

insights



A taste of falafel and independence

by Lenore Skenazy

School is in full swing in the United States, which means that some lucky students are about to undergo an enormous, transformative experience. It does not involve a test. At least not on paper.

It involves doing a Let Grow project – a radical new homework assignment where the kids’ task is to go home and do one thing on their own that they haven’t done yet. These activities that might sound simple or scary, depending on how much local news you watch: Walk the dog. Make dinner. Run an errand.

Here’s what some 6th graders in my city – New York — discovered:

“Going home by myself gave me many different feelings. I found it fun, because I was finally able to take the bus all by myself! Also, when I got off, I walked to my building — 8 blocks in total. My fear of going home alone disappeared. I am so happy I forced myself (and I also forced my parents) to go home alone. Now I am allowed to do it every day!”

See? That was a transformative afternoon for that girl. Here’s a boy whose mother allowed him to get a snack on his own:

“After the eternity of waiting, the school day is over. I think to myself: ‘Where to start? So many things to see!’ I figure that if I was going to be a new and independent me, I should try new things. So, I go to the falafel place and order falafel with sour cream and salad. I have never eaten sour cream before. I feel nervous and I hate that. It is all because my parents always keep a really close eye on me. I’m so accustomed to them watching me that not being watched is abnormal. The pita sandwich finally comes. I have one bite of the sloppy mess and think, ‘OH. MY. GOSH. FANTAAAAABULOUS!!’ It was one of the best meals I ever had. I eat until I notice my plate is empty.”

And now from a boy who’s exaggerating his fears...I hope:

“Being 11, I feel more independent than ever. I have decided to risk my life and make an egg sandwich, all by myself, and eat it too. This task is harder than it may seem. I am going to use a flame to cook eggs, all independently.... I transfer the eggs to the pan. I am a little nervous now, since I can easily touch the flame right then and there.”

He manages to make the eggs, as well as the toast, even though, he writes, “in the process I could easily burn myself.” He survives and eats the sandwich: “Yum.”

Last story, this one from a girl:

“Everyone says that when you’re on an adventure, you’ll travel far. I don’t believe this to be true. In fact, today my

adventure led me to a neighbourhood cafe, Cosi. I have been begging my parents to let me go somewhere on my own. Today, they finally caved. They sent me off, cell phone in hand, and told me to have fun. I felt as if I was a bird who had broken free of her cage.”

Naturally, she has to call her parents the second she arrives safely. But, it’s a start.

All these adventures are. Maybe they seem small, even silly, but in a culture that has created mountains of fear around every childhood experience, these kids have started their climb. Pretty soon, they’ll be ready to fly.

You can view videos and info on the [Let Grow Project](#). There’s a letter to send to parents, an instruction sheet for teachers, a list of activity ideas for the kids, and an optional worksheet. All Let Grow’s materials are downloadable and free of charge.

[You can attend our upcoming webinar, Brave parenting in a culture riddled with worry, at no cost!](#)

About the webinar

This webinar is designed to help parents understand where their anxiety about their kids comes from, and why they don’t let their kids do half the stuff they did growing up.

Hear from Lenore Skenazy, President of Let Grow, a non-profit promoting childhood independence and resilience, and founder of the Free-Range Kids movement. Lenore will talk about ways to make it easy and normal to start loosening the reins so both generations get more freedom.

When

Wednesday 27 November 2019 8:00pm AEDT.

Price

This webinar is \$37 per person to attend, and is free of charge to families at schools with a Parenting Ideas membership.

How parents can redeem the voucher

1. Click this link: <https://www.parentingideas.com.au/parent-resources/parent-webinars/webinar-brave-parenting-in-a-culture-riddled-with-worry>
2. Click ‘Add to cart’
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Lenore Skenazy

Lenore Skenazy is president of the new non-profit Let Grow, and founder of the Free-Range Kids movement. After her column Why I Let My 9-Year-Old Ride the Subway Alone landed her on every talk show from The Today Show to Dr. Phil, Skenazy founded the book and blog Free-Range Kids to say that kids are not in constant danger. Give them more freedom and everyone wins. Lenore lectures internationally and has been profiled everywhere from The New York Times to The Daily Show. She has written for everyone from The Wall Street Journal to Mad Magazine. Contact details: <https://letgrow.org/>