

# Unleash the Greatness in Your Child



**Powerful,  
Character-Building,  
Positive  
Parenting Activities**

An "I Care" Positive Parenting Workbook



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# Introduction

## The “Unleash the Greatness in Your Child” Workbook

The activities in this *Unleash the Greatness in Your Child* Workbook are built around many of the foundational concepts and skills your child will need. Highly successful individuals share a number of traits in common. Among them are the thinking skills, attitudes, and behavior patterns that represent “character.” This book provides tools for parents like you who want to begin unleashing the potential in their children through the development of their character.

## Positive Parenting

Positive parenting strengthens parent/child relationships by engaging children with the most important teachers they will ever have—their parents. Furthermore, it increases academic achievement and expectations for the future; instills self-esteem and confidence; and reduces behavior problems and school absenteeism.

## Character Development

Character development doesn't just happen, it is primarily learned from role models and significant adults and should be started at an early age. A list of the twelve “Pillars of Character” upon which the “I Care” approach is based is found on pages iv and v, along with the behaviors that define them at each grade level of the “I Care” Positive Parenting Workbooks.

## “I Care”

Beginning over ten years ago, “I Care” is committed to communicating with parents the importance of their involvement with their children and helping them improve their parenting skills. Today, “I Care” is used by over a million parents.

## “I Care” Positive Parenting & Mentoring Curricula

“I Care” Positive Parenting & Mentoring Curricula are used in over 35,000 classrooms for Toddler and Pre-K through High School. Activities similar to the ones in this Workbook are implemented by parents throughout the school year. Administrators, teachers, and parents have all raved about the results.

## Feedback

Feedback is one of the key components to the “I Care” approach. Defining parental involvement as the number of positive interactions you have with your child makes it easy. The *Reflection Activity* at the end of each month will help you keep track of your involvement. The other indicator will be the changes you see in your child. They will be stunning.



# How To Use This Book

## Practice, Practice, Practice

Practice is necessary for a behavior or attitude to become a habit. That's why we provide so many activities for each character trait. In fact, learning theory tells us that it generally takes 21 days of practice before a new habit is acquired. But don't stop with ours! Be creative in developing your own activities as well.

## Discuss, Discuss, Discuss

Discuss—not tell, tell, tell—is the rule. If a child can talk about an idea using his own words, ask questions about it, and consider it from different points of view, he will both learn it and understand it more completely.

## Parenting Activities

Carefully read through the month's activities. Designate a visible location to place the positive message and post the activities (refrigerator, message board, etc.). The activities can be done while walking or riding in the car, at the breakfast table, at bedtime, on weekends, and in other situations where you and your child are together. Take advantage of the "teachable moments" and read to and with your child daily.

## Monthly Character Traits

There are twelve important character traits, one for each month of the year, spiraling from a Pillar of Character. They instill self-esteem, positive attitudes, and self-confidence. Focus on one character trait per month and complete the associated parenting, enrichment, reinforcement, positive message (monthly character trait), and reflection activities.

## Parenting Pledge

The *Parenting Pledge* is an affirmation from the parent to the child that the character traits will be practiced and reinforced. Display it in a visible location. (See page vii.)

## Child's Pledge

The *Child's Pledge* is an affirmation from the child to the parents. Have your child repeat it often until it is committed to memory. Display it in your child's room. (See page ix.)

## Enrichment Activities

The *Enrichment Activities* will get your child excited and motivated about learning. The activities are designed to enhance your child's skills in reading, writing, constructing, designing, recognizing, visualizing, making patterns, and communicating.

## Positive Messages

The monthly *Positive Message* should be displayed in a visible location to help your child main-



tain focus on one character trait while you, as a parent, provide reinforcement actions.

### Reinforcement and Media Activities

These *Reinforcement and Media Activities* will give parent and child multiple opportunities to manipulate and model the behaviors associated with each character trait during the month.

### Reading Activities

The recommended books and reading activities support the child's literacy development and reinforce the monthly character traits. These books may be available at your local library or they can be purchased in a set of 12 at [www.icarenow.com/parents.html](http://www.icarenow.com/parents.html). Other books and videos that reinforce the month's concept may be used if the recommended ones are unavailable.

### Reflection Activity

The monthly *Reflection Activity* is designed for parents to summarize their positive actions, recognize their accomplishments, and encourage self-initiation of more positive parent/child interactions.

### Successful Parenting Practices

The timeless successful parenting practices at the end of each month's activities were used as a guide to develop the "I Care" Positive Parenting Workbook. They serve as models for effective parent/child relationships.

### 12 Universal Pillars of Character

**Goal Setting**—*Learning How to Plan*

**Self-Aware**—*Understanding What You Think and Why*

**Value Achievement**—*Taking Pride in Accomplishments*

**Value Others**—*Being Able to See the Good in Everyone*

**Self-Control**—*Keeping Action and Emotion in Check*

**Caring**—*Respecting Others' Feelings and Giving of One's Self*

**Responsible**—*Following Through on Commitments*

**Citizenship**—*Showing Loyalty to the Rights of Others*

**Life-Long Learner**—*Enhancing Learning Skills*

**Self-Confidence**—*Trusting in Your Own Abilities*

**Respect**—*Showing Honor or Esteem*

**Trustworthiness**—*Being Honest*



# "I Care" Positive Parenting Workbooks

- Built on twelve universally recognized pillars of good character with spiraling grade-level character traits to build one behavior on another
- Includes the primary behaviors that define each character trait for the repetition that enables transfer of learning
- Includes parenting/mentoring, enrichment, reinforcement, visual learning, and reflection activities
- Additional grade-level workbooks are available for the grades listed below

Month	Pillars of Character	Pre-K	Kinder-garten	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade
January	Goal-Setting	Dream	Dream	Imagine	Hard Work	Persevere	Persist	Set Goals
February	Self-Aware	Recognize Feelings	Recognize Feelings	Sensitive	Humility	Consistency	Monitor Thinking	Integrity
March	Value Achievement	Recognize Achievement	Recognize Achievement	Accomplishments	Accept Recognition	Dedication	Appreciation	Productive Thinking
April	Value Others	Unique Qualities	Unique Qualities	Make Friends	Value Differences	Hospitable	Forgiveness	Loyalty
May	Self-Control	Self-Control	Self-Control	Self-Discipline	Cautious	Punctual	Endurance	Control Impulses
June	Caring	Caring	Caring	Respect	Compassion	Gentle	Generous	Sympathetic
July	Responsible	Responsible	Responsible	Follow Procedures	Dependable	Prudence	Thorough	Accuracy
August	Citizenship	Positive Attitude Toward School	Positive Attitude Toward School	School Pride	Oversee Environment	Understand Consequences	Thriftiness	Cooperation
September	Life-Long Learner	Read	Read	Discover	Listen	Alertness	Creative	Find Facts
October	Self-Confidence	Self-Confidence	Self-Confidence	Self-Reliance	Optimism	Courage	Joyful	Problem Solving
November	Respect	Courteous	Courteous	Polite	Fairness	Patience	Honor	Open-Minded
December	Trustworthy	Honest	Honest	Sincere	Loyalty	Truthful	Reliable	Self-Knowledge



# A Proven Educational Method

***“I Care” follows best strategies of the teaching and learning process described below and has been professionally developed using relevant research.***

## Advanced Organizers

The *Message to Parents* is provided for introducing the month’s character trait.

## Three Essential Learning Conditions

These have been identified by cognitive psychologists and embedded into the workbook: reception, availability, and activation.

1. Reception—Advanced organizers focus the child’s attention on specific activities.
2. Availability—Parents can take advantage of the “teachable moments” and insert parenting activities into the home schedule at any time.
3. Activation—When parents role model the character traits and ask questions such as those provided in the preplanned activities, they are activating the child’s cognitive assimilation of the trait.

## Repetition, Repetition, Repetition

Long-term memory is enhanced by the number of times a child mentally manipulates a trait. “I Care” provides varied repetitions of each character trait over an extended period of time. Learning theory tells us that it generally takes 21 days of practice before a new habit is acquired.

## Use of Questioning Strategies

Most of the “I Care” Activities are written in the form of open-ended questions.

## Connected to Real Life

Children are able to respond to activity questions (passive activity) utilizing their own experiences, and when activities involve doing something (active activity), children carry out the activity within a familiar environment that is part of their daily lives.

## Substantive Conversation

Research shows that a child must talk about an idea or trait using his or her own words, ask questions about it, and look at it from multiple points of view for it to be assimilated to the point that the trait transfers into automatic behavior response. The “I Care” Workbook has built-in opportunities for all these kinds of conversations.





## **"I Care" Positive Parenting Pledge**

**I Pledge To Teach My Child:**

***How to Set Goals***

***The Importance of Integrity***

***To Think Productively***

***The Importance of Loyalty***

***How to Control Impulses***

***How to Be Sympathetic***

***The Importance of Accuracy***

***To Demonstrate Cooperation***

***How to Find the Facts***

***How to Solve Problems***

***To Be Open-Minded***

***The Importance of Self-Knowledge***



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Tear out this page and display the Parenting Pledge on the other side in a visible location.



## "I Care" Positive Child's Pledge

I Pledge To:

*Do My Best to Achieve in School*

*Read Daily for Information or Enjoyment*

*Have a Positive Attitude Toward School*

*Listen to My Parent's Advice*

*Use Good Manners*

*Practice Common Courtesies*

*Limit My Television Watching*

*Be Responsible for My Actions*

*Stick With a Task Until It Is Finished*

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Tear out this page and display the Child's Pledge on the other side in a visible location.

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## Parenting Activities

### Message to Parents

*Productive thinking is coming up with really good ideas. It involves bringing together elements that aren't usually associated with each other to create new ideas. Leaders in all professions use it. By helping your child look at things in new ways, you can increase his productive thinking.*

### 1. COMMUNICATION

#### Standing Against the Tide

Innovation is seldom appreciated. In 1899, the Director of the U.S. Patent Office suggested that the government close the office because everything that could be invented had been invented. In 1923, physicist Robert Millikan, winner of the Nobel Prize, said there was absolutely no likelihood that man could harness the power of the atom. Chester Carlson invented xerography in 1938. Virtually every major corporation, including IBM and Kodak, scoffed at him saying that since carbon paper was cheap and plentiful, no one would buy an expensive copier. Talk with your child about how important confidence and perseverance are to innovators whose ideas are constantly rejected.

### 2. ROLE PLAYING

#### Model It

Creativity is developing original ideas. It means not just looking for one correct way of doing things but coming up with many solutions, a few of which will be unique, of high quality, and workable. Model creative thinking for your child. If it's family night out and the budget is tight, decorate the dining room and make up your own activities using your child's favorite food.



## Productive Thinking

# Parenting Activities

### 3. TABLE TALK

#### Talk About It

Discuss the following with your child:

- Talk about six words that can prevent people from being productive, such as *no*, *can't*, *won't*, *never*, *maybe*, *if*, etc.
- Riddle: *How do you eat an elephant?* Answer: *One bite at a time.*
- Discuss the following quote: *"The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them."* → Albert Einstein

### 4. WRITING

#### Family Challenge

Productive thinking includes using things in new and unusual ways. For example, the Army got its idea for camouflage patterns from the artist Picasso. The "unbreakable" code used by the military in World War II came from the Navajo language. Gather your family together and give them a "productive thinking" challenge. Give them five minutes to list as many ways as they can think of to use a brick. Don't let them stop. At the end of five minutes, have each person share his list. Talk about the following: how many things did you list?; How many categories of things did you have? (door stop, anchor, and wall are all different categories; wall, house, and patio are all one category because they are things built from bricks); how much detail did you add to each? (remember that you didn't tell them that they had to *only* use a brick); who had the most unusual idea?



## Productive Thinking

# Parenting Activities

## 5. PHYSICAL

### Smack Down

Start with two boiled eggs, one for you and one for your child. Ask him to stand a hard boiled egg on its end. When he complains that it can't be done, take your egg and slam the end flat so the egg sits on its end. If he says "Not fair!" point out that you didn't tell him he couldn't break the egg, he just assumed that. The point is that sometimes you have to look beyond the obvious to solve a problem.

## 6. READING

### Getting Things Done

Being productive also means dealing with a crisis and doing what needs to be done. Read the book *Fever 1793* by Laurie Halse Anderson with your child and talk about the ways that Mattie was productive by getting things done well against all odds.

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# Parenting Activities

## 7. COMMUNITY

### Look Around

You've probably heard the saying "Necessity is the mother of invention." There are lots of people in the community who have come up with unique ways to solve problems. Help your child find and talk to some of these people. Call the newspaper or library and inquire about local inventors or craftsmen. Check with auto mechanics and builders. Have they had to use their ingenuity to fix or build something? What about artists? Have they used ordinary materials in extraordinary ways?

### Successful Parenting Practices

- Unfortunately, there are barriers that discourage productive thinking. Some of these come from other people who make fun of new ideas. You can't control these reactions, but you can help your child overcome his own negative attitudes. When you hear any of the following, talk about how that kind of thinking may be stopping him from being really creative: *What will people think?; I might fail; I can't do it!; But I'm not creative; That's silly.*





### Productive Thinking

# Journal Activity

## Activity 1: Journaling—Examples in History

Thomas Edison began his life of science at the age of six when experimenting with fire that burned down his father’s barn. After that, he tried to create a human balloon and by his early teens he had developed a system for controlling the cockroach population by shocking them to death with electrical current.

By age 14, Alexander Graham Bell had invented a rotary brush device to remove husks from wheat in a local flour mill. And, at age 14, Philo Farnsworth, the inventor of television, had come up with an idea for optical scanning.

History is full of interesting examples of productive thinking from young and old alike. Help your child go online or to the library to find some examples he’d like to read about. After reading, ask him to write about the most interesting thing he learned. What kinds of things gave these inventors their ideas? Also ask him to keep a record of his own productive thinking, solving problems or coming up with new ideas around the house or at school.

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## Productive Thinking

# Enrichment Activity

## Productive Thinking

Productive thinking is coming up with new, useful ideas. It's used in solving problems, making decisions, invention, and artistic creativity. We can improve our productive thinking by practicing several skills.

1. **Fluency**—Coming up with as many ideas as possible
2. **Flexibility**—Making the ideas different
3. **Elaboration**—Adding detail
4. **Originality**—Coming up with unique ideas

**Fluency** is having lots of ideas. We use brainstorming to help us be fluent.

**Flexibility** is being able to see things in a new way. Frisbees are an example of flexible thinking. Someone saw how kids were tossing around the pie tins from the Frisbee Pie Company after the pies were eaten and came up with the idea of tossing plastic discs. A multi-million dollar toy business was the result. The *Writing Activity* on page 28 and the *Art Activity* on page 34 practice flexibility.

**Elaboration** is adding lots of detail so that people understand an idea better. Poets use this by creating word pictures to express their feelings. Businesses do this in reports when they include pages of details to explain new policy. Clothes designers add and change details so there are always new fashions for the customer to buy. The *Art Activity* on page 34 is about elaboration.

**Originality** is having ideas that are unique or unusual. You recognize originality because the ideas, inventions, or art works are so different and not like those of anyone else. Picasso was considered original when he broke away from traditional painting. The airplane and automobile were original. You can practice originality with the project on page 36.

Reference: E. Paul Torrance, *The Search for Satori and Creativity* (1979).

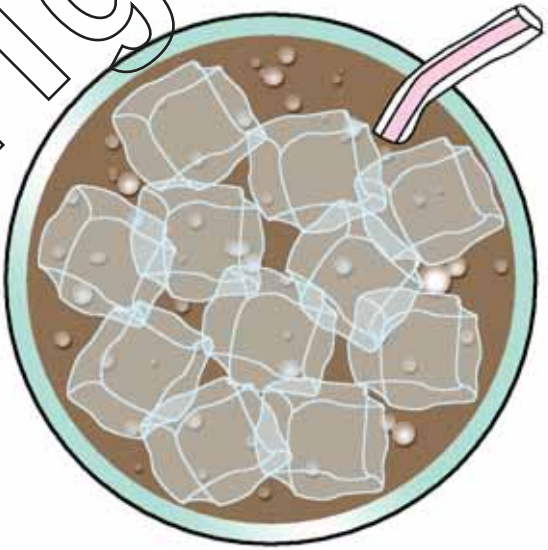
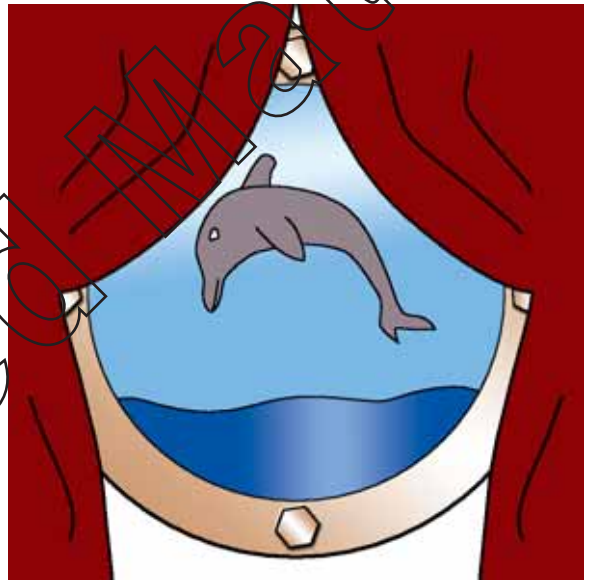


*Productive Thinking*

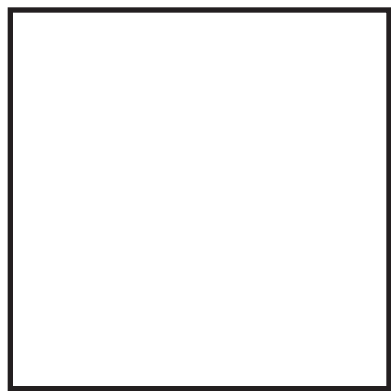
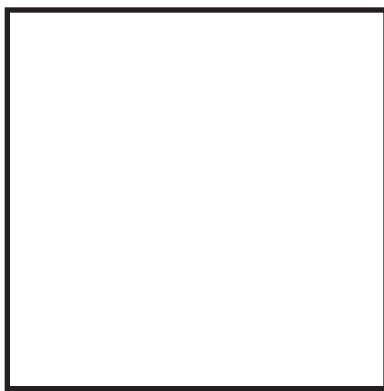
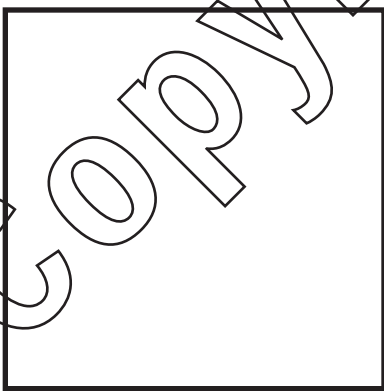
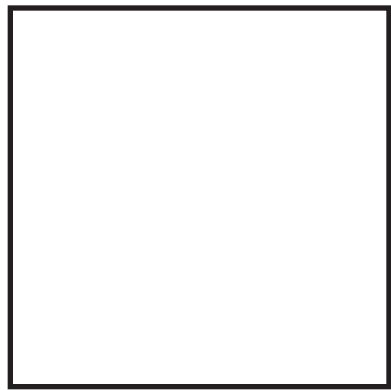
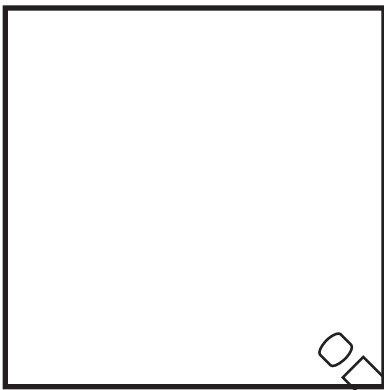
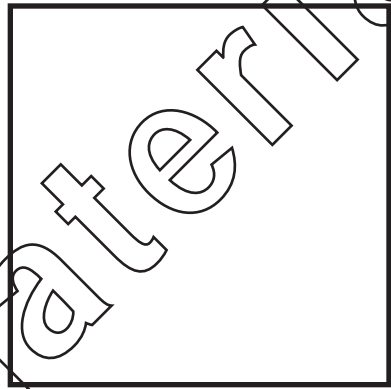
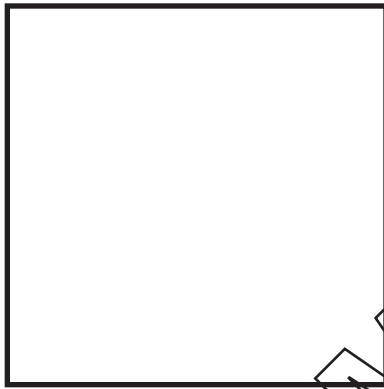
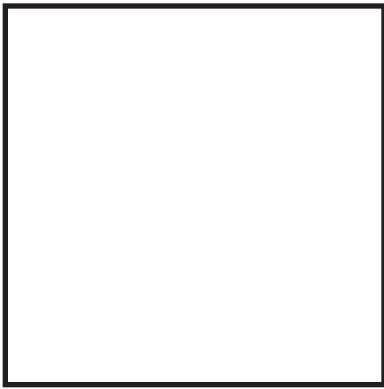
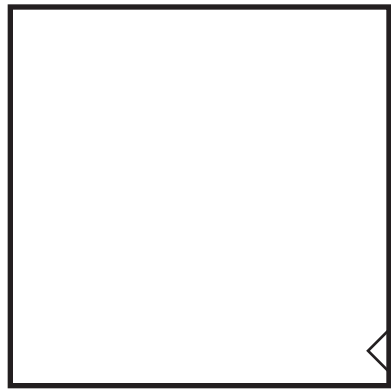
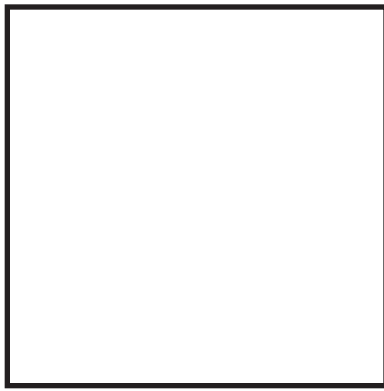
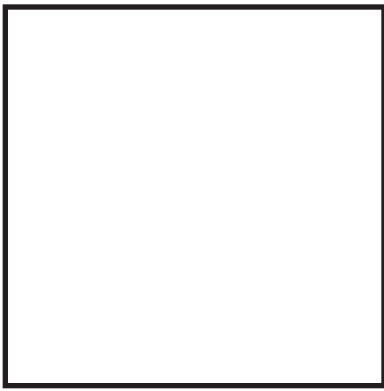
# Enrichment Activity

## Activity 2: Art–Make Them Different

The pictures below illustrate productive thinking. Each is a different kind of object, each is elaborate, and two are original. All three of the pictures below were made from circles that are the exact same size. Have your child create as many different and unique pictures as he can, using the squares on the following page. Encourage him to use color, background, additional figures, labels—anything he wants in order to make each one unique.



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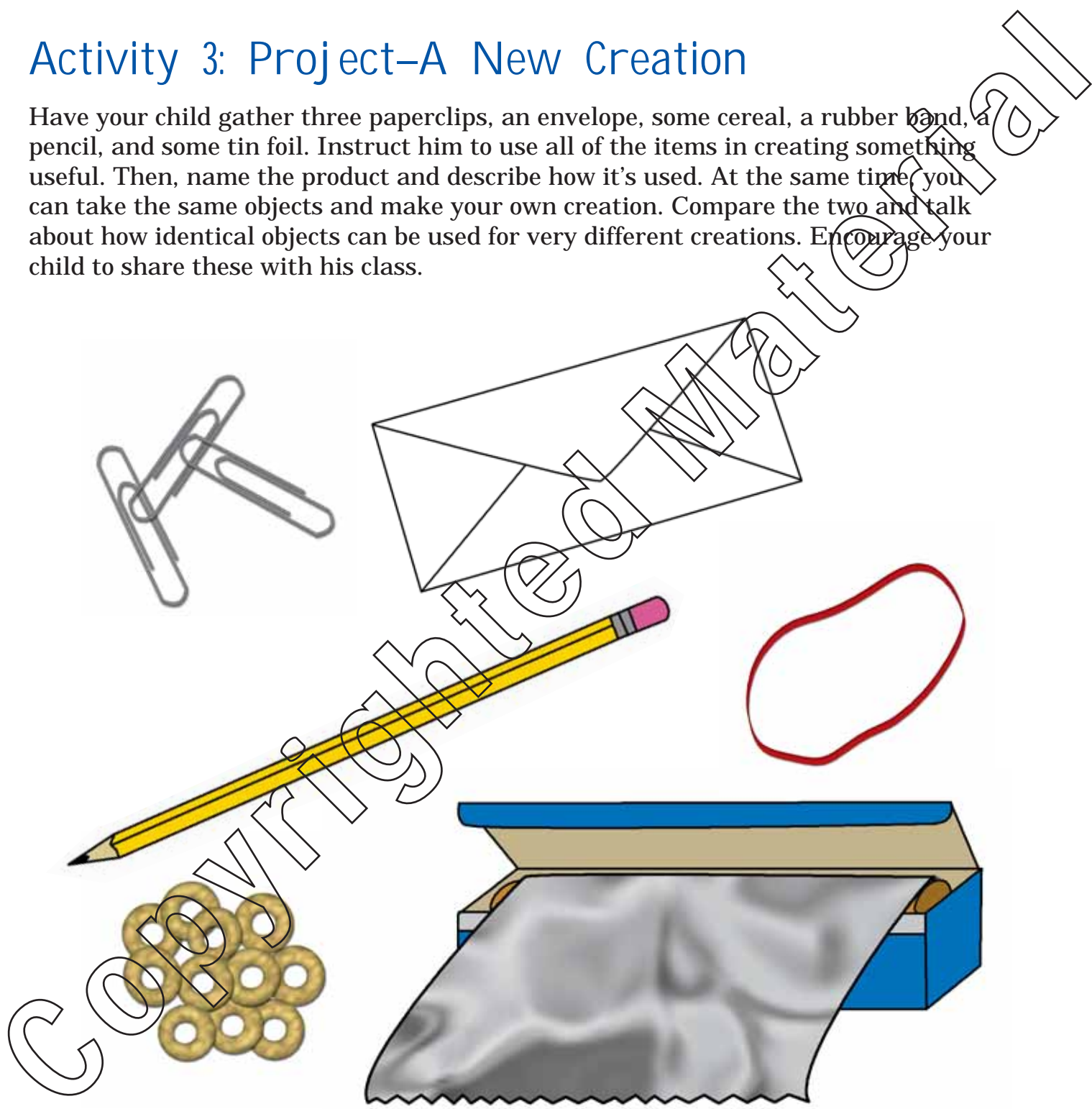


*Productive Thinking*

# Enrichment Activity

## Activity 3: Project—A New Creation

Have your child gather three paperclips, an envelope, some cereal, a rubber band, a pencil, and some tin foil. Instruct him to use all of the items in creating something useful. Then, name the product and describe how it's used. At the same time, you can take the same objects and make your own creation. Compare the two and talk about how identical objects can be used for very different creations. Encourage your child to share these with his class.





## Productive Thinking

# Positive Message

## Activity 4: Visual Learning

Post this message in a visible location for your child to see it often during the month. At the end of the month, complete *Activity 5* on the other side of this sheet.

**Productive thinkers ask "How many different ways can I look at it?" instead of "What have I been taught by someone else on how to solve this?"**

### Media Activity

Imagine your family was shipwrecked and marooned on a South Sea island. Productive thinking would be a must. After watching the movie *Swiss Family Robinson*, talk about your favorite innovations. How creative would your family be? What can you do as a family to increase your productive thinking?

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*Productive Thinking*

# Reinforcement Activity

## Activity 5: Reward Productive Thinking

Record examples of times your child demonstrated productive thinking below and post in a visible location.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

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**Productive Thinking**

# Reflection Activity

## Activity 6: Reflection Log

Summarize your child's positive interactions during the month and reward yourself for a job well done.

**Child's Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Parent(s)** \_\_\_\_\_

Record the number for each of the following questions in the box on the right.

**A.** How many of the workbook activities did you do with your child?

**B.** How many positive recognitions did your child receive from teacher(s)?

**C.** How many positive recognitions did your child receive from family members, friends, etc.?

**D.** How many positive recognitions did your child receive from you, the parent(s)?

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*Productive Thinking*

D. Record five self-initiated positive activities you did with your child that were not in this month's workbook activities.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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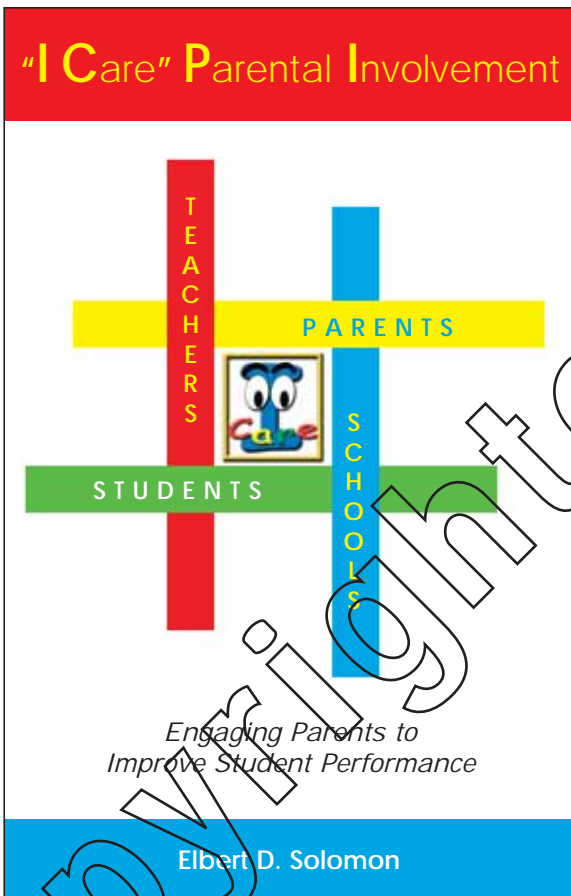
## 50 Ways Parents Can Say "I Care"

1. Post & Discuss Positive Messages
2. Attend Teacher/Parent Conferences
3. Take Family Portraits
4. Post Affirmation Pledges
5. Eat Meals Together
6. Post Daily Schedule
7. Assign Chores
8. Make Scrapbooks Together
9. Cook Meals Together
10. Award Certificates
11. Watch Movies Together
12. Visit Theme Parks
13. Volunteer at School
14. Read Books to Each Other
15. Attend Family Events
16. Give Parties for Special Occasions
17. Schedule Board Game Nights
18. Visit the Zoo
19. Help with a Class Project
20. Monitor TV Programs
21. Attend Parenting Workshops
22. Send Get Well Cards to Friends & Family
23. Lunch with Mom
24. Lunch with Dad
25. Encourage Hobbies
26. Attend Sport Events
27. Attend Local Theatre
28. Provide Enrichment Activities
29. Schedule Ice Cream Socials
30. Visit the Library
31. Go Shopping Together
32. Attend Friends' Events
33. Help with Homework
34. Post a Child Affirmation Pledge
35. Enroll Child in Book Club
36. Go Fishing Together
37. Go Skating Together
38. Encourage Creativity
39. Discuss Child's Day
40. Praise Good Efforts
41. Say *I Love You* Often
42. Write Notes to Recognize Achievement
43. Document Positive Activities
44. Talk About Positive Activities
45. Role Model Desired Behaviors
46. Support Extracurricular Activities
47. Schedule Family Nights
48. Attend Community Events
49. Help with School Projects
50. Set Limits



# "I Care" Parental Involvement Book

"I Care" Parental Involvement—Engaging Parents to Improve Student Performance, by Elbert D. Solomon, is full of research-based, field-tested implementation practices and measurement tools and introduces an innovative curricular approach to parental involvement that will delight parents, teachers, and students. More importantly, it will improve student performance, help parents to initiate more positive activities with their children at home, and enable educators to get beyond the difficulties of involving parents. Available in English and Spanish.



Engaging Parents to Improve Student Performance  
Elbert D. Solomon

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