

S is for Strong

JOY FUL

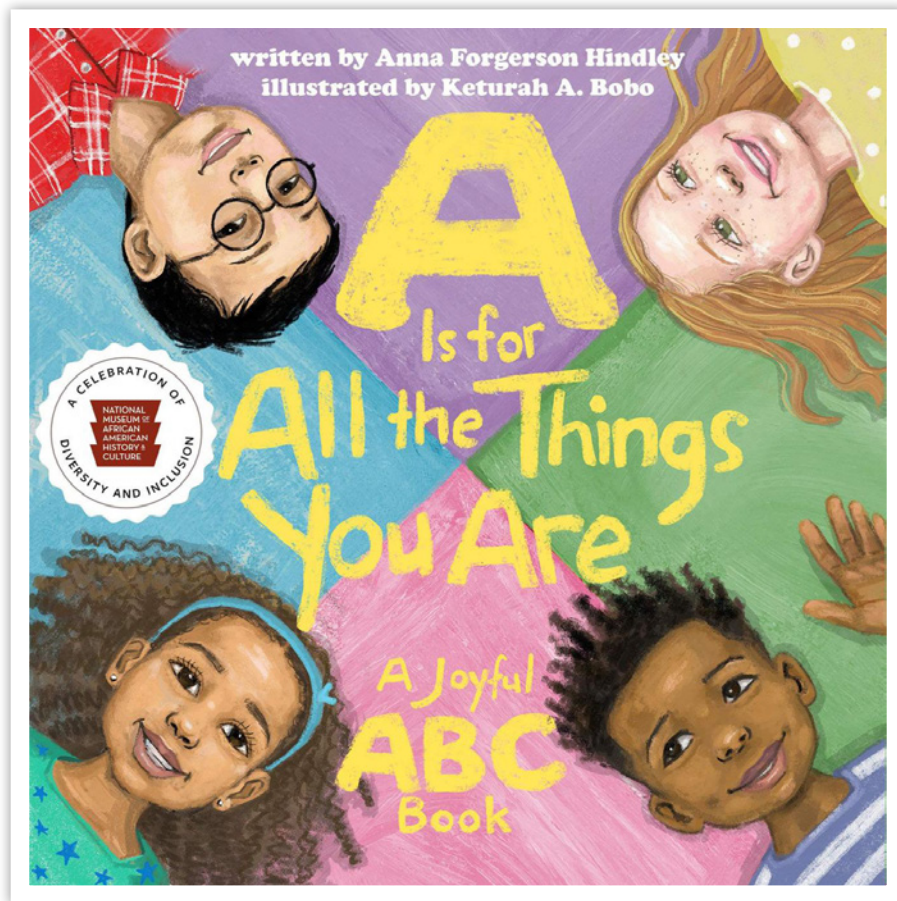


A NMAAHC KIDS ABCs ACTIVITY BOOK

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 Forgeson 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. 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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S is for Strong:

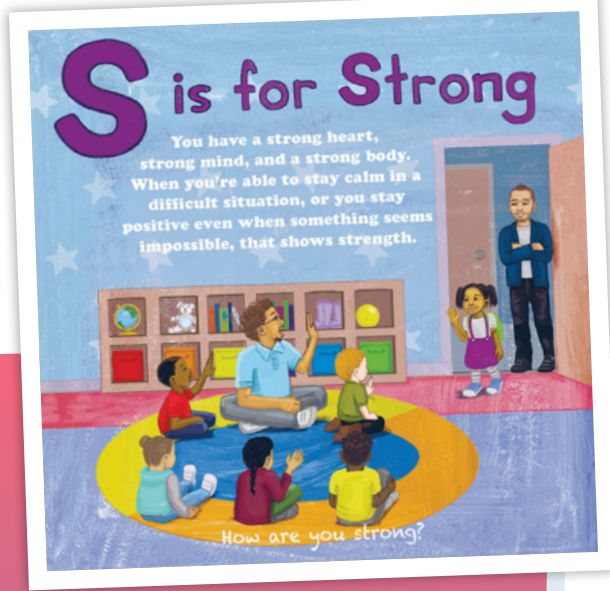
You have a strong heart, strong mind, and a strong body. When you're able to stay calm in a difficult situation, or stay positive even when something seems impossible, that shows strength.

How are you strong?

Physical strength - muscles and athleticism - is only one kind of strength. It takes emotional strength to face experiences that frighten us. It takes mental strength to figure out what a situation requires from us. It takes social strength to figure out what others mean, want, and need. And it takes internal strength to stand up for what we need or want.

“Strong” is a highly gendered word which is usually applied to male identified children. The label of “big, strong boy” is a phrase little ones start hearing in infancy. It carries with it pressure to be active as early as possible and it rewards them for physical prowess (and often recklessness). The word is rarely used with female identified children who receive the societal message that they are fragile, easily injured, and must learn to be cautious and wary.

However, all children need support to develop their physical strength and to believe in their competent (and healable) bodies. All children also need support to develop faith in their intelligent minds and open hearts. As caregivers, we can give words to our little ones that describe how strong their thinking is when they figure out something new. We can acknowledge their explosions of frustration or desire as strong feelings (even if we can't give them what they want). We can create a vocabulary of pride in their social strengths when they collaborate and cooperate with others. And we can share the joy their strong hearts bring us when they show us, as they do day after day, that they return the love we so gladly give.



What You'll Need:

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

- Hanging mobile
- Ribbon
- Miscellaneous items and toys
- Small blanket or scarf
- Play dough
- Balls (toys, balled-up socks or crumpled paper)
- Cardboard box



EXPLORE

In early childhood, children learn best through doing! To explore this week's theme, try the activity below with your infant or toddler.

Are You Strong?

Our babies and toddlers may be small but they're mighty! We witness their strength when they grip our fingers, lift their heads to look at us, or kick their feet to express joy or frustration. But, do *they* know how strong they are? Through play and celebration we can help our little ones notice the strengths they possess and are building every day and we can support them to see themselves as strong and capable humans.



Studio portrait of a baby by Rev. Henry Clay Anderson

Use the playful activities below to provide opportunities for your little one to see their impact on the world.

Infants:

Lay your baby on their back under a mobile. Attach a loose ribbon to the mobile and to your little one's foot. As they kick and move, the mobile will move too. Cheer them on by saying things like: *Look! Your brain figured out how to move the mobile. You have a strong mind and strong legs!*

Play a game where you invite your baby to watch while you slowly put a toy under a small blanket or scarf. When the baby pulls the cloth away, comment on their strong hands and mind that found where the toy was hidden.

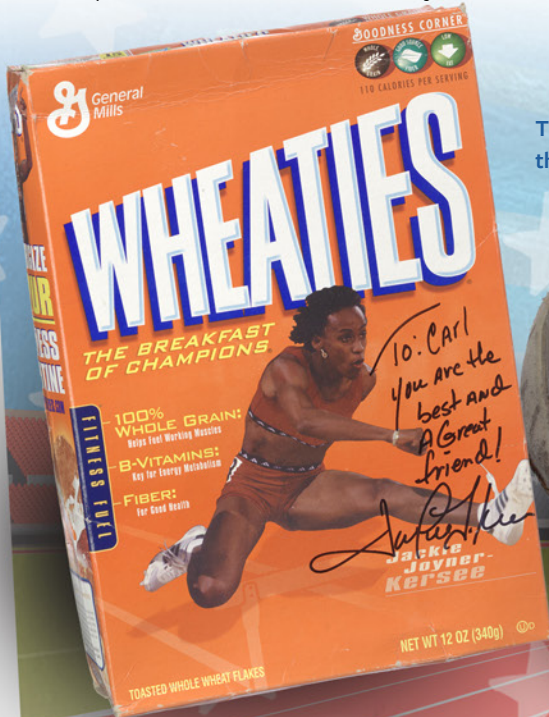
Toddlers:

Invite your toddler to squeeze play dough, pound it with their fists and push their fingers into its softness. Bring attention to how their strength changed the dough. *Your hands are strong! You made the play dough ball go flat.*

Gather a set of balls (toys, balled-up socks or crumpled paper). Invite your little one to try throwing balls in a certain direction. Talk about how their strength moves the ball. *Your strong arms made the ball go high into the sky!*

EXPLORE

Explore this week's theme with your toddler by trying this engaging experience inspired by our museum collection.



This [Wheaties box](#) featured Jackie Joyner-Kersey, who also wore these [track shoes](#) at the 1984 Olympic trials.



Keep Going

Whether you're an adult or a child, it takes strength to keep trying when faced with a challenge. African American track and field Olympian [Jackie Joyner-Kersey](#) was known for skillfully jumping over hurdles throughout her athletic career. Though it did take great physical strength to rise above these literal obstacles on the track, Jackie also possessed great mental strength and internal motivation to keep moving forward towards being her best. Today, Jackie Joyner-Kersey continues to hold world records in track and field, and holds the title of *Sports Illustrated* Greatest Female Athlete of the 20th Century.

Nurturing our children's strong self-determination in their toddler years can happen in playful ways but will serve a child throughout their life as they face increasingly more complex hurdles. Try this:

Move forward. Find an empty box, basket or bin that is about as high as your toddler's waist. Invite your toddler to push the box around and add their favorite dolls, stuffed toys and other items to the empty box. Then, keep pushing!

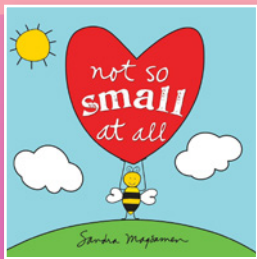
As they push the box around your home, they will likely bump into something or get stuck. In these moments, observe how their brain works to figure out how to move around the obstacle or through a space in a new way. In that moment of rethinking and moving forward, they are being strong! Celebrate that with your words: *You figured out how to get around the table. Your brain is so strong! You bumped into the wall but you kept going. You are strong!*

EXPLORE MORE

Continue learning with your little one using these recommended resources:

Books

Notice how the little ones in these stories are strong in unexpected and everyday ways.



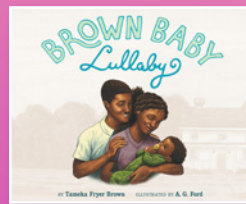
Not So Small at All
by Sandra Magsamen



Kindness Makes Us Strong
by Sophie Beer



Pouch!
by David Ezra Stein



Brown Baby Lullaby
by Tameka Fryer Brown,
illustrated by A. G. Ford

Tip:

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

Online Resources

Discover how you can support your baby or toddler to strengthen their mind and body!

- ★ [Building Baby's Strength](#) - **Parents.com**
- ★ [Standing Strong: How to Help Build Baby's Physical Strength](#) - **Virginia Infant and Toddler Specialist Network**
- ★ [Building Resilience](#) - **Zero to Three**
- ★ [Celebrate Your Child's Strengths](#) - **Zero to Three**

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

- Studio portrait of a baby by Rev. Henry Clay Anderson, 1948-1970s. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Charles Schwartz and Shawn Wilson, © Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture. [2012.137.17.13](#)
- Track shoes worn by Jackie Joyner-Kersey at the 1984 Olympic trials, 1984. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. [2013.219.7ab](#)
- Wheaties box inscribed to Carl Lewis by Jackie Joyner-Kersey, 2004. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of the Carl Lewis Estate. [2013.126.48](#)

Original Artwork

- Bluebird (cover), Stars (page 4) © 2018 Art by Keturah Ariel LLC