

A 10-MINUTE HONEST SNAPSHOT

The Adult-Ready *Check-In*

Beyond the report card: where your kid actually stands, and where you can hand over the wheel.

Your home is already a launch pad. The question is whether they're ready.

If you've found yourself years in, still wondering if you're doing this right: you're not behind, and you're not alone. Most of us were never taught what this actually takes.

Whether you've been intentional about it or not, you're preparing your children to launch into the world. This isn't about pushing kids out early. Honestly, I think most kids leave home too early, before they're ready or equipped. This check-in is about making sure they're prepared whenever that time comes.

These capabilities aren't just for "out there." They're for life inside the home AND out. Your children are contributing members of the first business, which is family.

How they show up at home is how they'll show up in the world.

A note before you start.

This isn't a test. There's no perfect score, and a low number isn't a verdict on your kid, or on you. It's a map. We're not raising children. We're raising adults. This just shows you how that's going, and where to point your energy next.

ABOUT AZIZI

I'm a Brooklyn-born homeschool mom of two daughters, married 19 years to my Norwegian husband. Together we've raised our girls across six countries over 16 years of homeschooling. I founded Stone Soup Family Pop-Up Communities and Tiny Green Chef, and I help families build homeschools with intention through project-based learning.

THE MISSION

I help parents trade self-doubt for conviction so they can raise capable, self-directed adults, not rule-following children. Same DNA, both generations.

Practice makes progress.

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I almost missed the thing I was already doing right.

Early on, I was building a catalog of curriculums. Searching for the “right” one. The one that would finally feel like real homeschooling. Meanwhile my three- and five-year-olds were cooking with me, packing their own snack bags for the playground, tying their own shoes, holding full conversations, swimming like dolphins, traveling between countries and speaking two languages. People kept commenting on how put together they seemed, while kids twice their age still needed help getting dressed. And I kept buying more curriculums.

It hit me one afternoon: what I actually wanted, capable, self-directed adults, was never going to come from inside a curriculum. I was already doing the real work. By default. From a lifetime of being the oldest, running things. The shift wasn’t to do something new. It was to stop doing the real work by accident and start doing it on purpose.

I stopped trying to be a teacher and started parenting like a CEO. Chief Empowerment Officer.

This isn’t unschooling. We still used math books and grammar programs. They just took a back seat to the real work: real projects, real challenges, real responsibility. I went from teacher to mentor, guide, and CEO. Not the one running the lessons. The one running the whole household with intention. I came to call this Parent Like a CEO™.

By eight, both girls were reading at a college level. They never did “middle school” or 9th or 10th grade in the traditional sense. Last year they tested directly into an online 11th grade and passed with flying colors. Kamilla is 14 and technically in 11th. Kaja is 16 and four classes from a high school diploma, all while running businesses, traveling, and learning instruments. I never opened most of the curriculums I bought. I haven’t missed them.

I’m glad I had that reality check about our hierarchy of needs. Real capability comes first. Curriculum supports it. Never the other way around.

The world isn't asking for your kid's test scores.

87% of companies say **skill gaps** are their biggest barrier to growth. And here's what they're not saying: "we can't find people who scored well on standardized tests."

Your kid can write a five-paragraph essay on the French Revolution and not know how to call the dentist. That's not a curriculum gap. That's a category error.

Look at what employers, partners, and real life are actually asking for, and compare it to what most schooling reliably produces. The gap between these two columns is exactly what this check-in measures.

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS

- Problem-solving and critical thinking
- Clear, real communication
- Self-direction and initiative
- Adaptability and resilience
- Collaboration and empathy
- Creativity and execution

WHAT SCHOOLING PRODUCES

- Compliance and following instructions
- Memorization and test performance
- Fear of failure and perfectionism
- Waiting for permission to act
- Asking the teacher for the answer
- Doing the assignment, not the work

44% of workers' current skills will be **disrupted by 2028**. The right answers your kid memorizes today expire before they graduate. Capability is the only thing that holds its value.

*See the gap? **That's what this check-in measures.***

HOW TO USE THIS CHECK-IN

Two scores per item. The gap between them is the whole insight.

For each statement, fill in two numbers: one for **They Can** (your child's real capability) and one for **I Let Them** (how often you actually let them do it without stepping in). Base it on what happens consistently and independently, not when you remind, help, or walk them through it.

1

Not yet

2

Rarely

3

Sometimes, with support

4

Usually

5

Consistently, on their own

Column 1 • They Can

Their real capability. What they can actually do, on their own, start to finish, without you in the room.

Column 2 • I Let Them

Your willingness to hand over the wheel. How often you actually let them do it without rescuing or redoing.

Why we score both.

Most kids stay dependent not because they can't, but because we never let go. A child only believes they're capable when they see it reflected in the person raising them. If "I Let Them" stays low, "They Can" can't keep growing, no matter how much we teach. **The agency you model is the ceiling they inherit.** So this check-in scores both of you on purpose. The gap between your two columns is the most useful information in this whole document.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The capabilities hiding in that gap, figuring it out, speaking up, building something real, are exactly the human skills no AI can do for them. The gap isn't just holding your kid back. It's the one thing the future will pay them for.

Ready? Let's take an honest look.

Runs Their Own Day

CAN THEY RUN THEIR OWN LIFE?

Self-direction is the foundation of everything else. Without it, your child will always need someone telling them what to do, a teacher, a boss, you. **A self-directed person doesn't wait for permission. They see what needs doing and do it.** This isn't just about careers. It's about running a household, managing relationships, pursuing passions, and building a life that's actually theirs.

22%

Only 22% of business leaders say today's entry-level workers arrive "very or completely prepared" for the workforce. The number-one missing trait? Self-direction.

General Assembly Workforce Readiness Report, 2025

	THEY CAN	I LET THEM
Starts what needs doing without being told	☒ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Manages their own time and follows a routine	☒ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Finishes what they start, even when it gets boring	☒ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Sets their own goals, not just the ones handed to them	☒ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Keeps going when no one is checking	☒ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

They Can: ____ / 25

I Let Them: ____ / 25

REFLECTION

Where do you step in this week even when they could handle it? What might happen if you didn't?

Figures It Out

CAN THEY SOLVE REAL PROBLEMS?

Life is an endless series of problems with no answer key. **Schools teach there's one right answer and the teacher has it. Real life is messier than that.** Approaching a problem systematically, gathering information, considering options, and adapting when things don't work is the core skill of capable adults. Kids who learn to figure things out develop confidence that lasts a lifetime.

#1

Problem-solving is the most in-demand soft skill employers consistently say they can't find in entry-level hires.

GMAC Corporate Recruiters Survey, 2024

	THEY CAN	I LET THEM
Tackles a problem instead of freezing or waiting for the answer	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Finds the information they need on their own	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Comes up with more than one way to solve something	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Adjusts and tries again when the first attempt fails	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Asks sharp questions when they're stuck	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

They Can: ____ / 25

I Let Them: ____ / 25

REFLECTION

What's one problem you usually solve for them? What would they try if you didn't?

Speaks for Themselves

CAN THEY MAKE THEMSELVES UNDERSTOOD?

Every relationship, every opportunity, every conflict runs on communication. *This isn't about being articulate or extroverted.* It's about saying what they need, listening, navigating a hard conversation, and advocating for themselves with an adult who isn't you. A child who can't communicate their needs will struggle in friendship, partnership, and work. This skill is built at home first.

89%

of hiring managers say new employees lack the communication and interpersonal skills they need on day one.

LinkedIn Workplace Learning Report

	THEY CAN	I LET THEM
Speaks up clearly, even to adults who aren't family	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Gets their ideas across in writing	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Actually listens instead of waiting to talk	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Asks for what they need without you doing it for them	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Handles a hard or awkward conversation	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤

They Can: ____ / 25

I Let Them: ____ / 25

REFLECTION

Where do you still speak for them when they could speak for themselves?

Handles Hard Things

CAN THEY RECOVER AND KEEP GOING?

Life will knock your child down. Relationships will end. Jobs will be lost. Projects will fail. **The question isn't whether hard things will happen. It's whether your child can get back up and keep moving.** Resilience isn't about being tough. It's about processing difficulty and seeing failure as data, not identity. In school, wrong answers cost points. In real life, failure is the only path to growth.

Top 10

Resilience, flexibility, and agility now rank among the World Economic Forum's most in-demand skills for the workforce of 2030.

WEF Future of Jobs Report

	THEY CAN	I LET THEM
Recovers from a mistake instead of melting down	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Keeps going when something is hard or frustrating	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Takes feedback without falling apart or shutting down	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Tries things they might not be instantly good at	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Owens a mistake without blaming everyone else	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

They Can: ____ / 25

I Let Them: ____ / 25

REFLECTION

What hard thing have you been quietly protecting them from? What might they learn if you didn't?

Handles Real Life

CAN THEY FUNCTION DAY TO DAY?

You'd be surprised how many 22-year-olds can't cook a basic meal, manage a budget, or schedule their own doctor's appointment. *These aren't glamorous skills, but they're the foundation of independent living, and a quiet confidence machine.* A kid who can cook dinner, manage money, and navigate systems feels capable.

43%

of young adults in the U.S. struggle with personal finance basics, including budgeting and managing money.

Federal Reserve survey of young adults

	THEY CAN	I LET THEM
Handles money basics: spending, saving, what things cost	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)
Cooks a few real meals start to finish	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)
Takes care of their own space and belongings	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)
Makes basic decisions about their own health and body	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)
Navigates real-world systems: appointments, forms, lines	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

They Can: ____ / 25

I Let Them: ____ / 25

REFLECTION

Which real-life task do you do because it's faster than teaching it? Which one could you hand over this month?

CATEGORY 6

Works Well With People

CAN THEY COLLABORATE AND HOLD THEIR GROUND?

Almost everything worth doing involves other people. Careers need collaboration. Marriages need partnership. Communities need connection. **Relational skills mean collaborating toward shared goals, navigating conflict without torching the relationship, showing real empathy, and holding a boundary.** The family is the first training ground for every relationship that follows.

97% / 37%

97% of employers say soft skills like collaboration and empathy are essential. Only 37% say their entry-level workers actually have them.
National Association of Colleges and Employers

	THEY CAN	I LET THEM
Works on a team without taking over or checking out	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Works through a conflict instead of avoiding or exploding	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Notices and responds to what others are feeling	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Builds and keeps real relationships	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Holds a boundary and respects other people's	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

They Can: ____ / 25

I Let Them: ____ / 25

REFLECTION

Which conflict do you keep refereeing? How could you coach instead of solve, next time?

Builds Something Real

CAN THEY MAKE SOMETHING FROM NOTHING?

The one school never measures and the future rewards most. *This isn't about being "artistic."* It's the ability to generate ideas, execute on them, learn what's needed, and create value others can see. The heart of project-based learning: turn a real interest into a real thing, and the proof stacks into a portfolio that shows who they're becoming. Evidence, for them. Not a permission slip for a gatekeeper.

#1

Creative thinking is the fastest-growing skill employers say they need, ahead of analytical thinking and tech literacy.

World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Report

	THEY CAN	I LET THEM
Comes up with their own ideas without a prompt	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Starts something from nothing and sees it through	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Turns an interest into a real project with a real audience	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Makes things more than they just consume things	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Has built at least one thing they're genuinely proud of	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤

They Can: ____ / 25

I Let Them: ____ / 25

REFLECTION

What real interest of theirs have you not yet asked: "what if you made this real?" Could they build something from it?

YOUR SCORE

Two numbers. One gap. Your whole map.

	<i>They Can</i>	<i>I Let Them</i>
1. <i>Runs Their Own Day</i>	___ / 25	___ / 25
2. <i>Figures It Out</i>	___ / 25	___ / 25
3. <i>Speaks for Themselves</i>	___ / 25	___ / 25
4. <i>Handles Hard Things</i>	___ / 25	___ / 25
5. <i>Handles Real Life</i>	___ / 25	___ / 25
6. <i>Works Well With People</i>	___ / 25	___ / 25
7. <i>Builds Something Real</i>	___ / 25	___ / 25
GRAND TOTAL	___ / 175	___ / 175

140–175 • Adult-Ready. Strong, real capability. Deepen the strengths and start capturing them in a portfolio, proof of who they're becoming.

105–139 • On the Way. Solid base, real room to grow. Take your lowest categories and build them over the next few months.

70–104 • Building. Real gaps, real opportunity. Shift from covering curriculum to building capability. Pick 2–3 categories to focus on through real projects.

Below 70 • Time to Build. Big gaps to close. Ask honestly: is your current approach building these capacities, or just covering academic content?

Now find your biggest gap.

Look for the category where **They Can** is high but **I Let Them** is low. That's a child who's ready and waiting on you. Handing that one thing over this week is the single fastest win in this entire check-in. Where both scores are low, that's a real skill to build together.

YOUR ACTION PLAN

Don't try to fix everything at once. Pick one.

A low score isn't a verdict on your kid, and it isn't a verdict on you. It's a map. The hard part was never spotting the gaps. It's knowing what to build first, and what to let go of for now.

MY 3 LOWEST CATEGORIES (IN PRIORITY ORDER)

1

2

3

THE ONE CATEGORY I'M PRIORITIZING FOR THE NEXT 90 DAYS

WHY THIS ONE MATTERS MOST RIGHT NOW

THE BIGGEST "THEY CAN" / "I LET THEM" GAP I NOTICED (THE FASTEST WIN)

3 REAL EXPERIENCES OR PROJECTS I'LL USE TO BUILD THIS SKILL

Your home is the first business. These skills aren't for "one day." They're for how they show up in your family right now, and the adults they're becoming.

WHAT'S NEXT

You did the brave part. *Now go build.*

You came in with a quiet worry. You're leaving with a map, and one capability worth building first. A map isn't the climb, though. The gap you found doesn't close from reading about it. It closes when your kid builds something real, and you practice handing over the wheel.

Picture it: you stop being the engine that drags them along, and become the guide who lets them pull. Same kid. Different parent.

You don't have to figure out the project alone. That's the part I've already built a tool for.

THE NEXT STEP

SparkMate AI + the Spark Book

give it your kid's interest. get a real project back. start this week.

SparkMate is the AI built on my project-based method. Tell it what your kid is into and it hands you a real project, mapped to the exact capabilities this check-in just measured. Paired with the Spark Book, it's everything you need to pick the project and begin. No guessing. No waiting until you feel ready.

You've spent more than this on a curriculum you never finished. The real cost isn't the \$37. It's another year of being the engine while the window quietly narrows.

SparkMate \$37. Add the Spark Book for \$7.

Childhood doesn't have a pause button. The earlier they start, the more the proof stacks.

Try SparkMate now →

Up and running now.

The Spark Book is right there at checkout.

If the "I Let Them" column left you a little uncomfortable, that's the door. Building one real project is how you walk through it.

We're not raising children. We're raising adults. Practice makes progress. — Azizi

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