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.

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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 as well. 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. In exploring ideas such as fairness, kindness, open-mindedness and being vocal, children begin the task of recognizing injustice and knowing how to stand up for themselves and others.

Each activity booklet offers suggestions of how to begin the lifelong work of having a positive sense of self and others with your early learner, 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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P is for Persistent:

If you're trying something new, like learning how to do a cartwheel, you might fall down. But if you get up and try again, you are being persistent!

When have you persisted?

There is so much our little ones have to learn! The same persistence they showed us as they first learned to stand, walk and run is required in all of the new challenges they'll face while they grow from toddlers to school age. One way we can encourage persistence in our children is by observing what they are working on and narrating what we see. You’re really trying to climb up into the car by yourself. You’re using your arms to pull and your legs to push! When we resist the temptation to take over in difficult moments and guide them through challenges with our words of observation and support instead, we convey our faith in the child’s ability to learn and to succeed.

There is tremendous value in struggling, trying something beyond our skill level, working at it, letting it go and then coming back to it. It’s how we all learn, “yes we can.” What stops a child from persisting is rarely the difficulty of the task, but almost always, the fear of being wrong or of disappointing the people who matter to them. The way we can support children to develop lifelong persistence is to help them see that making a mistake - that not getting it “right” - does not mean being wrong. Mistakes are how human beings learn. Children need to know that though it didn’t work the way they thought it would, they can try again and they will always be loved.

This week, when the things you try to do don’t turn out the way you hoped, instead of considering your actions as mistakes or failures, try seeing yourself as a persistent learner and as a model of persistence. None of us gets it right all the time. What counts is not giving up.

What You’ll Need:

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

- Cardboard
- Short cardboard tubes
- Markers and crayons
- Balloon
- Scissors
- A Large piece of paper
- Markers and crayons

Tip: Build an at-home creativity kit full of all the supplies and recycled materials you’ll need for future ABC art and play activities. Find the supplies list here!
In early childhood, children learn best through doing! Explore this week’s theme with your child by trying this engaging experience inspired by our museum collection.

Persistence in Sports

Sometimes it takes a lot of practice and persistence to do amazing things. Athletes are persistent people. To get better at their sport, they have to keep trying when they make mistakes, don’t win a game or when they face challenges. Althea Gibson was an African American tennis player whose persistence made her strong. When she was treated unfairly because of her skin color, Althea stayed persistent and kept practicing her skills, playing tennis matches and winning competitions and awards.

Try your hand at the coordination, focus and determination it takes to play tennis like Althea Gibson by creating your own tennis rackets to play with at home.

1. **Make tennis rackets.** Cut out two cardboard circles, about 7 inches across. Decorate the circles for your rackets with a fun design or a pattern like tennis racket netting.

2. **Add handles.** Cut short slits at the tops of two short cardboard tubes. Insert the cardboard circles into the slits.

3. **Make a ball.** Use a small balloon or a ping pong ball as your tennis ball.

Now, play together, hitting the ball back and forth! Whenever your child hits the balloon or tries again by picking the balloon up when it falls, celebrate their persistence: *You can do it. You are really focused. Wow, I’m so impressed by how you keep trying!* Be sure to keep play time fun and stop before it moves from a game into a drill!

After your tennis match, talk with your child about something that challenges them that they’d like to get stronger at. Ask: *What can you do to stay persistent if things don’t go how you’d like? What can we say to ourselves when we mess up?*
CREATE

Create art inspired by this week’s theme!

Encouraging Word Art

What You’ll Need

- A large piece of paper
- Markers and crayons

Encouragement from others and self-motivation are essential to a child’s persistence. Signs, shirts and button pins that read, “Yes We Can!” were created to support Barack Obama when he ran for president of the United States for the first time. That message encouraged him and others to keep working hard to make a positive difference. With self-determination, persistence and the support of his community, Barack Obama became the first African American president of the United States.

Create a “Yes I Can!” poster to remind yourself to stay persistent and keep trying to reach your goals, even when it’s not easy.

1. Write encouraging words. Use markers and crayons to write words “Yes I Can.” Caregivers: For early writers, lightly write the words in pencil for them to trace over with a marker or crayons.

2. Decorate your poster. Add inspirational colors, designs and pictures around the words you’ve written.

3. Put your poster up! Find a spot to hang your poster. Look for a place where you’ll be able to see your encouraging words when you need them the most, like in a window so that you can see your poster while you play outside.
LEARN

Invite your child to take part in the following experiences to support their literacy and language skills.

Persistence in Writing

Reading and writing takes persistence. Before poets, authors and songwriters wrote poems, books and songs, they had to learn the names and sounds of letters, practice using writing utensils and work hard to share their thoughts and feelings through written and spoken words. Poet Saul Williams wrote his poem, *Coded Language* on a scroll of paper over 12 feet long. That’s a lot of writing! Saul Williams often brought the written words of his poem with him to read out loud for others. With persistence and support from loving, patient adults, children can also fill pages and pages with stories, songs and poems one day and share them with others.

Invite your child to try the activities below to strengthen the fine motor skills they’ll need for writing.

- Use plastic tweezers or kitchen tongs to pick up colorful pom poms or small blocks and sort them by color into muffin tins.
- Weave pipe cleaners through the holes of a colander.

As your child plays, acknowledge their persistence when they choose to pick up pom poms again after they’ve dropped from the tongs, or celebrate their careful focus as they try to push a pipe cleaner through a hole. Let them know that the way they keep trying and trying will help them to be a wonderful writer!

Tip:

Check out *A Squiggly Story* by Andrew Larsen. The book wonderfully captures the persistence and creativity it takes for young children to become writers!
EXPLORE MORE

Continue learning with your little one using these recommended resources:

**Books**

Read these stories of persistence with your little one and discuss the ways you both can be persistent in everyday moments.

- **Jabari Tries** by Gaia Cornwall
- **The Most Magnificent Thing** by Ashley Spires
- **I Can Do Hard Things** by Gabi Garcia, illustrated by Charity Russell
- **Whistle for Willie** by Ezra Jack Keats

**Online Resources**

Use the resources below to support your child to keep trying to meet their goals and overcome obstacles.

- Encouraging Your Child to Keep Trying - PBS Kids
- Bruno Mars Sings “Don’t Give Up” - Sesame Street
- Promoting Preschoolers’ Emergent Writing - NAEYC
- Practicing Persistence and Take a Break, Take a Breath, Try Again - Sesame Street in Communities

Tip: Use your favorite search engine to find read-aloud videos online!
**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.

**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.

The developmental path to reading is a child’s understanding that, “Anything I do or see, I can say! Anything I say can be written! Anything written can be read!” Many booklet experiences will encourage you to engage in conversations about objects and during story times to deepen your child's connection to spoken and written words. Other experiences will invite you to build literacy skills by writing down what your child says, feels or thinks and reading it back to them aloud. Some booklets will introduce fun ways to boost fine motor skills that contribute to a child's writing and reading abilities. The booklets will also recommend books that intrigue children by illustrating the rich diversity of people in the world and providing them with a mirror to their own lives or a window into other lives.

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!**

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**Credits**

**Objects**

- Tennis racket used by Althea Gibson, ca. 1960. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Donald Felder and family. 2014.205.21
- Coded Language by Saul Williams, 2002. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Saul Williams, © Saul Williams. 2014.188.1

**Original Artwork**

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