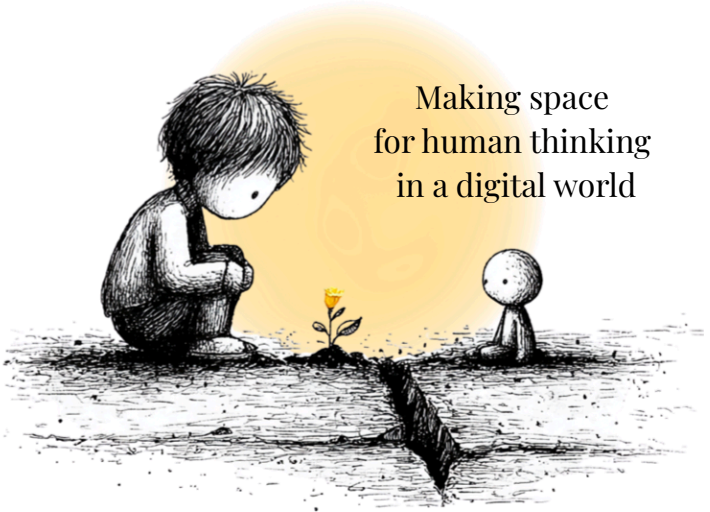


# The Little Book of How to Grow Big Thinkers

Making space  
for human thinking  
in a digital world



Children will master technology.  
But they still need to learn  
how to think for themselves.

Belinda Hooke  
Founder, Acorn Studio Press

PS. Saw this and  
thought of you. Enjoy.  
Belinda x

# **The Little Book of How to Grow Big Thinkers**

Making space  
for human thinking  
in a digital world

Created by Acorn Studio Press

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# **The future will belong to children who can think, not just keep up.**

Children are growing up  
in a world of powerful technology.

We don't know what jobs they'll do,  
or what tools they'll use.

But the most important skills  
are still the human ones:  
curiosity, empathy, resilience, imagination,  
and the ability to think in surprising ways.

And beneath it all is a quiet truth:  
the future won't run on code and calculations alone.

It will depend on humans  
who can question,  
connect and create.

Together.

And on their own.



Because the screens will go dark every day.  
As they do.

And in those moments  
humans still need to be able to think.

**To make sense of the world  
on and off-screen.**

## **Wandering minds aren't mistakes.**

Real thinking isn't linear.  
It doesn't need to make sense.  
(Not all the time.)

Wandering minds aren't mistakes.  
They're how humans  
find ideas no straight line would ever lead to.

And how children learn there's  
more than one opinion to hold,  
and seldom only one right way to think.

And real education isn't about correctness.

Because a computer can give you the "right" answer.

But only humans learn to make sense  
when the world isn't black or white  
but in gloriously unpredictable technicolour.



Because real life lives in the in-between colours,  
and humans must learn to breathe there.

To stay there.

**In a world that just keeps changing.**

## **Curiosity is how humans grow.**

Disconnected learning fades fast.  
Facts don't stick when they're pushed into an  
already full space.

Curiosity changes that.

It links ideas to interest.  
Interest to meaning.  
And meaning to understanding.  
It creates empty spaces  
just the right size for something new to take shape.

Because when minds engage  
with something they care about,  
something they believe they can do,  
learning becomes a trampoline,  
not a list of facts.

It becomes learning that matters.

Because curiosity is the original rebellion.



That human voice that pokes every idea with  
“But... what about this?”

“But... why?”

“But...?”

**That curious voice machines don't have,  
and humans can't grow without.**

## **Flexible thinking takes courage and persistence.**

Ideas are meant to be bent around and around  
and braided together  
until something new slowly appears.

This is the kind of thinking that grows  
when children are allowed to tilt thoughts,  
fold them, stretch them,  
pull them apart and try again.

Flexible and brave enough to try something new.

It's building,  
joining ideas,  
breaking them,  
reshaping them  
and watching ideas evolve into the undreamed of.

Even when no-one else is watching.



Because computers store more facts, and answer more questions, and can seem to be all-powerful.

**But only humans have the power to twist an idea, stretch it, and turn it into something the world has never seen.**

**Choices need space.  
Humans don't grow without  
practising how to make them.**

And children's decision making rushes to the left,  
to the right, takes three steps forward,  
gets rubbed out and starts all over again.

But to do that they need space.  
Space to create. Space to note. Space to human.

Paper slows the world  
just enough  
for thoughts to curl,  
wander,  
loop,  
and settle into ideas worth keeping.

Children need space to be  
fully,  
messily,  
creatively,  
wonderfully,  
mark-makingly,  
writing-tool-in-hand,  
human.



Children think in curls, clouds and constellations,  
and they need enough open space

for all of that to unfold in front of their eyes.

**And the best ideas don't download.  
You can't hang a .JPG on the fridge.**

## **Truly joined-up thinking needs time with the space.**

Not just time.

Not just information.

But room to pause without being pushed forward.

It needs moments where nothing new arrives.

Where ideas are allowed to sit,

be unpacked

without reading the flatpack instructions.

When everything moves too fast,  
thinking becomes reactive.

We skim.

We scroll.

We answer instead of wondering.

But when time opens up,

meaning catches up and

suddenly we realise we're talking another language.

This is where understanding begins.

Not at the speed of delivery,

but at the pace of ponder.



And the thinking that lasts  
is the kind you build by joining the dots,  
one imperfect step at a time.

**Because computers can process answers.  
But only humans can wrestle with ideas.**

## **Curiosity grows when children own their attention.**

Tearing it away from the loud and shiny.  
Tearing it away from the urgent and the bright.

Because when everything competes for attention,  
feeds, alerts and endless answers,  
thinking fragments.

Puzzle pieces jump  
until the picture on the box no longer makes sense.

But when the attention grabbers fade away  
children don't stop thinking.

They suddenly find the space to  
jump higher, dive deeper.

They learn to be comfortable  
with their own opinions.

In a world that is learning to answer for us  
faster than we can learn to think for ourselves.



Children don't know a world  
where they've had to own their opinion.

But when they learn to hold their attention,  
they learn they can hold a thought,  
and own their opinions and curiosity.

**And that's where independent thinking begins.**

## **Learning doesn't happen in a vacuum.**

It happens in glances.

In shared pauses.

In discussions in the aisles of the supermarket,

In laughs when going from spot A to spot B.

In moments where no one is performing.

Where no one is "on".

When ideas are spoken out loud and shared,  
or quietly noticed together,

learning isn't just about books anymore.

It's about the value of human-ing together.

Not something delivered to be marked.

Not something watched for correctness.

Something shared between people.

Children don't need correct answers expected  
from them all the time.

(They'll find plenty of those on their own.)

They need people willing to wonder, explore and be  
human with them.



Because learning is not something done to a child.  
Not taught from a distance.  
Not tested by a computer.  
And definitely not a scoreboard.

**Just noticed and enjoyed.  
Together.**

## **Kindness and courage change the world.**

Thinking takes courage.  
The courage to stay with a thought  
when it challenges you.  
To have an opinion.  
To change your mind.

Kindness takes attention.  
It is care that doesn't turn aside  
when things feel complicated  
or inconvenient.

Without kindness thinking can become careless.  
Without courage thinking can become compliant.

But when children are shown  
how to think with care, they learn to ask  
who is affected?  
what matters here?  
what could be different?

And when they are given courage,  
they learn that thinking carries weight.  
It has consequences.  
It can protect, repair, and reshape.



They learn that ideas are  
not just for solving problems,  
but for deciding  
what kind of world they want to live in.

Because the future doesn't just need faster answers.

**It needs humans  
brave enough to care  
and kind enough to act.**

## **Small beginnings matter.**

Most meaningful things don't announce themselves.  
They don't arrive fully formed.  
They don't start with certainty,  
confidence, or applause.

They start quietly.  
With a question.  
A choice.  
A small decision to care  
when it would be easier not to.

Children don't need grand plans to change the world.  
They need to know that what they do now counts.  
That small thoughts are still thoughts.  
That small actions still shape things.  
That paying attention is already an act of courage.

This is how change actually begins.  
Not later.  
Not bigger.  
Not when everything is ready.



Because big change rarely starts with a plan.

It changes in kitchens.

In playgrounds.

Big impact doesn't start big.

It starts with people

who don't wait to be important.

It changes when

someone notices something isn't right

and decides not to look away.

**And children don't need to grow up  
before their thinking starts to matter.**

## **This book isn't finished.**

It keeps going  
in conversations,  
in questions,  
and in the spaces you leave open.


If it made you pause,  
wonder,  
or see learning a little differently,

then it's already doing its work.

And if it finds its way to someone else,  
that's exactly how it was meant to travel.

*P.S. If you're finished  
reading it, why not pass it on  
to someone else you think  
might like it. Take care.  
Belinda x*





PPS. If you'd like to get  
another copy to share with  
someone else, just visit  
[acornstudiopress.com/manifesto](http://acornstudiopress.com/manifesto)

# The Acorn Way

## Building a Mind that Builds



You've seen your child work hard to make sense of new things. Acorn invites them to connect ideas and see how their thinking can build something new.

## Learning that Matters



You've seen how lessons can fade once the test is over. Acorn makes learning feel alive again, connecting ideas to caring, action, and hope.

## Joined-Up Thinking



You've seen how school subjects can feel miles apart. Acorn joins the dots so children see how science, maths, stories - in fact everything - just fits together.

## Paper First



You've seen how lessons can fade once the test is over. Acorn makes learning feel alive again, connecting ideas to caring, action, and hope.

## Distraction Free



You've seen how fast the world moves. Acorn gives your child a distraction-free moment to slow down, breathe, and reconnect with their own curiosity.

## Choice & Discovery



You've seen how children start to think there's a single right way to be right. Acorn offers choices that remind them learning is about exploring, questioning, and finding their own way.

## Kindness & Courage



You've seen how easy it is for children to doubt themselves or compare. Acorn helps them find quiet confidence, learning that kindness can be strong and courage can be calm.

## Together Time



Every page sparks connection: talking, drawing, sharing ideas. Learning becomes something you do together, not something you watch over.

## Small Beginnings, Big Meaning



You've seen how big things often start quietly. Acorn begins small, helping children see that their thoughts and actions can make a difference.

Children are growing up fluent in technology.

**This book is about  
the other skills they need to practise.**

The human ones.

Curiosity. Empathy. Imagination. Resilience.

The ability to question, connect.

And think in surprising ways.

Not instead of digital skills.

Alongside them.

Because the future won't be built by code alone.

It will be shaped by humans who know how to think.

Together.

