W is for Worthy

JOYFUL

A NMAAHC KIDS ABCs ACTIVITY BOOK
EARLY LEARNERS EDITION - AGES 3 TO 5

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 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.
W is for Worthy:

What you think and feel and believe matters. So when you have something important to say, be seen and be heard. You are worthy.

Finish this sentence: I am worthy because...

Worthy is not a word we commonly use with our children, but our children are constantly developing their sense of self-worth whether we realize it or not. As their loving caregivers, we can introduce this powerful word and let our children know that they are worthy of love, respect, and joy just as they are, without having to earn or prove it.

One small way you can help to build your child’s sense of self-worth is with intentional language during everyday moments. For example, when we remind our children to sit down at the dinner table, we can say, “I love you and I’m reminding you to sit down so you can be safe.” It’s a shift from the usual, “I love you, but you have to sit down.” When our children are working on a new skill, like rinsing dishes and one breaks, we can respond with, “Oops! You made a mistake and you’re learning something new. I love you no matter what you do! Let’s clean it up together.” We can acknowledge our children’s mistakes and make sure they know that mistakes don’t define who they are or make them less loveable.

Moving away from buts to focus on ands is a small yet powerful reminder to our children that our love and their worth isn’t conditional. When we remind our children that they will always matter and be special to us with phrases like, “I will always love you.” or “You are still important to me.” this becomes our child’s inner voice. The next time they make a mistake or face a challenge, their inner voice will respond with the same love we have shown them.

When children know they are worthy of being heard, seen and respected, they’ll be more likely to persist when trying new things, take appropriate risks and stand up for themselves. As your child continues to understand, own, and define their worth, your support and empowering language along the way will help them to feel comfortable and confident in who they are at every stage of their growth.

What You’ll Need:

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

- Cardboard tube
- Markers, crayons, or paints
- Paper (white, yellow or orange)
- Cup
- Scissors
- Glue stick

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!
EXPLORE

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.

You Are Worthy!

You are important, special and worthy of good feelings and experiences! That means, you don't have to earn love or happiness, you are worthy of great things just because you are you. Who you are, how you feel and what you think matters but sometimes it can be hard to remember your worth, especially when you have negative thoughts, go through hard times, or hear unkind words.

Stand in a power pose. Power poses are ways we can move and hold our bodies to feel strong, confident and worthy, even if you aren’t feeling that way right at that moment. Power poses can look differently for each of us: sitting or standing, arms crossed or open wide, hands on your hips or folded in front of you. Try different poses out in front of a mirror. What pose makes you feel best?

Try this! Pose like Elizabeth Catlett’s sculpture. Stand with your feet apart, one hand on your hip and the other hand in front of your face. Imagine your hand is raised to block negative thoughts from entering your mind.

Say empowering words. Then, look at yourself in the mirror and say these words out loud to yourself:

- I am worthy.
- I am worthy of being seen.
- I am worthy of being heard.
- I am worthy of being loved just the way I am.

Tip:
Discover more important affirmations with I Can Do Hard Things: Mindful Affirmations for Kids by Gabi Garcia.

Rejecting Injustice by Elizabeth Catlett
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CREATE

Create art inspired by this week’s theme!

Shine Bright

This little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine! Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine! The song *This Little Light of Mine* has been sung by communities, activists and children for many years. The lyrics remind us, that even in hard times or when others try to put us down, there is something special - a light - inside each of us.

Everyone is worthy of taking up space, being heard and shining bright! Sometimes we may feel like we need to make ourselves smaller, quieter or more dim so that other people can take up more space, be heard and shine bright. But, we all have a light that’s worthy of sharing with the world. You share this special light when you tell stories, sing loud, dance big, create art and play imaginatively! Your light shines when you’re simply being yourself.

Create a paper candle to remind yourself to let the light inside of you shine no matter what!

What You’ll Need:
- Cardboard tube
- Markers, crayons, or paints
- Paper
- Cup
- Scissors
- Glue

Grown-ups:

Using a cup, trace a circle onto a piece of white, yellow or orange paper. Then draw a flame shape (similar to a raindrop shape). Cut out the circle and the flame.

Cut two small slits, across from each other, at the top of a cardboard tube.

Early Learners:

Decorate a cardboard tube, paper circle and paper flame with markers, crayons or paints in bright colors. To make the flame of your candle, glue the paper flame on top of the paper circle and insert the paper shapes into the cardboard tube slits. When your candle is complete, talk to your caregiver about how you like to shine! What makes you feel good inside? When do you shine the brightest?

Tip:

Caregivers, learn more about the history of *This Little Light of Mine* and then find a recording of the song online to sing along to together.
LEARN

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

Worthy Words

Your mind is full of great stories, interesting ideas and big feelings. The way that you think is unique and worthy of being heard. Sometimes we share our minds with others through writing and other times we share by talking to each other. Sharing our thoughts, in either way, is important and takes practice.

Learn Letters

W is for Worthy. This week, practice writing the letter W or the word worthy. Worthy is just one word you can use to describe yourself. As you practice writing, think about this: What other words describe who you are? Then, try writing the words (or letters from those words)!

Boost Literacy

Ask your little one to tell you a story or to talk about their favorite things. What made you feel happy today? What is your favorite thing to do? As they talk, write their words down and let your child watch. Storytelling helps them to practice language skills while seeing their words written down tells them they are worthy of being heard and that their words matter to you.
EXPLORE MORE

Continue learning with your little one using these recommended resources:

Books

Check out the books below to remind your little one that what they think, say and do matter!

You Matter
by Christian Robinson

All Because You Matter
by Tami Charles,
illustrated by Bryan Collier

I Am Every Good Thing
by Derrick Barnes,
illustrated by Gordon C. James

Ambitious Girl
by Meena Harris,
illustrated by Marissa Valdez

Online Resources

Celebrate how special your child is with the songs below.

*Will.i.am Sings “What I Am” - Sesame Street*
*“We Are All Amazing” Song - Sesame Street*
*“You Are Special” Song - Mister Rogers Neighborhood*
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!

Credits

Objects

Original Artwork
- Bluebird (cover) © 2018 Art by Ketubah Ariel LLC