

# Learning to Fly ↗





# A Book for Parents

A book for the parent of a person with special support needs for a time when the child is growing more independent and leaving to lead a life of his or her own.

This book belongs to

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**LEARNING TO FLY**

Translation: Anna Uotila

Illustrations: Johanna Vuorenmaa / HehkuVisual

Layout: Jaakko Bashmakov / Pic Design

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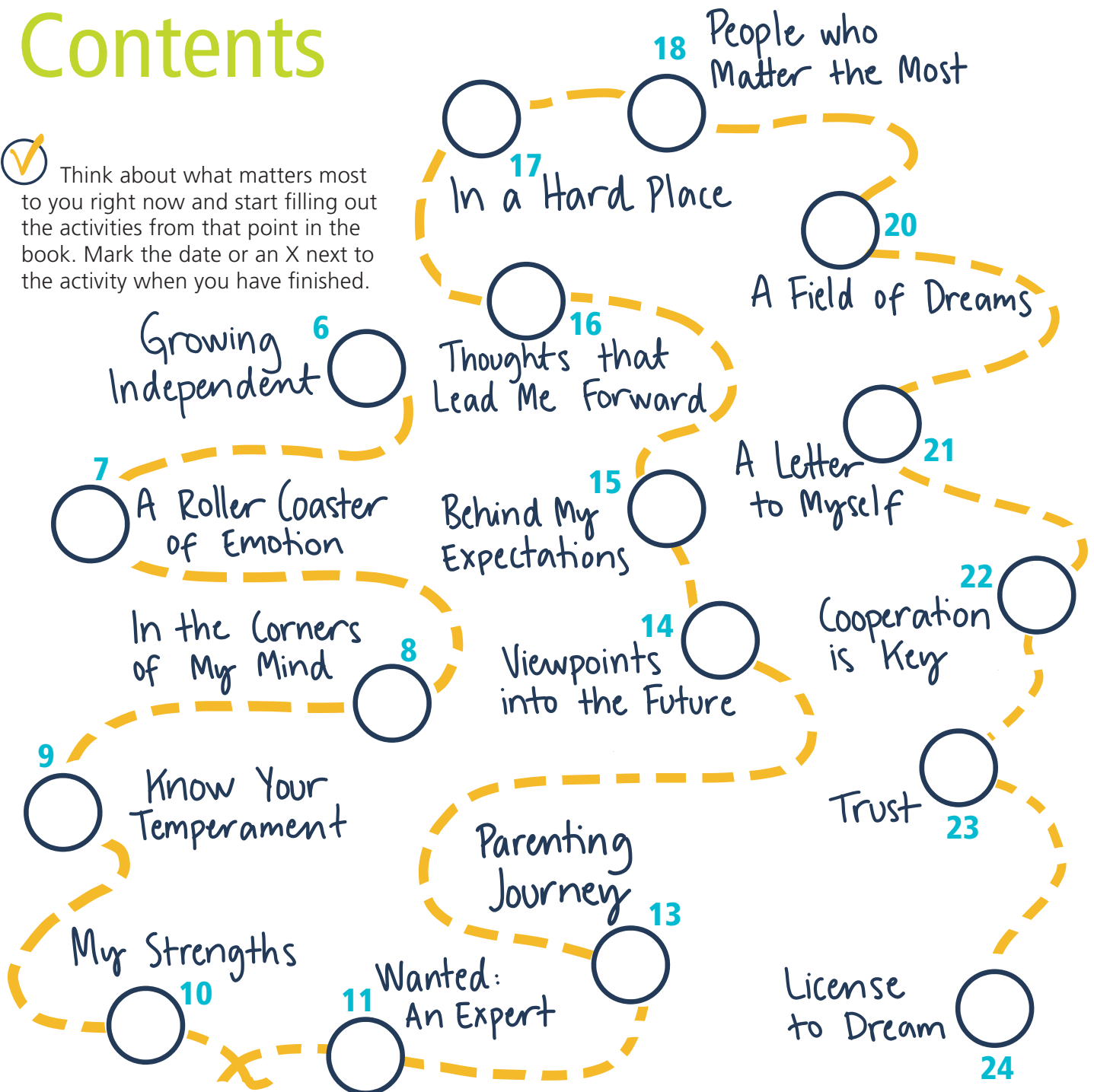
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INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS:  
LEARNING & INVESTING IN PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITIES, CO-OPERATING WITH FAMILIES  
& SERVICE PROVIDERS.

# Contents

✓ Think about what matters most to you right now and start filling out the activities from that point in the book. Mark the date or an X next to the activity when you have finished.



# For You

Your child is moving into his or her own home. Or perhaps you have now reached that point where you consider your own life and your thoughts regarding your child's journey to independence. How can you support that journey? How does your child's growing independence impact you? How can you prepare yourself for when your child moves out of your home? How does that move change your parenthood?

In this book, we have gathered things that help you prepare for when your child with special support needs is growing more independent and moving out of his or her childhood home. The book contains activities that the **Service Foundation for People with an Intellectual Disability (KVPS)** has carried out in peer support groups for loved ones in the foundation's activities for families going through changes in life situations. This book's activities have, in other words, been born in encounters with parents. The activities are complemented by insights from **Marjatta Tammisto**, "Master of Emotions". For decades, Marjatta has walked alongside families in seasons of change.

From this book, you may choose the activities that suit you and carry them out in the order that you like, in your own way. The activities may be done by discussing, drawing, writing or even scrapbooking with clippings from papers, like you were making a treasure map. You can go through these things alone, together with a friend or with a person who is going through a similar phase in life or has maybe already lived through it. This book may work in peer support groups as an aid when addressing various matters. With the help of other people's opinions, your own thinking may expand, and you may find new ways to look at things.

It is only natural that change stirs many types of thoughts and emotions. We all have our individual ways of reacting to change, and we all find our own ways to prepare and survive. Hopefully the things this book handles help you find your own personal ways to think and act when change occurs and to adapt to a new kind of life. It is said that it takes at least four seasons to adapt to a new phase in life. It is therefore important to allow time for yourself, to find the people and ways that help you to prepare for change and to adapt. Thinking about these things beforehand affects your future life as well as the life of your child.

**Wishing for productive moments with these matters and activities!**

## **Katja Marjamäki**

*Development Activities*

*Service Foundation for People*

*with an Intellectual Disability (KVPS)*

# Growing Independent

For a child with special support needs, growing independent is a process that stems from childhood and for which he or she needs the parents' support and push.

"I would gently push them over the edge of the nest" (*Anneli Leino, mother*)

The dream and the goal are to manage as an adult and to have the opportunity to live as an equal, in the same way as everyone else does.

"You should start thinking about your child growing independent as early as when the child is 10 years old."

– A mother to an adolescent with special support needs –

"Master of Emotions"

MARJATTA TAMMISTO

THINK

1. How is your child manifesting his or her growth towards independence now?
2. What are the things that have supported him or her growing more independent?
3. How can you fortify your child's growth towards independence?
4. What types of things strengthen your child's growth towards independence?  
(What types of experiences, for example)



# A Roller Coaster of Emotions



Causes for Joy:

Fear and Worries:

Wishes:



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## Experiences of Success

Appreciate your children and accept them for how they are, not the way you wish for them to be or become. Experiencing appreciation and success build self-esteem and self-confidence, and self-esteem is intrinsically linked with dignity. It is important to feel appreciated just the way you are. Experiences of success build confidence in life and other people.

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# In the Corners of My Mind

Psychiatrist **Eric Berne** has developed a theory with the basic assumption that the human personality is built and works through three so called ego-states. These states are Child, Adult, and Parent.

In the Parent state, a person has internalised his or her own parents' values as well as their thought, behaviour and parenting processes, and may pass them on unknowingly – both in good and bad ways. The child state, in turn, shows emotions and emotional reactions. The inner child is an important faculty for experiencing love and tenderness and for giving. Spontaneous joy of life, playfulness and humour also stem from the child state.

When we are tired or stressed, we may “fall into child”, which means that we lose control over our emotions and the feelings of disappointment and anger burst out.

The adult in us evolves through interaction, life experience, and learning. The adult state comes with self-knowledge, the ability to recognise the “child” and the “parent” in yourself. Self-knowledge is the foundation for good interaction skills, emotional skills and control over your own emotions.

Recognise situations in which the different ego-states have come up.

What was the situation like?

My reaction in the situation?

Who spoke in me (+ or -)?



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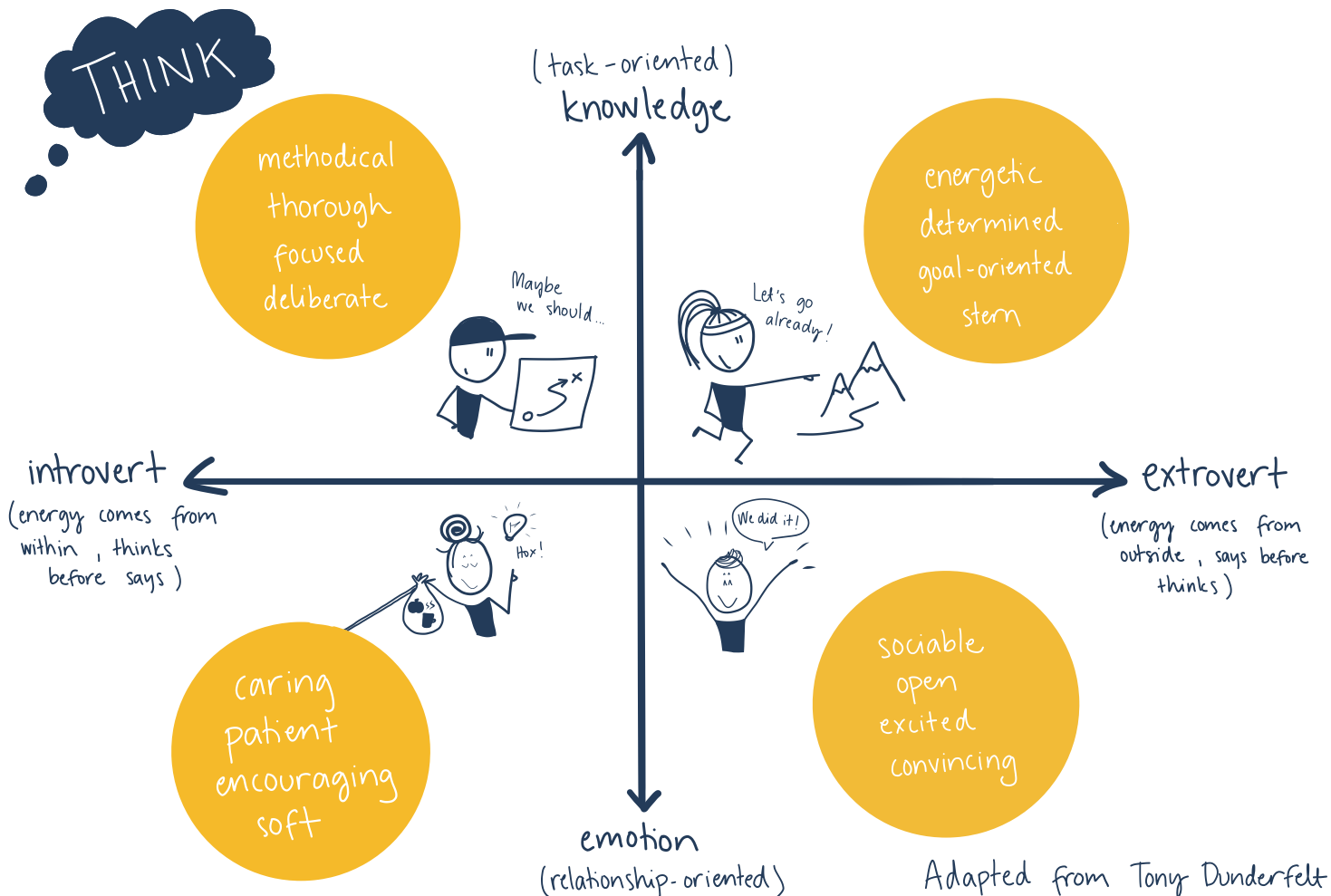
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# Know Your Temperament

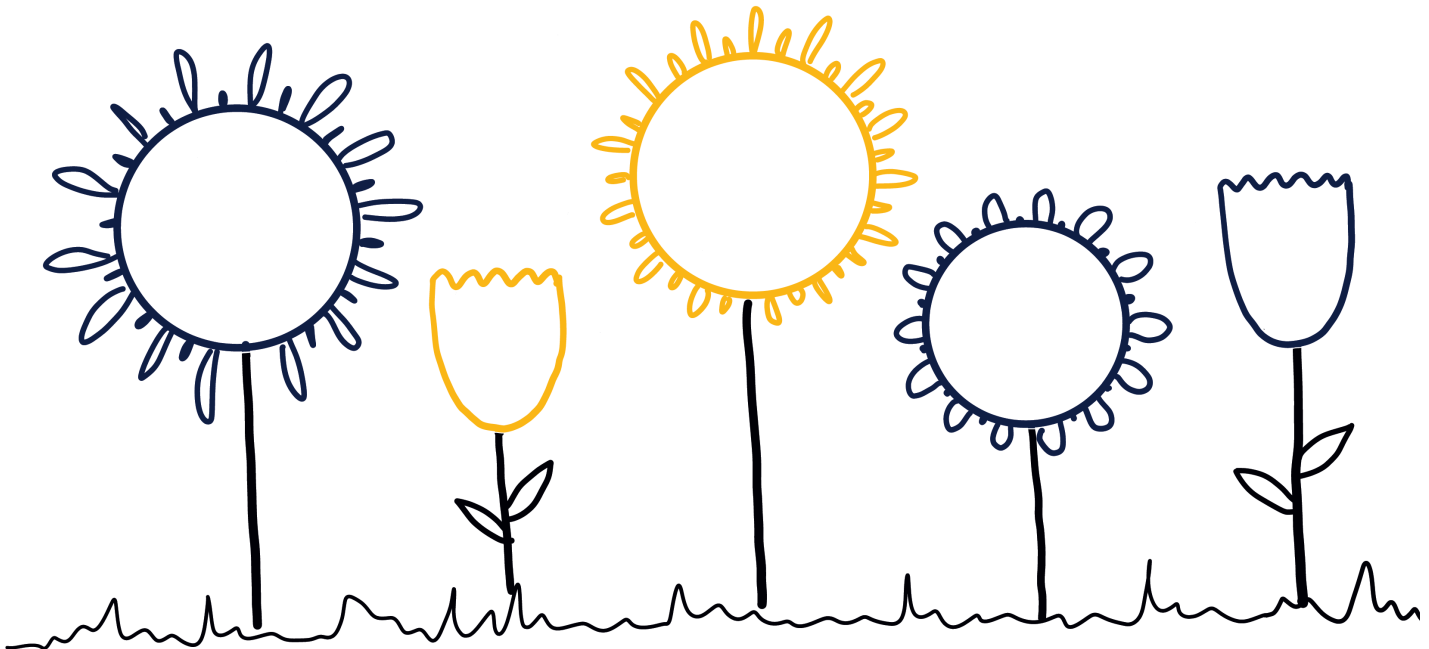
**Temperament** is a person's innate and permanent feature. Your upbringing and environment shape your temperament into a personality. Temperament traits include, for example, sociability, adaptability, tendency for a negative mood, and rhythm (quick/slow).



# My Strengths



Think about yourself through your strengths and write them down into the flowers below and onto this page.



# Wanted: An Expert...

What if you made a want ad about your role as your child's parent?  
What are the tasks that are involved? What would be the job title?

Make a want ad using words and pictures. You may use clippings from papers.





When you have finished the ad,  
consider applying for this job.  
**What types of things and skills are required  
to carry out the job?**



By completing this activity,  
you have hopefully gained an impression of your current life situation.  
Perhaps this has opened your eyes to see how multitalented you have become throughout the years.

# Parenting Journey

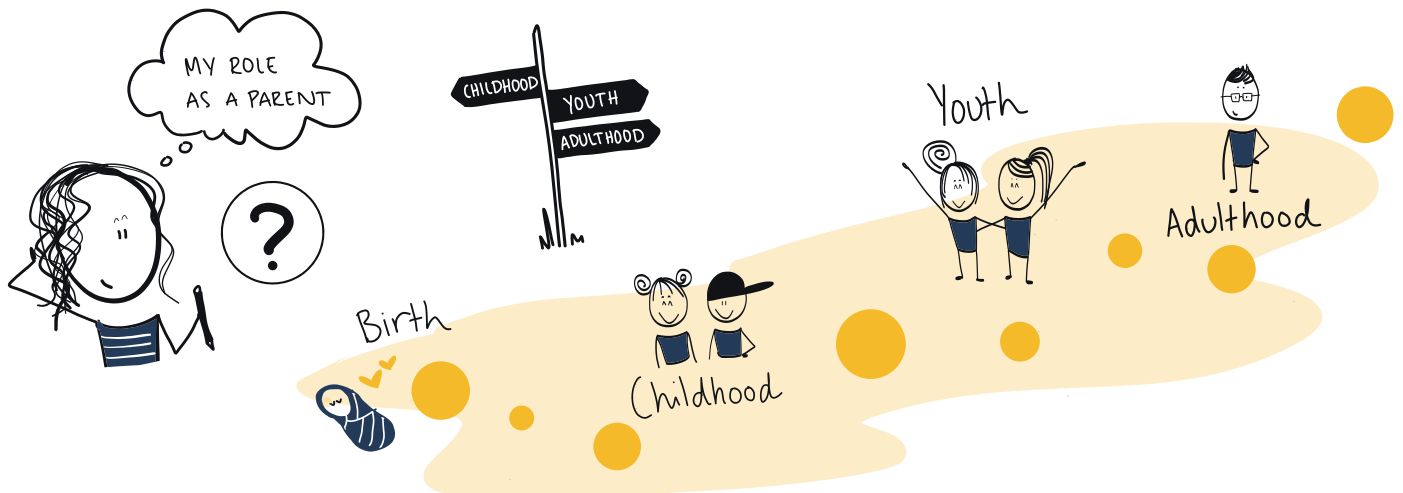
## Identity

When your life situation changes, your identity may also change quite a bit. If one relationship or position changes, it may critically change your entire self-image and affect your roles. Identity is formed throughout various phases in life. It adapts to life situations. To age, environment, and social situations, for instance. It is important to consider your own self-image at this moment in time and in the future – how do you see yourself when your child is living in his or her own home? What is your relationship with your child then? What is the role you see yourself in?

*"Master of Emotions"*

MARJATTA TAMMISTO

Parenthood changes when the child becomes independent and moves into his or her own home. What are your thoughts concerning your role in your child's life? What was your role when your child was born? In his or her childhood? Adolescence? Adulthood?



# Viewpoints into the Future

What good does change bring? Why is change necessary right now?


How does change affect you? You can think about this by first stopping to consider things that will be different when change occurs. What things will remain the same?

What can I  
grow / strengthen?



What will change?

What stays  
the same?



One father once said that it pays to specifically focus on the things that remain the same – more than on the things that change. Of course, the positive things that change brings with it will pull you forward.

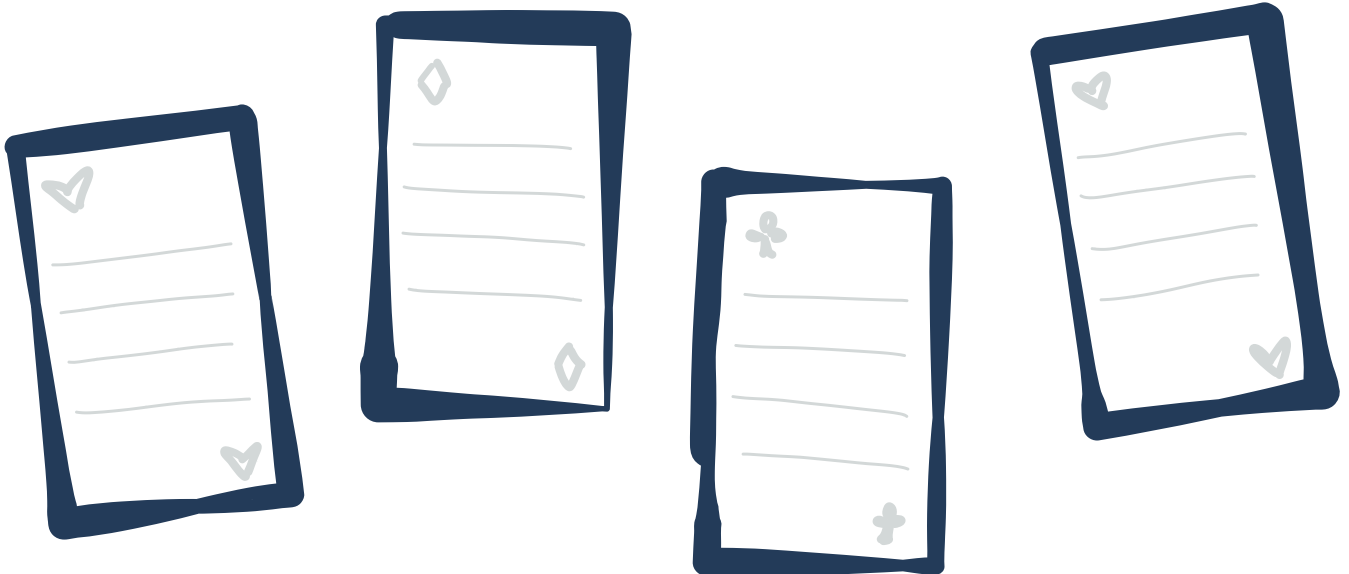
# Behind My Expectations

Perception is an attitude based on observation, experience or thinking. The word may, therefore, refer to a mental image, knowledge, mindset or impression. A person often views things through this attitude. This is why it is important to stop and consider your own perceptions and beliefs.



What about when we do not know what the future brings?  
We then have various expectations and maybe even beliefs as well as wishes and fears.  
Our earlier experiences and perhaps what we have heard from others will, of course, also colour our perceptions of what is to come.

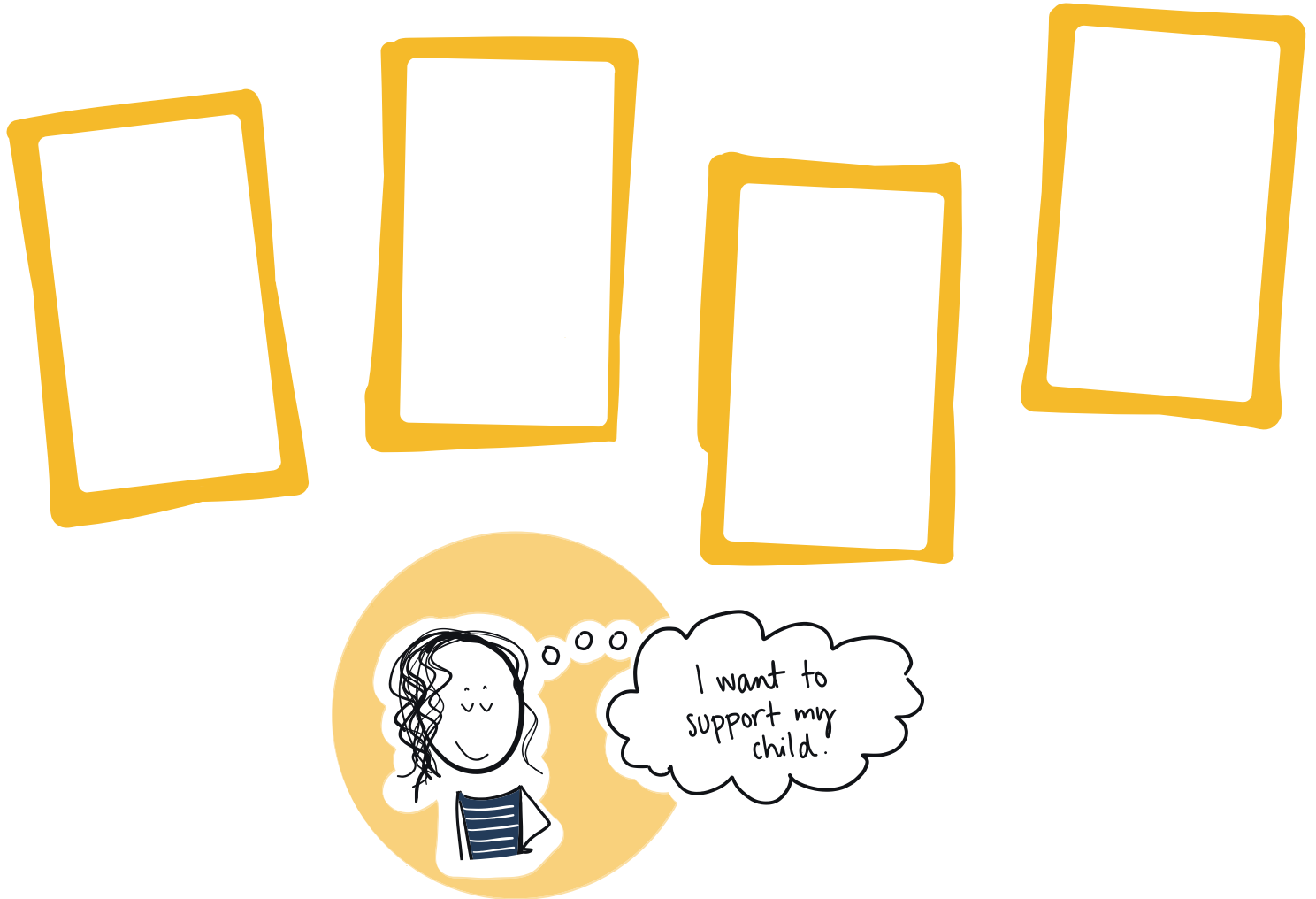
What are your perceptions and beliefs regarding the future?



# Thoughts that Lead Me Forward

You have various perceptions and beliefs regarding the future. Some of them will lead you forward, and some will hinder you.

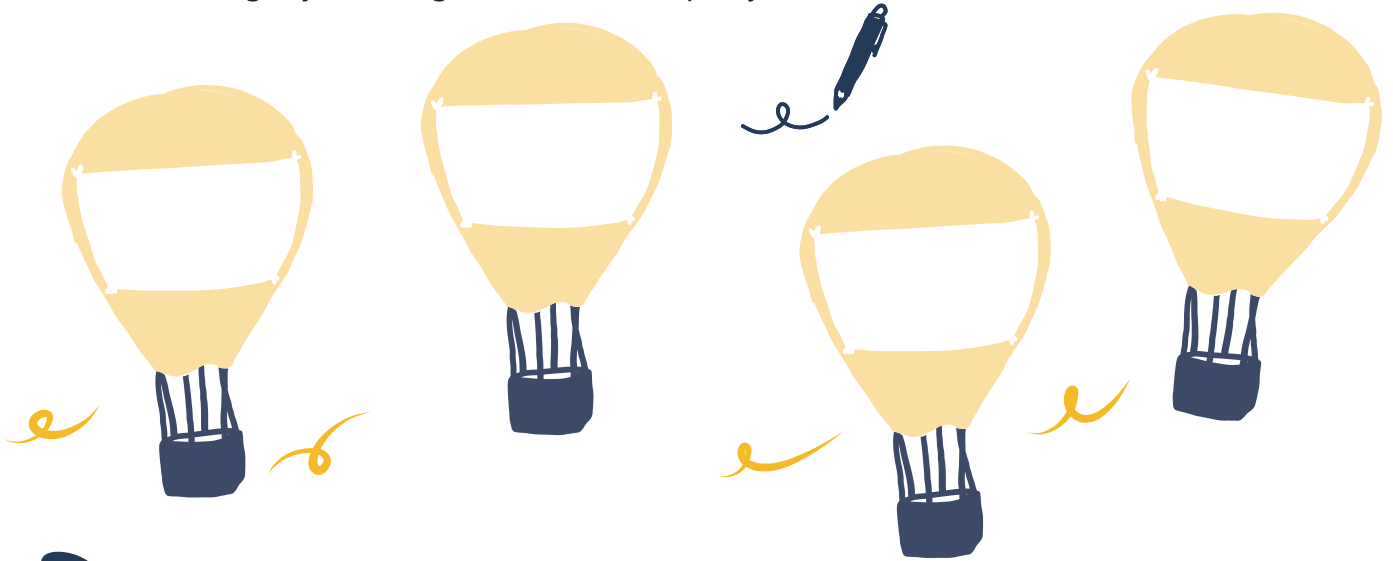
Write down on the cards thoughts that lead you forward.  
Which perceptions would you like to change? Could you find another point of view? What would change your perceptions?





# In a Hard Place

Your life has brought before you situations and changes, so called "hard places".  
What are the things that have carried you towards a new dawn?  
What has brought you strength? What has helped you?



## Attitude counts!

Instead of having gumption and gritting your teeth, we could talk about having faith and believing in success.

Find joy in life, the sadness will come without searching. Life cannot be controlled, but you can impact your attitude. Trusting yourself and others is important. Sharing experiences and having friends are a lifeline and a beanpole in many situations.

Especially when it comes to people who have been through the same thing!

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# People who Matter the Most

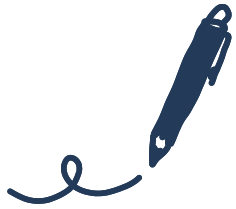
During seasons of change, other people's support is important.

Talking helps you structure your own thoughts.

Sharing things with friends makes you feel better.

Sharing thoughts and experiences opens new points of view.

Who are the people and friends you need in this phase of life?



The support group  
of my life





Find a person who has lived in a similar life situation as you – he or she has walked this road before you. For instance, his or her child has moved out of the childhood home and into a home of his or her own.

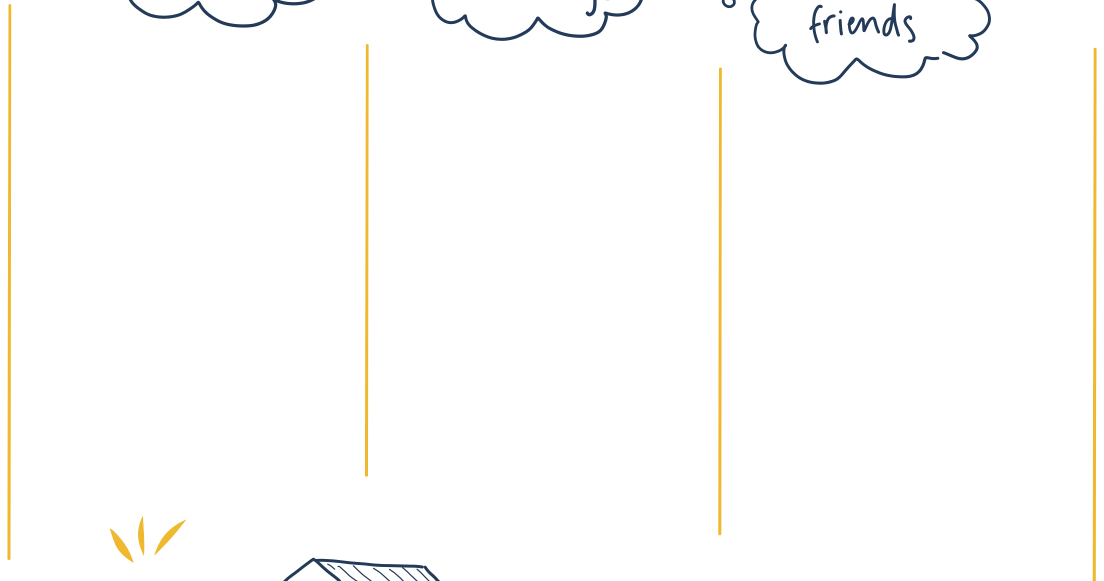
Arrange a meeting with this person and discuss how he or she has prepared for change. What has helped this person?

These matters may be new or familiar to you. They help to strengthen your thinking, you will notice you are not alone with your thoughts, and a joint discussion will guide you towards the future.

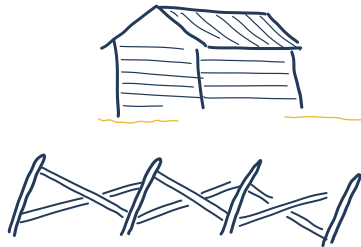
# A Field of Dreams

Think about your future, about the time when your child has left the nest.

What are the things you want to do alone, with your partner, with siblings, and with friends?

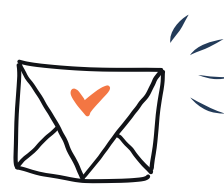


Field  
OF DREAMS



Adapted from Sirpa Lammi

# A Letter to Myself



Do you remember how much fun it was to get a letter from a friend?

**Now it is your turn to get a letter from yourself.**

Go and find a beautiful piece of paper and an envelope. Write a letter to yourself a year from now.

**First, go through this mental exercise:**

- Move on a year from this moment.
- How are you? What are you doing? What do you enjoy?
- What is your day-to-day life like? And your celebrations?
- What has the year offered?
- How have you accomplished all this?

**Start writing things, that came into mind.**

Put the letter in the envelope and write your name and address.

And now you will need a friend with good memory. : )

Give the letter to a friend and ask him or her to send it to you in a year.



# Cooperation is Key

You have encountered many workers in your life, that you have cooperated with. Look back on your life and try to remember good encounters and experiences with these people.

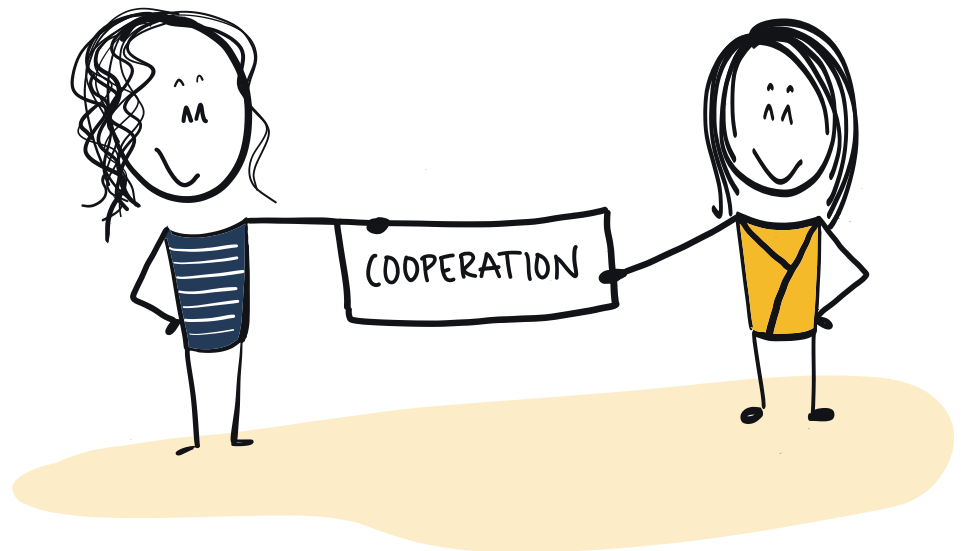


What made the cooperation so good?

Good cooperation is...

Cooperation is successful, when a worker...

Cooperation is successful, when I as a loved one...



# Trust

List things that come to mind when you hear the word "trust".

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Ask your friend to list things as well. When both of you have finished your lists, see what types of words you came up with. What do you notice?

## Trust

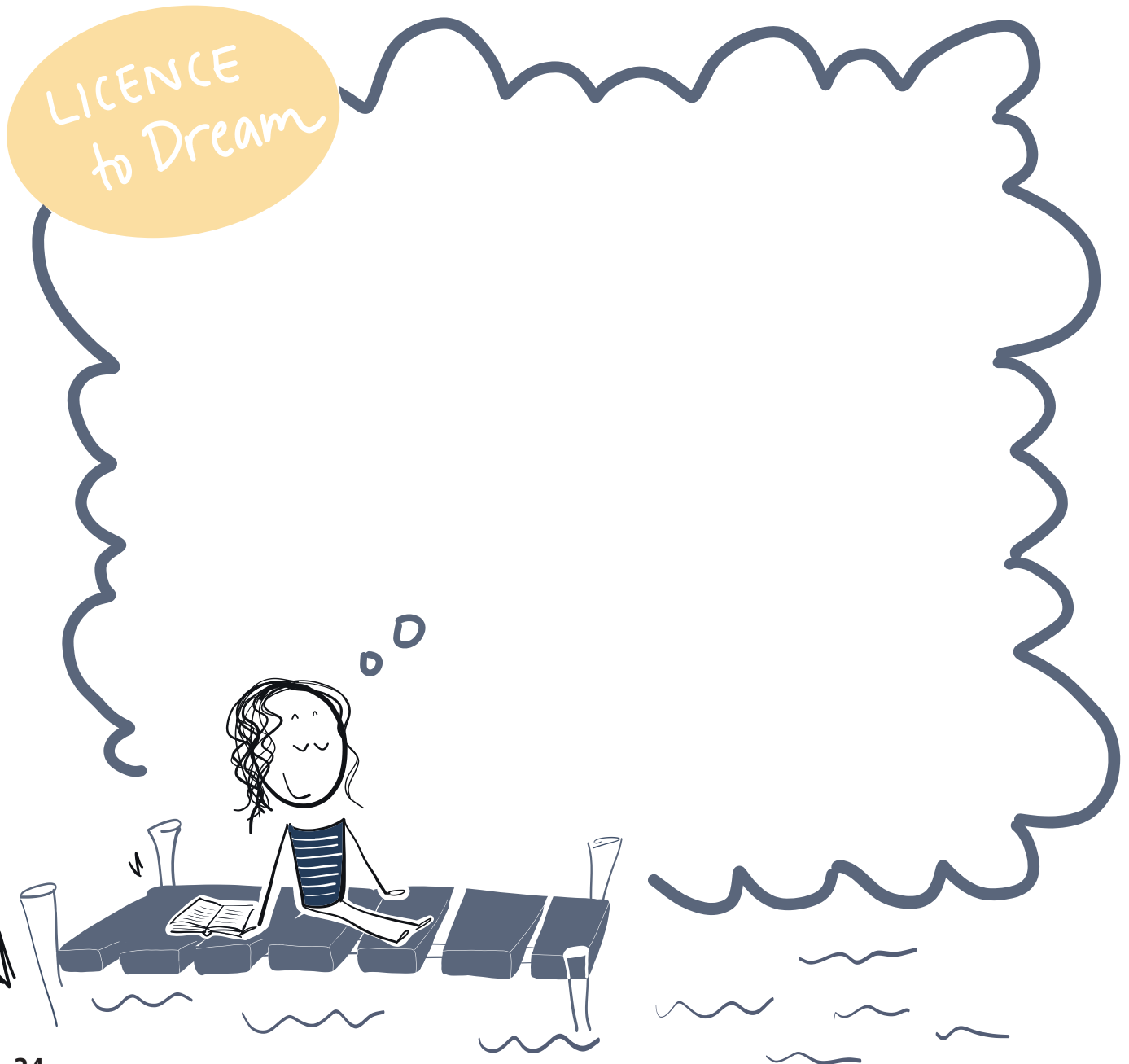
Trust is a starting point for cooperation and interaction, and vice versa, cooperation and interaction build trust. Trust is important for survival and for the wellbeing of your mind.

Trust is like a tower of building blocks. If you pull out a block, the tower comes tumbling down, is broken. Trust can be broken as well, but it can also be built anew, block by block. In order for that to work, openness, leniency towards yourself and others, deeds, and faith are needed.

"Master of Emotions"

MARJATTA TAMMISTO

# License to Dream





# Notes

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