

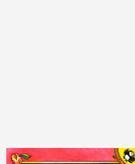
# Books That Help Kids Know and Love Themselves

by Melissa Taylor



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If you ask most parents, we'll probably tell you that we want our kids to know who they are and to love themselves. Because it's both, right? We want them to know their strengths and understand their uniqueness and embrace both, loving and accepting every bit. This develops as children come of age, but it can also be nurtured by the daily life lessons we share and the books we read together. I hope these books prompt rich discussion and valuable life lessons about knowing and loving all of who we are.



## **Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon**

by Patty Lovell, illustrated by David Catrow

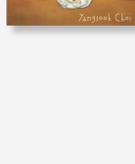
I love this book so much. Molly Lou Melon's grandmother gives her cheer and support for all the tough things in her life and Molly Lou Melon takes this advice to heart. She's short and walks proudly, she has buck teeth and smiles big, she has a croaky voice and sings loudly, even when Ronald Durkin bullies her. She's proud of who she is and we don't just love her for it, we want to be like her.



## **I Like Me!**

by Nancy Carlson

This exuberant pig is filled with self-confidence and optimism. Not only does she appreciate all the great things about herself, she understands that mistakes are a part of life. Rather than getting down on herself for making them, she tries and tries again. An easy-to-understand story for young readers with engaging illustrations and an important message about resilience.



## **The Smallest Girl in the Smallest Grade**

by Justin Roberts, illustrated by Christian Robinson

Sally McCabe is the smallest student in her grade (and when you're the smallest student in the smallest *grade*, that's saying something!). But being small in stature doesn't stop Sally McCabe from being observant, brave, and bighearted. When Sally notices bullying happening, she speaks up and makes a difference. This sweet story about a serious topic will spark important conversations with young readers.



## **The Name Jar**

by Yangsook Choi

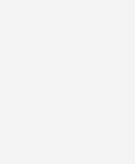
This book contains such an important lesson — that names are important and should be valued, even if they are foreign or difficult to pronounce. When Unhei arrives in America from Korea, she tells her class to pick her a new, easier name. Fortunately, her new friends help Unhei value her given name, which she keeps.



## **Tomorrow I'll Be Brave**

by Jessica Hische

Repeat after me: we can't be everything every single day. Jessica Hische's *Tomorrow I'll Be Brave* reassures readers that no matter what they failed to be today — be it patient, or confident, or someone with all the right answers — tomorrow is another chance to do their best. And to do our best every day, and be at peace with the outcome? That takes a whole lot of bravery.



## **You Are Awesome**

by Susann Hoffmann

Sure, we know that our little humans can grow up to be anything they want to be, but you can never remind them of that too often. *You Are Awesome* is a bright and positive picture book that shows children there are countless ways to be awesome, and the best way to start is by appreciating ourselves.



## **Me and My Fear**

by Francesca Sanna

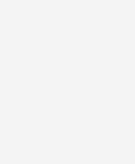
Francesca Sanna's latest is a beautiful sequel to *The Journey*, which followed a refugee family as they fled their war-torn country. In *Me and My Fear*, the young protagonist is apprehensive about starting a new life in an unfamiliar place, and her Fear keeps growing bigger and bigger. But as she learns to share her Fear with others, she creates new friendships, and her Fear begins to change. A hopeful reminder that our fears don't diminish us, and we need only listen to them.



## **Me: A Compendium**

by Wee Society

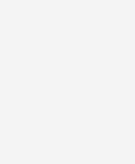
Kids will get to know themselves better with this fill-in, draw-in journal of prompts that captures them at this particular moment in time — their favorite weather, socks, and book; their imagined flag for a pretend castle; what kind of shop they would like have; their favorite thing to do outside and inside; and much more. This lovely journal can lead to self-discovery and self-love.



## **Someday**

by Eileen Spinelli, illustrated by Rosie Winstead

Think back to your own childhood: Did you spend time daydreaming about what you would grow up to be, do, and explore? And sometimes, did that future seem so far away that you got a little impatient just thinking about it? So does the little girl in this story, whose daydreams seem to multiply. This one's great for getting kids talking about their hopes, dreams, and aspirations — and how they can pursue those interests in the here and now.



## **Just Like Me**

by Vanessa Brantley-Newton

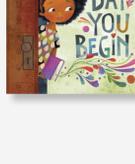
This vibrant, affirming picture book is filled with stories about all sorts of girls, with all sorts of interests and families and backgrounds, feeling the whole wide gamut of feelings. Vanessa Brantley-Newton's text assures young girls that they don't have to be perfect to be worthy of love. As she writes in the dedication, "I like you just the way you are. Shine, girl, shine!"



## **Just Ask**

by Sonia Sotomayor, illustrated by Rafael López

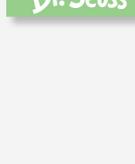
From Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor comes an encouraging book about feeling different, and about approaching those who seem different than you (hint: just ask!). As a group of diverse children build a community garden together, they come to understand that our differences as people are as crucial — and as beautiful — as the different plants and flowers that make up a garden.



## **Raise Your Hand**

by Alice Paul Tapper, illustrated by Marta Kissi

Written by 11-year-old Alice Paul Tapper, *Raise Your Hand* encourages girls to feel confident about speaking up in the classroom. Paul helped create a Girl Scout badge specifically for this purpose, after noticing that girls in her class were hesitant to answer questions and express their opinions. Not only will *Raise Your Hand* embolden readers to trust their inner voices, but it might also inspire them to see where they, too, might like to make change.



## **My Heart**

by Corinna Luyken

Gentle and poignant, this household favorite is all about embracing the spectrum of human emotions, leaving our heart open to the ebbs and flows of different experiences, and tapping into our inner-most selves with self-knowledge and acceptance. Its message is simple yet powerful, and readers of all ages will be able to use Luyken's metaphors to describe what their own hearts look like on any given day, at any given moment. If you love this one, try Luyken's other title, *The Book of Mistakes*, which reminds us that we're all glorious works-in-progress.



## **I Am Just Right**

by David McPhail

*I Am Just Right* will ring oh-so-true for toddlers and preschoolers, who are changing so much every day they can hardly keep up. The young bunny in this book is growing out of a lot of things, both literally and figuratively, but he's just right for so many new things (and the ones that will never change, no matter much he grows up!). Celebrate self-acceptance with this upbeat easy reader from the *I Like to Read* series.



## **Ignore the Trolls**

by Jordan Gershowitz, illustrated by Sandhya Prabhat

This one's a fun and funny fairytale with an important message at its heart about bullies (otherwise known as trolls). Tim the Timid of Ye Olde Elementary School can't wait to try out for the jousting team. But there are trolls about, who enjoy tearing others down. Fortunately, Tim has a loyal friend in Bethany the Brave, who helps him learn how to feel confident in himself and ignore the trolls.



## **The Day You Begin**

by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by Rafael López

Especially fitting for young readers heading into a new setting, like a new preschool or the first day of kindergarten, *The Day You Begin* will give them a boost of confidence and a roadmap for moving forward during moments when they feel different from everyone else in the room. Those moments, as beloved author Jacqueline Woodson attests, are opportunities to be brave and to reach out to others, sharing our stories and discovering our commonalities.



## **The Sneetches and Other Stories**

by Dr. Seuss

Both little and big kids need to read the Sneetches story. It provides a framework for talking about racism, tolerance, diversity, and acceptance using the Sneetches, creatures who are divided because some have stars on their bellies and some do not. It takes discrimination and a mess with a machine who puts or erases stars for the Sneetches to learn the lesson that everyone belongs, stars or no stars.

## Melissa Taylor

Melissa Taylor, MA, is a teacher, mama, and writer from Colorado. Her goal in childhood was to read every book in the children's section of the library. She loves (in no particular order) children's books, her Kindle, Pinterest, and knitting rectangles. An education expert, she's written for many publications, including *Parenting.com*, *USA Today Health*, and *Scholastic Parent and Child*. Connect with Melissa on her learning blog, *Imagination Soup*, or on Pinterest.