



Human Raised

Discussion Guide

SETTING THE STAGE

1. Before picking up this book, how much had you thought about AI in the context of your family or your children's lives? Were you curious, worried, dismissive, or somewhere in between? Had you already started making any decisions — intentional or not — about how AI fits into your home?
2. The introduction opens with the idea that the "biggest missing piece" in all of artificial intelligence is that "none of our machines care" — and that you, as a parent, have exactly what the machines are missing. How did that land for you? Did it feel reassuring, surprising, or something else entirely? Did it change the way you think about your role as a parent in the age of AI — or did it raise questions of its own?

PARENTING IN A CHANGING WORLD

3. Early in the book, the author describes Maya and Leo tracking their son Noah's vocabulary milestones, sleep patterns, and emotional check-ins on a spreadsheet. Does this feel familiar? How do you feel about the rise of "intensive parenting," and do you see it as a rational response to today's pressures or something more troubling?
4. The author argues that each generation of parents has rationally prepared their children for the future they believed was coming — from teaching children which berries were poisonous to tracking cognitive milestones today. Do you agree that your own parenting instincts are shaped by the specific fears and opportunities of this moment in history? What are those fears for you?
5. The author describes a pervasive feeling among parents of "not doing enough." Where does that feeling come from for you? Has reading this book changed how you think about it?

HOW THE BRAIN IS BUILT

6. During the first three years of life, a child's brain forms over one million new neural connections every second — and the quality of back-and-forth human conversation directly shapes those connections. Did anything about the neuroscience in this book genuinely surprise you? What will you do differently, if anything, as a result?
7. Patricia Kuhl's research showed that babies learn language from live human interaction but not from screens showing the same content. What does this tell us about what children actually need — and how does it make you think about the role of AI tools and devices in your child's daily life?

8. The book explains that today's AI language models require roughly 100,000 times more data than a child needs to learn a language. Children build meaning through emotionally rich, embodied exchanges; AI learns by crunching patterns. What does this asymmetry reveal about the difference between human intelligence and machine intelligence?

THE HOPE FRAMEWORK

9. The four HOPE principles are: Human connection is irreplaceable, Own the imperfections, Protect the early years, and Enhance — don't replace. Which of these four feels most urgent or most difficult in your own life? Is there one you find yourself resisting?
10. The book argues that "good enough" parenting — messy, imperfect, full of small misunderstandings and repairs — actually builds more resilience than frictionless AI responsiveness ever could. Does this idea feel liberating or hard to accept? How does it sit alongside the pressure to optimize every moment of your child's development?

ATTACHMENT AND THE SOCIAL GATE

11. The "Goldilocks Zone" of attachment describes a sweet spot between cold, inconsistent caregiving and perfectly patient AI responses. The book suggests that perfect responsiveness may actually harm development by teaching children that relationships should never require repair. Does this change how you think about AI companions or "always-on" parenting tools?
12. The author describes how our "social gate" — the brain's system for learning through human connection — evolved before AI existed, and cannot distinguish a genuine relationship from a simulated one. Children are especially susceptible to anthropomorphizing AI. Does this concern you? Have you seen it play out with a child you know?
13. The book shares both hopeful and cautionary examples of therapeutic robots — helping children with autism practice social skills; being misused by disengaged parents handing off childcare to a device. What distinguishes a helpful use of AI from a harmful one in the lives of children?

EVALUATING AI TOOLS AND TOYS

14. The DETECT method (Design, Ethics, Trouble, Evidence, Confidentiality, Teachings) gives parents a framework for evaluating any AI product. When the author investigated a popular AI-powered stuffed animal, she found opaque data practices, unsubstantiated educational claims, and third-party voice data storage. Have you ever investigated a children's product this carefully? What would you want to know?

15. The author recommends against interactive AI toys for children under six and suggests the best toys rely on the child to do most of the play, i.e., those that are "ninety percent child and ten percent toy." Do you agree? Where do you draw the line between enriching technology and technology that does the imaginative work for the child?

AI AS A PARENTING AID

16. The book draws an analogy to ambient AI in medical settings, where AI handling documentation has allowed physicians to be fully present with patients again — and reduced burnout dramatically. Could the same logic apply to parenting? What tasks could AI take off your plate in a way that actually increased your presence and connection with your children?
17. The author uses the Fair Play card system to explore which parts of household labor AI can legitimately absorb and which must remain human. She argues that "noticing" — seeing what your family needs — is irreducibly human, while planning and execution can often be delegated. Do you agree with where she draws that line?

EQUITY AND SYSTEMIC CHANGE

18. The book introduces Michelle, a child whose cochlear implant opened the door to sound but whose development was still limited by poverty, a lack of systemic support, and a mother left without the resources she needed. The author warns that AI could deepen inequality — making human attention a luxury — or help close the gap. Which direction do you think it's currently heading?
19. The author writes that we cannot keep asking individual parents to overcome structural failures through sheer force of will. What structural changes — in policy, workplace design, or community — would actually make it possible for more parents to be present? And what role, if any, should AI play in creating those conditions?

LOOKING FORWARD

20. The title *Human Raised* is described both as a label and a call to action. What does it mean to you? And what is one concrete thing you want to do differently — in your home, your community, or your advocacy — as a result of reading this book?

