



Reading Group Guide

Introduction

In Michaelleen Doucleff's *Dopamine Kids*—the much-anticipated follow-up to the wildly successful *Hunt, Gather Parent*—Douclevff shares a wealth of knowledge and tools to help parents achieve results where they need them most: in reclaiming the brains of their anxious children from the power of screens and processed foods. In the book, Doucleff learns to improve her own parenting as she writes, sharing what works (and what doesn't) with her daughter, Rosy, and backing up her findings with cutting-edge research. In an age when parents feel at a loss for how to help their children (and big industries cause more harm than good), Doucleff's writing is a welcome and remarkably hopeful companion.



Discussion Questions

1. Toward the beginning, Doucleff describes an inability to stay content for more than a few fleeting moments. She describes a “low, constant hum of anxiety” and a need, always, for the next thing (**page 2**). Does this sound familiar? Did your experience or your kids’ experience with these feelings help motivate you to read *Dopamine Kids*?
2. Were you at all shocked by the screen time statistics shared on **page 4**? Has it been easy to forget how sudden and powerful technological changes have been, especially in how our children experience them?
3. How was Kent Berridge able to disprove Jim Olds’s long-held theory about dopamine and pleasure in the brain? What happened when Berridge blocked dopamine in the rats’ brains versus when he dramatically increased their dopamine levels?
4. Doucleff posits that dopamine is more connected to motivation than pleasure. Reflect on how and where you and your kids seek out dopamine—do you feel your behaviors align with Doucleff’s findings?
5. How did you feel after filling in your Family Dream List? Did anything surprise you?
6. Why does Kelly Lambert believe depression has increased in our society? How does this support the case for raising Beaver or Bowerbird children?
7. What is dopamine’s critical role in our brains?
8. What is eudaimonia? How might you help fulfill this need in your children?



Discussion Questions

9. Was **chapter 4** difficult for you to read? In what ways might shining a light on this research actually give you (and your family) hope?
10. How do the 3Ps weaken our desire for shallow activities and increase our desire for high-value activities? What are examples of favorite high-value activities in your family? What about favorite high-value activities when you were a kid that you might share now with your children?
11. How are phone noise and food noise similar? Do you experience one more intensely than the other?
12. Look back at the results of the self-control survey in the “What’s Better than Willpower?” chapter (**pages 237–42**). Did you expect different results? What did it reveal about willpower?
13. As your kids have become more used to engaging with technology, in what specific ways have their conversational skills and habits changed?
14. Throughout the book, Doucleff presents many studies and tips for changing your parenting. At the end of the book, however, she encourages the reader to “throw out the idea of perfection.” What are some ways you can challenge your perfectionism in parenting?

Activities

1. Get your kids together before or after your book club and plan one beaver and one bowerbird activity for each child to try. Are you surprised by who is more drawn to which activity? Discuss.
2. Try the bean/chia seed experiment on **page 54**. Keep a daily log and note what changes, or doesn't change, in your child's attitude toward food. Discuss and compare your experiences as a group.
3. Start a group recipe collection with your favorite nutritious and child-approved recipes!

