

Original thinkers

Imagine the possibilities

➤ SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

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IN THE past weeks I have been reading about Adam Grant and his ideas about being a better parent.

Adam Grant is a 34-year-old social science writer, New York Times writer and professor in organisational psychology and workplace dynamics, and his recent best-selling book is *Originals: How non-conformists move the world*.

Adam is interested in some of the concepts I care about – how we can make a meaningful difference, how we find connection and build relationships, and the importance of children's creativity.

Adam's better parenting lens puts attention on how we help our children be more ethical and more successful in ways that improve the world for everyone.

Key to that success he believes is for our children "to be original".

What a contrast this focus on "originality" is to Australia's current obsession with a standard "one size fits all" National Curriculum fixated on "imparting content" rather than "sparking creative thinking".

Adam uses research to show that we need to give our children opportunity to dream of what might be possible and to exercise their creativity.

Adam believes leveraging a child's favourite fictional character as a role model can support children's imagination and innovation.

Because fiction can spark the imagination, Adam recommends we use children's favourite characters to support their dreaming of ideas and solutions.

So next time your child is faced with a challenge, he recommends you ask them "what would Harry Potter or Hermione Granger do?"

Another interesting research finding about children who score as highly creative is that they have a strong moral compass and gener-



BIG IDEAS: Adam Grant's research highlights the importance of allowing children's natural curiosity to flourish.

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➤ SPARKING CREATIVITY

Start connecting to your child's original ideas. Ask your child some of these questions:

"How would you like to make the world a better place?"

"How would you define excellence or being an excellent person?"

"If we could only have one rule, what do you think would be the most important rule of all time?"

"Who are your favourite characters and role models and what do you think they might do to make the world a better place?"

"What do you love and enjoy doing more than anything else in the world?"

ally come from households with less than one rule.

They come from families where values are emphasised over rules and where they are engaged in conversations about right and wrong and encouraged to think about the consequences of actions on other people.

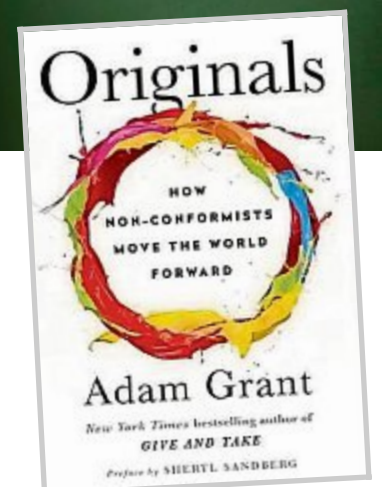
What this means is that children are engaged in thinking about why certain values and behaviours are important and so they begin to work out how they want to express those values. They generate rules

and ways of behaving for themselves.

Adam also highlights the importance of recognising our children as people, and not just behaviours.

Putting this into action sounds like "you are a really thoughtful person" rather than "that was thoughtful"; "you are a great helper" rather than "you helped".

Of particular interest to parents is a study where children aged three to six were almost 30% more likely to clean up their toys when they were asked to be helpers,



instead of to help. Worth remembering for those of us who have creative children with messy bedrooms!

The key message from Adam's research is that children are born with creativity, originality and spark. It is already there. Children have a natural capacity to create and explore and be curious.

Our job as parents and teachers is to make sure we don't extinguish this. Our job is to think about ways to nurture our children's originality and love of learning, and to support their creativity and spark.

Recognising and responding to what our children are interested in, enthusiastic and passionate about, is a great starting place.