

O is for Open-Minded

# JOY FUL

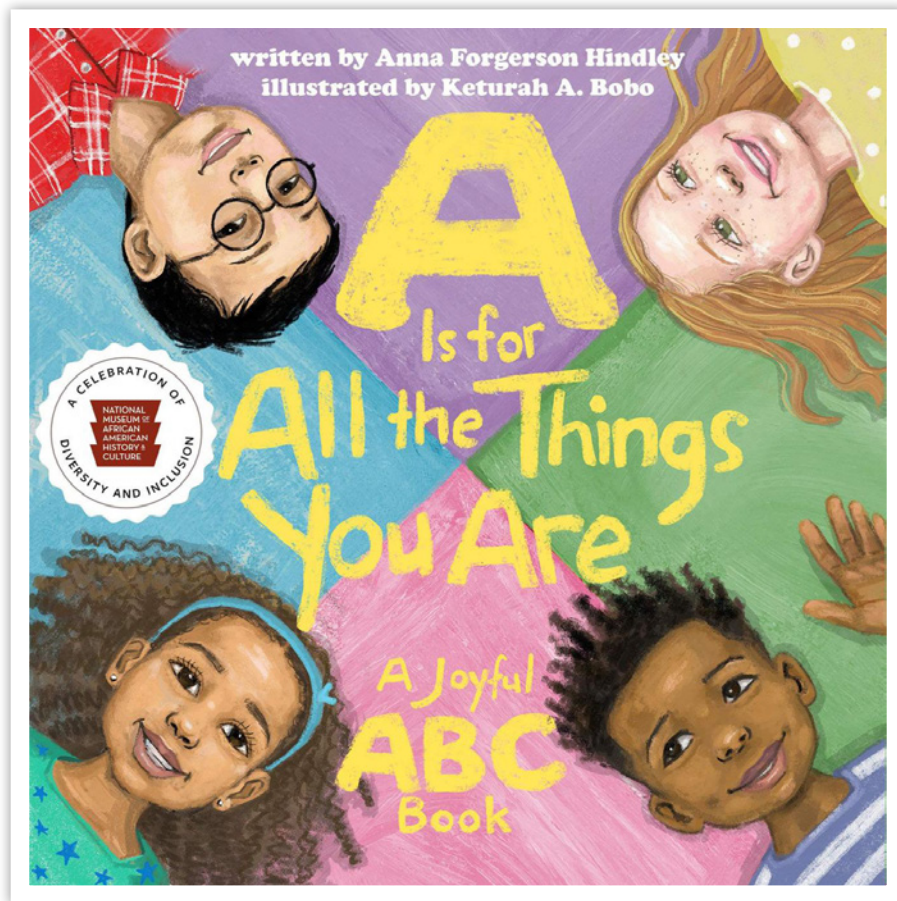


**A NMAAHC KIDS ABCs ACTIVITY BOOK**

INFANT AND TODDLER EDITION

Brought to you by the National Museum of African American History and Culture Early Childhood Education Initiative.  
Inspired by the children's book, A is for All The Things You Are: A Joyful ABC Book written by Anna Forgerson Hindley  
and illustrated by Keturah A. Bobo, ©2018 Art by Keturah Ariel LLC.

Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.



*A is for All the Things You Are* was written to affirm our children and empower them to see themselves as many things at once – daring and loving, creative and just, amazing and zany – and everything in between. The book offers wonderful opportunities for conversations with children to build their vocabularies, strengthen their sense of self and deepen their joy in and acceptance of human diversity. The illustrations allow them to see not only themselves, but others in the same positive light. By seeing positive images of children of different colors, genders, abilities, classes, and other social identities, we nurture the child's comfort and joy in human diversity so deep caring connections can be made across humanity.

*Each activity booklet offers suggestions of how to begin the lifelong work of having a positive sense of self and others with your infant or toddler, how to support their language development and how to build the foundations of literacy.*

A Is for All the Things You Are: A Joyful ABC Book  
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# O is for Open-minded:

Every day is a new chance to open your mind to new ideas. Even though you might disagree with someone's opinion, be open-minded to other perspectives.

When has someone been open-minded to your point of view? How did that make you feel?

Children start life naturally open-minded. They absorb new ideas and experiences every day. This rich curiosity is fueled by the rapid growth their brains go through during children's early years. Each new experience creates new connections in their eager brains. They try to anticipate what will happen next and identify what is familiar and what is new. Considering new ideas and trying new ways of doing something can be fascinating and sometimes, scary. They rely on their trusted adults to keep them safe and help them to process newness with their own pace and style.

With so much newness around them, infants and toddlers must constantly assess and process everything. To absorb the ever-increasing data of the world they've arrived in, children at this age rely on repetition and predictability to build the synapses in their brain. As they're in this stage, we can support our littlest ones by observing and respecting their unique styles of absorbing new information and ideas and by giving them words to describe what they are exploring. We can also create an emotional safety zone in which they observe *us* greeting new experiences with open-mindedness. Our actions, words and support can show that curiosity, exploration, hesitancy and caution are all parts of the process of remaining open-minded to new experiences, people and ways of thinking.

## What You'll Need:

The following supplies are suggested for the experiences in this booklet.

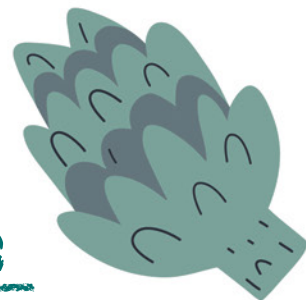
- A large piece of paper
- Tea bags, toy tea cups and tea making supplies (See page 4 for details.)



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# EXPLORE



In early childhood, children learn best through doing! Explore this week's theme in everyday ways.

## Being Open to New Foods

**Yum! Mmm. No! More.** For infants and toddlers, being open minded during mealtime can be fun and exciting for some children and challenging for others. In a child's first three years of life, they are presented with a variety of spoons, plates, cups and bottles full of new colors, scents, textures and flavors. As the caring adults in their lives, we know it's important they have foods that are safe and nourishing so when they push it away, spit it out or shake their heads "no" it can be frustrating. However, with patience, creativity and love, we can support little ones to be open and excited about new foods and experiences. Try a tip or two below:



*Studio portrait of a young girl by Rev. Henry Clay Anderson*

Find ways to use words to show love to your child this week:

- **Mix their favorites with small portions of new foods.**

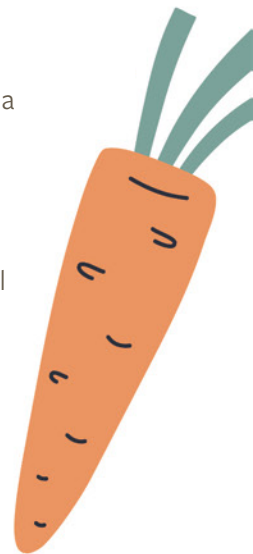
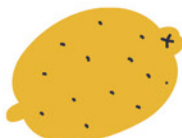
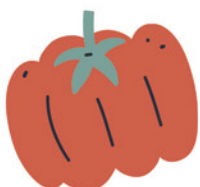
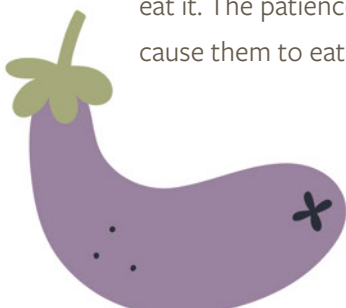
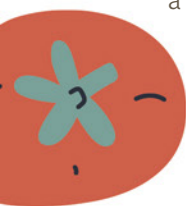
Entice your little one by combining something they love with a little bit of something they're not familiar with yet. For

example, your toddler may be a fan of crunchy foods and feel hesitant with softer

textures (or just the opposite). Try inviting them to dip their favorite crunchy snack, like crackers or slightly cooked carrots, into soft applesauce.

- **Show them it's yummy to you!** Your excitement for a new food can encourage your little one to give it a try. Let them see you eating a food you'd like them to try and describe what you taste and feel: *Mmm I like how crunchy this is! This smells really good. Yum!*

- **Try again but don't push.** Babies and toddlers often need to be offered food several times before they'll eat it. The patience this requires isn't easy, but it pays off. Forcing a child to eat foods they're wary of can cause them to eat less and be more hesitant or afraid in the future.





# EXPLORE

Explore this week's theme in an everyday moment by following the tips below.



## Nurture Openness with Exploration



Engaging all of your toddler's senses when introducing a new food is another way to support their capacity for openness. This week, explore tea! Tea is a drink found in many cultures around the world. Even within the United States, there are a variety of ways to make and enjoy tea. Before you begin your activities, be sure to pick decaffeinated tea and an appealing flavor to your child.

- **Look:** Picture books, like *Teatime Around the World* by Denyse Waissbluth, are an effective, age-appropriate tool for introducing new things, such as tea, to your toddler! Share toy teacups to play with as you read.
- **Listen:** Use a kettle to boil hot water for tea. Listen together to the kettle's whistle! Pour hot water into a cup over a teabag, then remove and save it for later exploration. Stir with a metal spoon and listen closely to the clinking sounds.
- **Taste:** Once the tea cools to room temperature, pour it into a smaller child-safe cup. It's tea time! Ask: How does it taste? What do you like - or dislike - about the taste?
- **Touch and Smell:** Create art with tea. Place used tea bags on plates of shallow water and invite your toddler to explore and smell them. If they begin to rip or put tea bags in their mouths, that's okay - just watch closely to make sure they're exploring safely. Invite your little one to "paint" with a wet tea bag across a big piece of paper. Ask: What colors do you see? Can you pick up a different tea bag? What happens if we squeeze it? Consider using decaffeinated herbal or fruit teas to make a spectrum of colors.

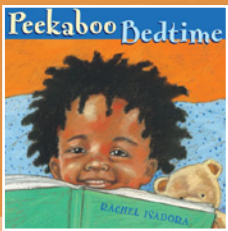
This learning experience is inspired by the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center's Tea Exploration activities for [toddlers](#) and [young children](#).

# EXPLORE MORE

Continue learning with your little one using these recommended resources:

## Books

Part of being open minded is being brave and curious when you don't know what's going to happen next! These lift-the-flap and peek-a-boo books support this skill. Be sure to pause before lifting a flap or turning a page to ask your little one a question about what they'll see next.



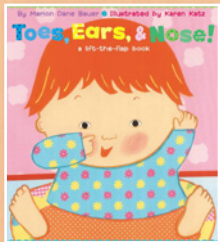
### **Peekaboo Bedtime**

by Rachel Isadora



### **Peek a Who?**

by Nina Laden



### **Toes, Ears, & Nose!**

by Marion Dane Bauer,  
illustrated by Karen Katz



### **Guess What? Food**

by Yusuke Yonezu

**Tip:**

Use your favorite search engine to find read-aloud videos online!

## Online Resources

Explore these resources to nurture your little one's curiosity and openness to new ways of thinking, meeting new people and trying new foods.



[How-to: 5 Steps for Brain Building Serve and Return](#) - Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University



[Parenting Strategies to Help Children Meet New People](#) - Zero to Three



[When, What, and How to Introduce Solid Foods](#) - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



[5 Strategies to Help Your Child Try New Foods](#) - Parents

# CONNECT

## A Guide for Families and Caregivers

### Why do these experiences matter?

A child's identity is both internally constructed and externally imposed. They learn who they are and how they are valued from the words and actions of others and from the way they do or don't make sense of those messages. Their beloved adults (that's you!) are the most important people in their world. The words you give a child to describe themselves and others have lasting power in their lives. When a child has the words to think about their strengths and their worth, they can sort through negative messages and hold on to their sense of being loveable and capable. The experiences in this booklet are invitations for you to use objects, activities and words to support your child's positive identity development, their fascination with how people are both different and the same, and their ability to read emotions and build empathy. In time, experiences like these will also support your child's ability to recognize unfairness or unkindness and to stand up for themselves and others.

### What about supporting language development and getting ready to read?

Alphabets, in and of themselves, are not particularly interesting to young children. However, learning letter-filled words to describe the world around them and inside of them (their feelings, experiences and senses) is very interesting to children! Discovering new words, new ways to say things and new ways to think is exciting and essential to a child's literacy and identity development.

In the first three years of life, early language and literacy skills are best learned through everyday moments. The experiences in these booklets invite you to boost your child's literacy through talking, playing and creating together in fun and accessible ways. Some experiences will guide you in helping your infant or toddler "name the universe" with descriptive words for the actions and emotions of themselves and others. Other experiences will encourage you to point out written words and look closely at objects to provide your little one with the beginning connections between the real world, reading and talking.

Every child's path to literacy is different and valid - just like their identity. The experiences in these booklets aim to support you and your child along their unique journey to literacy and a positive sense of self. **Remember to have fun along the way!**

## Credits

### Objects

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- Beverage service from Wormley's Hotel, ca. 1885. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Charles Thomas Lewis. [2013.104](#)

### Original Artwork

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