

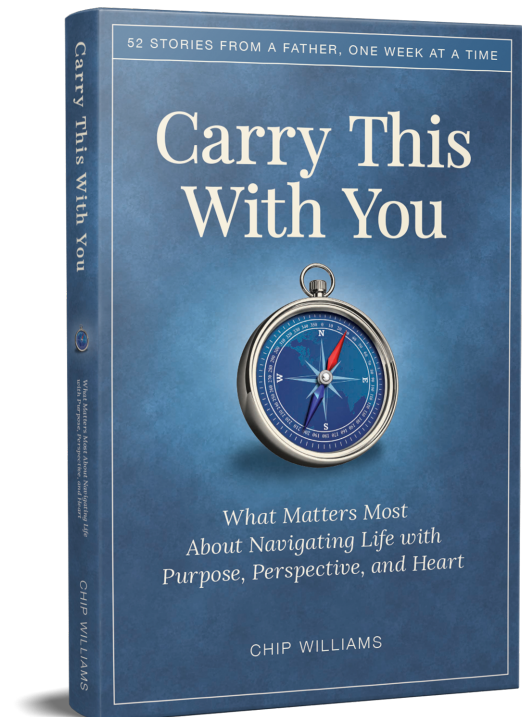
EDUCATOR'S DISCUSSION GUIDE

Carry This With You

What Matters Most About Navigating Life with Purpose, Perspective, and Heart

By Chip Williams

Carry This With You is 52 short stories about confidence, courage, resilience, kindness, and purpose. This guide makes every one of them ready to use in classrooms, advisory, clubs, and counseling.



Sample Edition: Three Stories

What This Guide Gives You

Everything you need to turn a short story about confidence, courage, or character into a real conversation with students.

1

No prep required

Every story page in this guide opens with a two-sentence summary, so you can lead the conversation even if you haven't read the story yet.

2

Fits the time you have

Each story works as a 10-minute check-in or a 30-minute discussion.

3

The same discussion format for every story

Every story page in this guide follows the same structure, from warm-up question to journal prompt. Students learn the rhythm and start talking sooner.

4

Page numbers throughout

Every story in this guide lists its page number in the book, so the whole group can turn there together.

5

Works wherever you meet students

Classrooms, advisory, counseling groups, Honor Society, clubs, and sports teams.

Free for your school

A digital copy of the complete guide, covering all 52 stories, comes with every school order.

Where These Stories Began

Carry This With You began as weekly messages I wrote for my sons, CJ and Hunter, as they stood on the edge of new chapters. CJ was graduating college. Hunter was graduating high school.

Every Monday, I sent them something small but meaningful to carry into the week ahead: a short story, a quote, or a simple reflection. Nothing meant to overwhelm or instruct. Just a pause. A moment to slow down, reflect, and see things a little more clearly.

Over time, the messages grew beyond my sons. Their friends shared them. Parents passed them along. Teachers shared them with their students.

The book gathers 52 of those stories, one for each week of the year. *Carry This With You* isn't a manual or a lecture. It's a compass, written for a world full of noise, notifications, and constant distraction. A little at a time. Just enough to pause, absorb, and apply.

That's why the book and this guide work so well together. Students lean into stories. A story lets them see themselves in someone else's moment and find their own meaning in it.

Enjoy the day,

Chip Williams

The Book's Journey: Belief to Legacy

The book's five sections follow one journey, from what you believe about yourself to what you leave behind.

1 Belief

Confidence, Purpose, and Self-Discovery

Believing you belong, before you take the first step.

OPENS ON PAGE 7

2 Action

Effort, Growth, and Momentum

Turning belief into motion, one imperfect step at a time.

OPENS ON PAGE 31

3 Resilience

Weathering Change and Finding Strength

Learning to bend without breaking.

OPENS ON PAGE 53

4 Connection

Kindness, Gratitude, and the Power of Others

Remembering that no one carries everything alone.

OPENS ON PAGE 85

5 Legacy

Purpose, Meaning, and Perspective

Asking what you're building that will last.

OPENS ON PAGE 111

Believe. Act. Endure. Connect. Leave something that lasts.

Follow the path, or start anywhere.

There's no required order for reading or teaching the stories. Take students through the sections across a semester, or open to the story that fits this week. Both work.

Two Ways In

By section

Follow the book's five sections, **Belief**, **Action**, **Resilience**, **Connection**, and **Legacy**, in order across a semester. Or stay with one section, like Resilience during a hard stretch of the year.

By theme

The appendix on page 139, *Finding What You Need, When You Need It*, groups all 52 stories under more than 35 themes, from Confidence and Fear to Grief, Friendship, and Transition. It's the most useful tool in the book for counselors and advisors.

USING THE THEME APPROACH: A FEW EXAMPLES

WHEN THE TOPIC IS...	THEME IN THE BOOK	STORIES
A big change or new chapter	Transition	<i>One Day. Or Day One.</i> (p. 35) <i>Leave the Harbor</i> (p. 39)
Fear or anxiety	Fear	<i>The Bravest Person in the Room</i> (p. 77) <i>Courage Is a Decision</i> (p. 41)
Self-doubt	Confidence	<i>Whose Voice Are You Listening To?</i> (p. 9) <i>Own Your Stage</i> (p. 27)
Pressure to be perfect	Mindset	<i>Make More Pots</i> (p. 43)
A setback or hard season	Hard Seasons	<i>The Donkey and the Dirt</i> (p. 71) <i>Adjust Your Sails</i> (p. 75)
Loss	Grief	<i>Let It Rain</i> (p. 83) <i>400 People</i> (p. 91)
Friendship	Friendship	<i>Give It Voice</i> (p. 89) <i>Get on the Right Bus</i> (p. 101)
Leadership	Leadership & Mentorship	<i>Own Your Stage</i> (p. 27) <i>Lead, Lift, Soar</i> (p. 99)

For a one-on-one conversation, hand the student the book open to the story. Let them read it, then talk.

Three Ways to Use It

Every story page in this guide has the same parts. Mix and match them to fit your time.

The story in brief · a quick summary

Warm-up question · to ask before reading

Discussion questions · three, to ask after reading

Weekly challenge · a small action to try

Journal prompt · for private writing

The line to remember · the story's closing line from the book

10

MINUTES

The check-in

Advisory, homeroom

Read the story aloud or have a student read it. Ask one of the *Discussion questions*. Close with *The line to remember*.

30

MINUTES

The discussion

Classroom discussion, senior seminar, counseling groups

Open with the *Warm-up question*. Students read the story, then work through the three *Discussion questions* in order. Finish with the *Journal prompt*.

1

STORY A MEETING

The club or team meeting

Honor Society, student council, team captains

One story per meeting, led by a student officer. Make the *Weekly challenge* the group's goal, and check in on it at the next meeting.

A Book Students Keep

Use the book across a semester, one story a week with a journal alongside, and students build something of their own: their reflections, their conversations, their answers.

This book is meant to be kept. It goes home with students, then on to college, first jobs, and the hard weeks no one sees coming. Years from now, a student may open it again and find that a story first read in your room means something new. That's the idea behind the title: a gift they carry with them.

Leading the Conversation

Share if it feels right.

Consider sharing a moment of your own. Students often open up after the adult in the room does. If you'd rather not, let the story speak for itself.

Let silence work.

Count to ten before you rephrase a question. The quiet is where students decide to talk.

There are no right answers.

Every question asks what a student thinks, not what the story says.

Keep writing private.

The *Journal prompt* can stay in a journal. Sharing is an invitation, never a requirement.

Watch for what's underneath.

Some stories touch anxiety, illness, or loss, and a student may be living it. Those pages carry *A note for leaders*. When a student seems to be carrying more than they say, follow up privately or bring in your counseling team.

SAMPLE STORY PAGES

Example Stories

Three stories, one from each of the book's first three sections.
The complete guide covers all 52 stories across all five sections.



Blue sections include a sample story in this edition.

SECTION I

Belief

Confidence, Purpose, and Self-Discovery

Every journey begins with the quiet conviction that you're capable of taking it. These ten stories help students look inward, trust their instincts, and find the strength that's already there.

STORIES IN THIS SECTION · PAGE

Whose Voice Are You Listening To?	9
Sacred Ground	13
Not Feasible	15
The Thinnest Rope	17
Don't Wait for the Fire	19
Life Is Your Canvas	21
The One You Feed	23
What Goes in First	25
Own Your Stage	27
Just Today	29

Whose Voice Are You Listening To?

THE STORY IN BRIEF · For you, before class

Two years into his first real job, Chip is passed over for a promotion he'd worked toward, and he lets the company's decision become his opinion of himself. The turn comes when he chooses to set that opinion down and keep showing up.

THE LINE TO REMEMBER · The story's closing line, from the book

"Your worth isn't given — it's remembered."

WARM-UP QUESTION · Ask students before reading

Think of a time someone else's opinion of you stuck around longer than it should have.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS · Ask after reading, in order

- 1** WHAT HAPPENED
How did being passed over change the way Chip saw himself?
- 2** WHAT IT MEANS
The story quotes Eleanor Roosevelt: "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." What does giving that consent look like in real life?
- 3** WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU
The story says your worth isn't measured by likes, grades, paychecks, or titles. Which of those do you measure yourself by most?

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

For students to try this week

When doubt shows up, stop and ask the story's question: Whose voice am I listening to right now?

JOURNAL PROMPT

For students to write on their own

Describe yourself the way someone who knows your whole story would.

PAIRS WELL WITH Own Your Stage (p. 27) · The Thinnest Rope (p. 17)

SECTION II

Action

Effort, Growth, and Momentum

Belief turns into movement, and movement turns into growth. These ten stories are about taking small, imperfect steps forward, and letting beginning build confidence instead of waiting for it.

STORIES IN THIS SECTION · PAGE	
Be the Architect	33
One Day. Or Day One.	35
One More Degree	37
Leave the Harbor	39
Courage Is a Decision	41
Make More Pots	43
The Power of 1%	45
86,400	47
The Daily Acts of Trivia	49
Sharpen First	51

Make More Pots

THE STORY IN BRIEF · For you, before class

A pottery professor grades half his class on quantity and half on making one perfect pot, and the quantity group ends up making the best work. Early in his career, Chip keeps second-guessing his first new business presentation, trying to make it perfect. Finally, he decides to give it as it is. The prospect becomes a client for more than 25 years.

THE LINE TO REMEMBER · The story's closing line, from the book

"Mastery is built one imperfect attempt at a time."

WARM-UP QUESTION · Ask students before reading

What's something you got better at just by doing it again and again?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS · Ask after reading, in order

1

WHAT HAPPENED

Why did the students graded on quantity end up making the most beautiful pots?

2

WHAT IT MEANS

Chip calls his early perfectionism "paralysis by analysis." How can chasing perfect keep us from getting better?

3

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

Where in your life, whether school, sports, art, or applications, are you waiting to get it right before you start?

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

For students to try this week

Finish the thing you've been refining too long. Send the email. Try the idea. Let the next one be better.

JOURNAL PROMPT

For students to write on their own

Write about a first try that didn't go well. What did it teach you that the next try needed?

PAIRS WELL WITH One Day. Or Day One. (p. 35) · The Power of 1% (p. 45)

SECTION III

Resilience

Weathering Change and Finding Strength

Strength isn't about never falling. It's about learning how to rise. These eleven stories explore loss, change, and uncertainty, and the quiet strength that grows in hard seasons.

STORIES IN THIS SECTION · PAGE

Stained Glass	55
The Lighthouse	57
The Bamboo Tree	61
The Point That Matters Most	63
The Cracked Pot	65
Be the Bean	67
The Donkey and the Dirt	71
Adjust Your Sails	75
The Bravest Person in the Room	77
The Shift	81
Let It Rain	83

The Bravest Person in the Room

THE STORY IN BRIEF · For you, before class

Chip is claustrophobic and needs a 65-minute MRI, lying still inside a narrow tube with the machine an inch and a half from his face. The day before, his five-year-old son CJ, terrified at a new swim lesson, stands his ground in the water and refuses to quit. That picture carries Chip through all 65 minutes.

THE LINE TO REMEMBER · The story's closing line, from the book

"You don't have to feel brave to be brave."

WARM-UP QUESTION · Ask students before reading

What's something small that scares you more than it probably should?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS · Ask after reading, in order

1

WHAT HAPPENED

What did CJ actually do at the swim lesson, and why did it mean so much to his dad?

2

WHAT IT MEANS

The story says courage doesn't always announce itself. Beyond a five-year-old standing in a pool, what does quiet courage look like to you?

3

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

What are you facing right now where staying, not quitting, would be the brave thing?

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

For students to try this week

Notice one act of quiet courage in someone else, and tell them you saw it.

JOURNAL PROMPT

For students to write on their own

Write about a time you were scared and did it anyway. What got you through?

PAIRS WELL WITH *Courage Is a Decision* (p. 41) · *The Donkey and the Dirt* (p. 71)

A note for leaders: This story is about anxiety. Some students live with it every day. Let them share only what they choose, and follow up privately if a student seems to be carrying more than they say.

THE COMPLETE GUIDE

All 52 Stories. Every One Ready to Use.

The complete Educator's Discussion Guide comes free, as a digital copy, with every school order of *Carry This With You*.



CarryThisWithYou.com/schools

Carry This With You also makes a meaningful gift for graduates, new beginnings, and anyone in a season of change. Individual copies are available at CarryThisWithYou.com.