O is for Open-Minded

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.
0 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 soak up 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.

We can support children’s open minds by regularly providing experiences that are safe but have unexpected outcomes and by asking questions that encourage them to anticipate and guess. What do you think will happen next? What might happen now? This is not a search for “right answers.” Rather, it is an invitation for children to approach the world with a sense of wonder and openness to possibility.

Children can then use this wonderment to be open to other people and their different ideas, feelings, beliefs and ways of being. They begin to understand that people can have different feelings and beliefs, and still be worthy of being known. Learning early in life that we are all the same in our value as human beings, even with different life experiences and thoughts, is an essential skill in our world. How wonderful it can feel to know that we can feel confident about who we are and still care about people who are different!

What You’ll Need:

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

- Writing paper
- Writing utensils
- Miscellaneous objects (See page 3.)
- Washable paints, water and food coloring
- Containers for paints
- Empty squeeze bottles, spoons or water droppers
- Large piece of paper or cardboard
- Newspaper or plastic tablecloth

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.

Being Open to Other Perspectives

Though we may have a lot in common with other people, we also see and experience things differently. We all eat food yet prefer different types of food, often depending on our cultures. We can live in the same town and have different places that makes us feel connected to the community. We all listen to music and have different feelings about what we hear. People can have different ideas, feelings and perspectives, and that makes the world interesting and wonderful! Being able to consider other perspectives takes practice. Imaginative play and games gives young children an opportunity to practice this important skill in a fun way.

The “What Is It Now?” Game

Gather a random selection of objects from around your home and place them in a bin. Then, pick any object from the bin, hand it to your child and invite them to imagine a new way to use the item or imagine it as something entirely different. Consider reading books like Not A Stick or Not A Box by Antoinette Portis before you start to help spark your child’s creative thinking.

In this game, objects can become anything! A whisk can be a microphone. A roll of tape can be an earring or a crown. A sock can become a puppet or an elephant trunk!

Ask your child what the object is now and how it’s used: What are you holding? What is it now? Can you show me how it works? Then, pretend to use it in the same way as your child.

This game works well with a group of children and adults so that the item can be passed around and reimagined by each person in the circle. As children watch and listen to another person explain this item’s new purpose, they are practicing an open-mindedness that they can use in moments where they meet and engage with others who have different ways of being, living, doing and believing.
CREATE

Create art inspired by this week's theme!

**Being Open to Unpredictable Outcomes**

In life, sometimes things don’t always turn out how we think they will. Adults can support little ones in understanding, accepting and delighting in this part of the human experience. Art projects provide children with opportunities to practice being open to unexpected outcomes and finding beauty and contentment in the unpredictable. Create an unpredictable painting!

**Grown-Ups**

Cover a working surface with newspaper or a plastic tablecloth for easy clean up. Next, put paints (thinned with water) or colored water into small dishes that your child can pick up with water droppers or scoop with spoons.

Describe the project to your little one, letting them know they’ll be dropping colors onto a piece of paper or cardboard to see what will happen. Before you begin, ask: *What do you think will happen?*

**Early Learners**

Gently drip paint, from a spoon or water dropper, onto your paper. Try adding the paint from close up and then from a little farther away.

As each drop lands in a new way, mixes with a different color or makes a new shape, encourage children to be open to the unpredictable way the art may turn out. Talk about the uncertainty of the final product with excitement: *I wonder what your art will look like! I’m excited to see how creative you are.*

As you work and when you finish, ask: *What do you notice? How did the paints’ shapes or patterns change? What did you think would happen? Did it turn out differently than you thought it would?*

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LETTERS & LITERACY

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

Being Open to Differences

To learn about new people, places and things, reporters ask people questions and listen closely to their answers. It’s important for reporters to stay open-minded when they ask questions because sometimes people have different responses than expected. This typewriter was used by Robert Churchwell, a reporter for the Nashville Banner newspaper who wrote about people and events in his community.

The practice of asking questions builds early language and communication skills while the writing of words they’ve heard allows the child to practice the skill of listening closely, documenting and being open to different or new responses.

Begin with a reading of Daniel’s Good Day by Micha Archer. In this story, Daniel asks different people in his community the same question: What makes a good day for you? He discovers that everyone has different ideas of a good day!

What would you like to learn about people in your life? Do you know their favorite colors? Could you learn about their happiest moments? With paper and a writing utensil in hand, join your child in asking a single question to 3 to 5 friends, relatives or neighbors. As your child listens to the response, support them in writing or drawing about what they hear and learn. (Remember that early learners may write words, letters and symbols that don’t make sense to us and that’s okay! Just the practice of writing is important during this activity.)

Notice how people can have many different answers to the same question. Acknowledge that each of those answers were true for the person who shared it. One of the most wonderful things about people is that they can be both the same and different sometimes! Find the joy in being open and curious about the many ways people can be or think.

ASK LISTEN LEARN
EXPLORE MORE

Continue learning with your little one using these recommended resources:

**Books**

When we look at the world around us and see it from perspectives other than our own, we are being open-minded. Discover what being open-minded reveals to the characters in the books below.

- **The Dot** by Peter H. Reynolds
- **Not A Stick** by Antoinette Portis
- **They All Saw A Cat** by Brendan Wenzel
- **Something Beautiful** by Sharon Dennis Wyeth, illustrated by Chris K. Soentpiet

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

**Online Resources**

Support your child to be open to the differences around them.

- **Raising Your Child to Embrace Diversity** - First Five Years
- **The Importance of Perspective Taking for Young Children** - Michigan State University
- **Try It! New Foods** - Sesame Street
- **5 Questions for Kids Fearful of Trying New Things** - Psychology Today
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.

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
• Coronet Automatic 12 electric typewriter owned by Robert Churchwell, 1970s. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Mrs. Mary Churchwell, Dr. Kevin Churchwell and Mrs. Gloria Churchwell. 2013.62.1

Original Artwork
• Bluebird (cover) © 2018 Art by Keturah Ariel LLC