ideas; K-Keep storming until no ideas or time expires.
- **Encourage Constructive Arguments.** Use acronym ARE. A-Assert: Be brief; share main point of opinion with facts; R-Reason: Support assertion with valid reason; E-Evidence: Offer proof of reason.



PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Curious kids are passionate about their original ideas and willing to defend them, but must feel support from adults. Do you convey such support to your child?

My take away:

My application: How can I create an environment that lets my kids feel they can take safe creative risks and think outside the box?

Lessons for my family: What is one thing will I do to strengthen my children’s curiosity?

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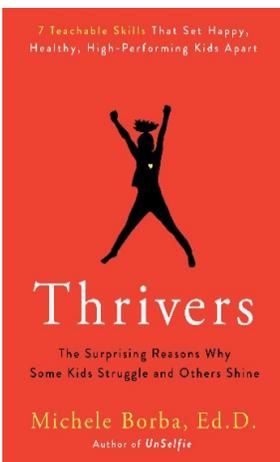


Chapter Six: PERSEVERANCE

Thrivers finish what they start and don't need gold stars. Children strong in perseverance exhibit fortitude, tenacity, and the resolve to endure, so as to bounce back from failure, increase resolve to endure and develop personal agency.

KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER SIX of THRIVERS

- **Perseverance Is a Super Power.** The ability to stick to a task and a long-term goal is the greatest predictor of success and stronger than IQ, academic achievement, SAT scores, extra-curricular activities and test scores.
- **3 Abilities Nurture Perseverance:** 1. Growth mindset; 2. Goal-setting; and 3. Learning from failure.
- **Teach Goal-Setting to Stretch Grit.** Goals usually start with *I will* and have two parts: *what* (what you want to accomplish) and a *when* (when you plan to achieve it). Teach the formula "I will + what + when."
- **Redefine Success.** Define success as a four-letter word spelled G-A-I-N: an improvement or "one step higher" over past performance due to personal effort.
- **Chunk Tasks.** Chunking tasks into smaller parts helps kids who have difficulties focusing, getting started, or feeling overly concerned that "everything's right" so they're more likely to succeed.
- **Add "Yet."** When you hear "can't, never, won't" comments, respond with a growth mind-set phrase that helps your child know that with effort, he will improve.
- **Allow Failure.** Thrivers use mistakes as success tool so they stick to tasks longer and don't give up quickly.
- **Teach "One Thing."** Help child identify her stumbler (the one little thing getting in way of success) and fix it so it doesn't derail success.
- **Praise Effort.** To stretch child's growth mind-set and perseverance, praise effort, not the end product.
- **Use a Balance.** A demanding *and* supportive parental style in equal parts is the formula for perseverance.



PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Kids must be praised for their effort, not the grade or end product. What type praise do you typically give? Do you think it helps to instill a growth mind-set? How might you help your child handle mistakes or failures?

My take away _____

My behavior: One way I will model perseverance to my children:

Lessons for my family: How will I strengthen my child's perseverance?

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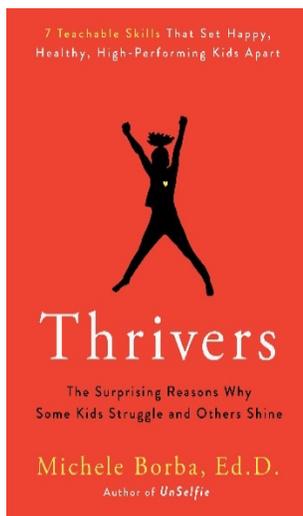


Chapter Seven: OPTIMISM

Thrivers find the silver lining. Children strong in optimism display positivity and gratitude, learn self-advocacy and keep unrealistic pessimism in check to reduce despondence and encourage a hopeful outlook and belief that life has meaning.

KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER SEVEN of THRIVERS

- **3 Abilities Nurture Optimism:** 1. Optimistic thinking; 2. Assertive communication; and 3. Hope.
- **Catch Pessimistic Thoughts.** Create private code to remind child to catch/halt their negative comment.
- **Challenge Inaccurate Views.** Teach how to counter, refute or balance pessimistic, inaccurate views.
- **Change Pessimistic Thoughts.** Challenge sweeping negative (*I always...never....every time*) thoughts with “Reality Check!” Then help reframe them with more positive, realistic views.
- **Show How to Stand Up for Self.** Help child learn to self-advocate (a proven THRIVER trait) by teaching each step in CALM. C-Chill to be taken seriously. A-Assert by developing comebacks (“Stop!” “Not cool”, “No.”) L-Look strong from head to toe; M-Mean it with an assertive-not wimpy-voice tone.
- **Teach Assertive Body Language.** Head: stand tall, head high; Eyes: look eye-to-eye; Shoulders: pull down; Arms: at side; Hands: uncrossed; Feet: planted firmly, twelve inches apart.
- **Hold Goodness Reviews.** Institute nightly review of good parts of each person’s day to focus on bright side.
- **Share Good News.** Uplifting stories of everyday helpers in news or neighborhood can inspire hope.
- **Volunteer to Kindle Optimism.** Lending a hand reduces stress and increases optimism. Make sure the giving project is something child *wants* to do, is done ideally face to face and isn’t just to look good on a resume.



PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

What impact do you think the Pandemic and other troubling world events have on kids’ views? Do you think it’s harder to raise a child with hope?

My plan: How can I help my kids feel hopeful about today’s uncertain world?

My example: How can I model optimism so my children catch it?

Lessons for my family: How will I strengthen my child’s optimism?

7 Essential Character Strengths to Raise THRIVERS

By Dr. Michele Borba, author of

[THRIVERS: The Surprising Reasons Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine](#)

Character Strength	Abilities	Outcomes
1. SELF-CONFIDENCE: Healthy identity, self-awareness, & using strengths to find meaning 	Self-Awareness Strength Awareness Finding Purpose	Healthy Sense of Self Positive Self-Identity Service and Meaning
2. EMPATHY: Understanding & sharing another's feelings, relating, acting compassionately 	Emotion Literacy Perspective Taking Empathic Concern	Reading & Sharing Emotions Understanding Other Views Compassionate Action
3. SELF-CONTROL: Managing stress & strong emotions, delaying gratification, stretching focus 	Attentive Focus Self-Management Healthy Decision-Making	Delayed Gratification Coping & Regulation Self-Discipline/Mental Strength
4. INTEGRITY: Adhering to strong moral code and values, ethical thinking, practicing honesty 	Moral Knowing Moral Identity Ethical Reasoning	Valuing Virtue Strong Moral Compass Ethical Decision Making
5. CURIOSITY: Open to experiences, ideas and life, taking creative risks to discover, learn, innovate 	Curious Mindset Creative Problem-Solving Divergent Thinking	Creativity Generating Alternatives Innovation
6. PERSEVERANCE: Fortitude, tenacity, resolve to endure, bounce back, and increase sense of purpose 	Growth Mind-Set Goal-Setting Learning from Failure	Determination and Drive Self-Mastery & Agency Self-Sufficiency
7. OPTIMISM: Positivity, gratitude, hopefulness to self-advocate & keep pessimism in check 	Optimistic Thinking Assertiveness Hope	Positive Attitude Self-Advocacy Hopeful Life Outlook

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