

# LIFE SKILLS SNAPSHOTS

FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN  
BETWEEN 8 AND 12 YEARS OLD

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# **PARENT-CHILD SNAPSHOTS**

## **IF YOUR CHILD IS 8 TO 12 YEARS OLD**

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# INTRODUCTION

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The Overcoming Obstacles *Parent-Child Snapshots* provide parents and guardians with an opportunity to become more actively involved in their child's growth. Through these engaging activities, you can reinforce the communication, decision making, and goal setting skills your child is learning at school.

Overcoming Obstacles is a nonprofit publisher of elementary, middle, and high school life skills curriculum materials that are research- and evidence-based, award-winning, and free. The organization was founded in 1992 and since that time has helped more than 180,000 educators in all 50 states and 150 countries teach over 40 million young people the skills they need to achieve success. Educators report that when students are taught Overcoming Obstacles, grades and graduation rates go up, bullying goes down, and young people are better prepared for college and careers.

Our goal is that every child receive a life skills education both in school and at home. If you find the activities in this handbook useful, please recommend our *Parent-Child Snapshots* to your friends.

# Snapshots | LISTENING

## THE GOLDEN RULE

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Tie good listening skills to “The Golden Rule.”

Start by asking your child if he or she becomes frustrated when speaking to someone who is not listening (*the answer should be yes*). Next, tell your child about “The Golden Rule” (*treat others as you wish to be treated*). Once knowledge of the rule has been established, you should then ask your child how it relates to listening (*for example, if I want others to listen to me, then I should be willing to listen to what others have to say*).

## SIMON SAYS

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Play a game to learn about the importance of listening.

Tell your child you are going to play a game and then lead him or her in a session of “Simon Says.” At the end of the game, discuss how good listening was important to playing the game.

## THINK ABOUT IT

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Help your child learn about good listening.

Discuss with your child why listening is important. Then, share with him or her what good listening looks like: head (*brain*) is thinking about what is being said, eyes are looking at the person who is speaking, ears hear what people are saying (*if you are deaf, you listen with your eyes, using sign language and lip reading*), mouth stays closed, heart cares about what is being said, hands and feet are still.

## RIDDLES

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Practice active listening with your child by playing games.

Read these three short riddles to your child, one after the other, allowing your child time to try to guess each answer: (1) What goes up and doesn't come back down? (*Your age*); (2) What belongs to you but is used more by others? (*Your name*); (3) What is so delicate that saying its name breaks it? (*Silence*). After the three riddles have been discussed, ask your child if it was important to listen closely to the riddles to solve them.

## TRANSCRIBE

15 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Through listening to a favorite song, your child learns about active listening.

Ask your child to select a favorite song that has lyrics. Then ask your child to write down the lyrics of that song as it plays. When the song is over, compare your child's lyrics sheet with the actual lyrics of the song (*these can usually be found online*). Discuss with your child whether the activity was easy or difficult. Did he or she have to listen to the song differently than usual (*active listening, more focus on the words*)? Why?

# Snapshots | EMPATHY

## SUCCESS

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Show your child the ways empathy can lead to success by sharing this poem.

Read the poem “Success” by Ralph Waldo Emerson to your child (*located on page 15*). Ask what the poet is trying to share. Lead your child to see how Emerson believes “success” often comes from caring about and for others. Print the poem for your child and suggest that he or she post it somewhere it can be seen every day.

## IN THEIR SHOES

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Your child develops empathy for others by experiencing a difference in his or her own life.

Ask your child to consider things in life that he or she has but others may not (*food, clothing shelter, health*). Tell your child that sometimes it’s hard to be grateful for the things that we have and that we don’t always realize how important they are until we lose them. Illustrate this by having your child experience life in “someone else’s shoes” (*as someone else may live*). You can place a blindfold over your child’s eyes for a minute, or have him or her place an arm behind the back and try some basic daily tasks using just his or her other hand. Ask your child to consider how life would be different with this one change.

## GIVING BACK

ONE DAY

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**OBJECTIVE:** Help your child develop an understanding for others through community service.

Together with your child, plan a day of community service that involves helping others (*for example, volunteering at a local food bank or an animal shelter*). At the end of the day, discuss with your child impressions of the experience.

## YOUR TURN

VARIES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Help your child develop empathy by understanding what it takes to care for the family.

Tell your child that he or she is going to help you with dinner tonight. Before you begin to cook, describe the necessary steps that go into preparing for a meal (*deciding on what to eat, shopping for ingredients, setting the table*). Then, lead your child through the process of cooking the meal and ask if he or she will please help you clean up after dinner. These activities will give your child a better appreciation of the effort that goes into meal time.

## HOW FAR YOU GO IN LIFE

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Read a quote to your child to help him or her learn about empathy.

Read this quote by George Washington Carver to your child, “How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these.” Discuss the quote with your child.



# Snapshots | COPING

## DE-STRESS

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Teach your child calming techniques.

Tell your child that sometimes doing a simple exercise can help people deal with stress. Then ask your child to stand and follow your instructions. Direct him or her to breathe slowly in through the nose and out through the mouth. Demonstrate this technique dramatically so your child can see how you take time with each breath and are intentional in how you breathe. Do this five times together. Next, tell your child to make his or her body very rigid and tight, as if the whole body is one big, straight board. Demonstrate. After your child holds this position for a few moments, say, “Now make your body very loose, like a wet noodle.” Demonstrate by loosening your body and wiggling all around, letting your arms jiggle. Tell your child to make his or her body tight again, and loosen and jiggle. Do this a few times. Conclude by asking your child if he or she feels a difference.

## UNWIND

AN AFTERNOON

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**OBJECTIVE:** Create a stress-free afternoon for yourself and your child.

Share with your child that it is important to find time each day to de-stress. Help your child identify things that he or she finds relaxing (*drawing, journaling, playing an instrument, listening to music*). To help you both cope with the stresses of life, plan an afternoon of fun for you and your child at least once each month doing an activity you will both enjoy (*going to a park, the zoo, or a movie*).

## GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Help your child cope with the loss of a loved one.

Explain to your child that grief is an emotion that best runs its course when expressed rather than hidden. Discuss the positive memories associated with a loved one now gone. Have your child share farewell remarks.

# Snapshots | GOAL SETTING

## ONE STEP AT A TIME

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Work with your child on goal achievement.

Have your child select a long-term goal to accomplish within the months to come. Then work with your child to create a series of smaller (*stepping-stone*) goals to reach the long-term goal. Use the “On Your Way” activity sheet (*located on page 14*) to map out the goal and write the steps in a calendar. Check in periodically with your child to assess progress and provide advice or assistance as needed. Once the goal has been accomplished, have a celebratory treat in mind (*favorite meal, special dessert, or whatever you think your child would like best*) and surprise your child with it.

## CONSIDER THIS

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Help your child understand that success comes from hard work.

Ask your child to name someone he or she admires (*a family member, community member, author, athlete, or musician*). Now ask your child if he or she believes that his or her favorite was always talented and successful. Tell your child that everyone has to start somewhere and that mastery comes with practice, effort, and determination. Every famous author has a series of poorly written rough drafts, every athlete has a history of misses and mistakes, every musician has songs that don't succeed. Conclude with a discussion around the idea that to begin the path toward mastery of a skill or craft, one must first accept that the start will be filled with challenges.

## IF

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Provide your child with an inspirational poem to help in goal achievement.

Read the poem “If” by Rudyard Kipling (*located on page 15*) to your child and ask what it means to him or her. Lead your child to understand that self-confidence, sensitivity to others, and the drive to never give up are valuable attributes to have in achieving your dreams. Print the poem for your child and suggest that he or she post it somewhere it can be seen every day.

## PERSEVERANCE

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Teach your child about the importance of perseverance.

Read this quote by Michael Jordan to your child, “I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the game-winning shot, and I missed. I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.” Ask your child to read the quote, then write a brief reflection on what he or she feels the quote means and how it may connect to his or her life.

After about five minutes of reflection, ask your child to share with you what was written. Then tell him or her, “Did you know that Michael Jordan did not make his high school basketball team? What if he had let that stop him? What if he had not persevered?” Allow your child time to respond.

## YOU HAVE ALREADY PERSEVERED!

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Help your child better understand the skills needed for perseverance.

Discuss with your child things that he or she has done that have taken perseverance (*for example, going from crawling to walking, riding a bike, doing math, playing a musical instrument or sport*). Create a list of these events along with a description of what is needed to persevere and demonstrate success (*for example, practice, have patience, ask for help, keep trying*).

# Snapshots | BULLYING PREVENTION

## NO FRIENDS

15 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Help your child understand how it feels to be a victim of bullying.

Ask your child to imagine that he or she will spend an entire school day without speaking to, sitting with, or hanging out with friends. Give him or her time to fully understand this scenario. Then explain that people who are bullied often feel alone and may have only a few friends. Why does your child think this is? To conclude, discuss how it would feel to be by oneself for a day and ask these questions: Would you ever want to feel like that? Would you want other people to feel like that? What are some ways you could ensure that your classmates and friends don't have to experience this loneliness (*for example, inviting them to hang out with you and your friends, asking them how they are doing*)?

## WHAT DO BULLIES DO?

15 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Help your child identify and pledge not to copy the actions of bullies.

Ask your child, "What do bullies do?" Give him or her a few minutes to think quietly. (*Responses may include intimidate others, start rumors, shove someone in the hallway.*)

Then ask that he or she write in a journal from one or more of the following points of view: (1) someone who was bullied, (2) someone who bullied another person, (3) someone who witnessed a bullying incident, and (4) someone who intervened in a bullying incident.

Discuss these experiences with your child. If you learn that your child has been bullied, contact your child's teacher and school principal. If you learn that your child has bullied another, encourage him or her to apologize to the person (*it's never too late to say you are sorry*) and pledge never to bully again.

## A PLACE AT THE TABLE

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Have your child consider what it feels like to not be included.

Ask your child to write about a lunchroom situation where a group of students will not let another person sit at their table. Have your child address these questions: (1) How would you feel as a person already sitting at the table? (2) How would you feel as the person trying to sit at the table? Conclude by asking what is the best resolution to this situation (*for example, joining that person for lunch, or convincing your friends to let him or her sit with all of you*).

## AN IMPORTANT LIST

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Work with your child to consider how bullying could prevent him or her from accomplishing their goals.

Ask your child to imagine a world where people aren't affected by what others think, where they can be themselves, make decisions, and express themselves without fear of being mocked or judged. With this in mind, have your child create a list of all of the things that he or she would attempt, do, or accomplish without fear of ridicule (*try out for the school play, start a new club, wear a favorite sweatshirt or sweater to school, become friends with a new person*). Conclude by sharing the importance of not letting bullying stand in the way of dreams—encourage your child to tell a teacher and you if he or she is ever bullied.

## THE SILENCE OF OUR FRIENDS

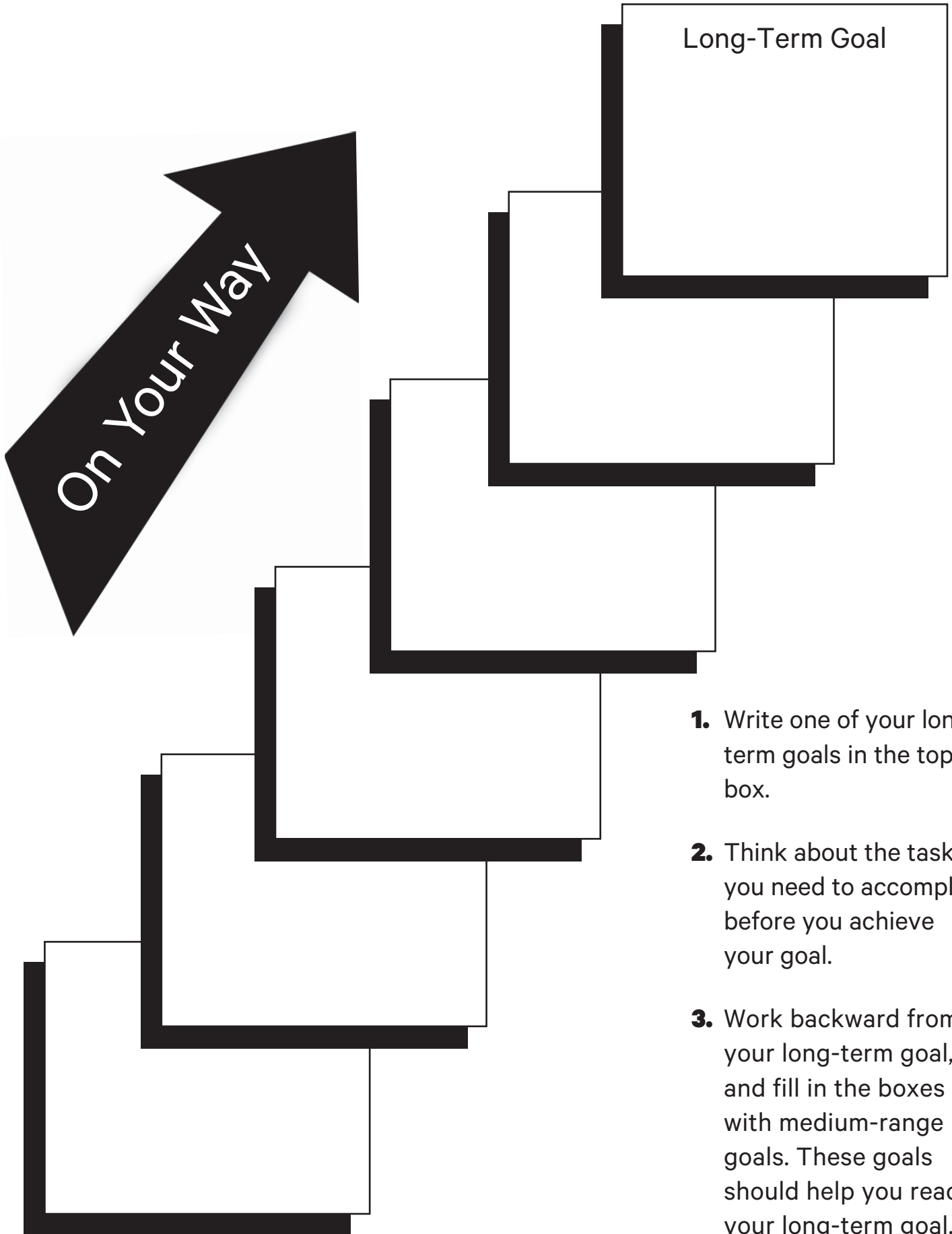
10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Help your child understand the importance of friendship as well as the responsibilities and expectations that come with it.

Read this quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to your child, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." Ask your child to think about the meaning of this quote and write in a journal what he or she thinks Dr. King would have to say about bullying.

# Snapshots | **RESOURCES**



- 1.** Write one of your long-term goals in the top box.
- 2.** Think about the tasks you need to accomplish before you achieve your goal.
- 3.** Work backward from your long-term goal, and fill in the boxes with medium-range goals. These goals should help you reach your long-term goal.

If you can keep your head when all about you  
 Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
 If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
 But make allowance for their doubting too;  
 If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
 Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
 Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
 And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;  
 If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;  
 If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
 And treat those two impostors just the same;  
 If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
 Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
 Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
 And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
 And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
 And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
 And never breathe a word about your loss;  
 If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
 To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
 And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
 Except the Will which says to them: “Hold on!”

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
 Or walk with Kings nor lose the common touch,  
 If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
 If all men count with you, but none too much;  
 If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
 With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
 Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
 And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.



# Snapshots | **JOURNAL**







