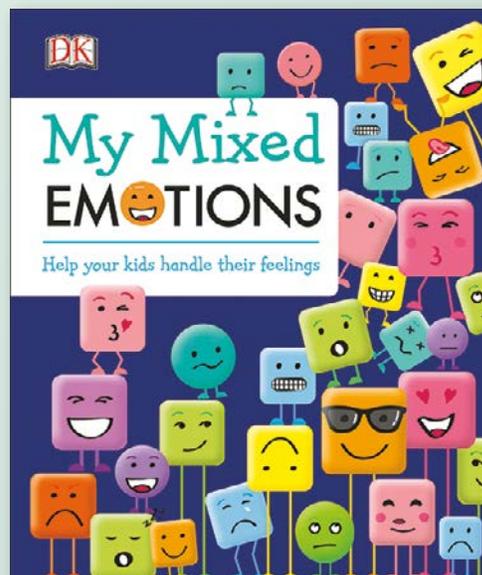
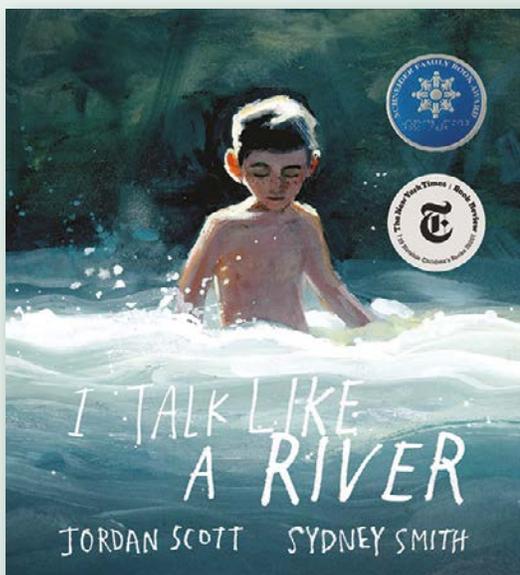
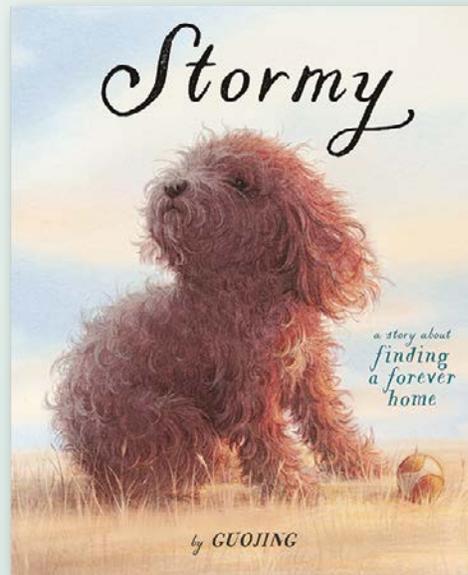
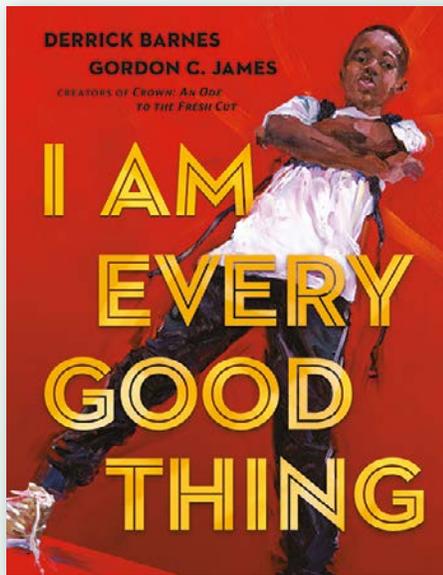


THEMATIC GUIDE  
STUDENT WELLNESS

Teaching About Resilience  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



## CONTENTS

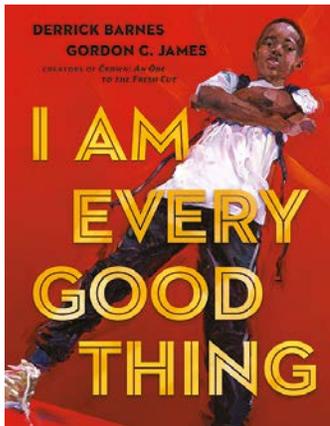
■ INTRODUCTION.....	3
■ ABOUT THE TITLES IN THIS COLLECTION.....	4
■ CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES.....	5
WELCOMING ROUTINES.....	5
Positive Affirmations.....	5
Morning Meeting.....	5
Mindfulness Minute.....	6
ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES.....	6
Emotions Word Wall.....	6
Mood Meter.....	6
Song Analysis.....	7
Image Analysis.....	7
I Am Poem.....	8
Storyboarding.....	8
Choral Reading.....	8
Discussion Questions.....	9
CLOSURE ROUTINES.....	9
Tic-Tac-Toe Celebration Board.....	9
Closing Circle.....	10
■ RESOURCES.....	10
■ ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE.....	10

## ■ INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, over two-thirds of children report suffering at least one traumatic event by age sixteen. In a society where children hear about climate change, school shootings, global pandemics, and more on a daily basis, resiliency has understandably become more of a challenge. Elementary children are increasingly showing signs of anxiety, sleeplessness, and difficulty concentrating, as well as problems controlling anger, sadness, or shame. However, scientists know the ability to face and overcome adversity is a learned trait. Educators play a crucial role in teaching children to manage emotions, develop healthy identities, and pursue individual goals.

The books in this text set focus on the following line of inquiry for elementary students: *How do we persevere when we encounter barriers? What can celebrating our differences teach us about overcoming adversity?* Teachers can choose one or any combination of books and strategies in the set for whole-class instruction, reading circles, or independent reading as they work to build a supportive classroom environment where children are empowered with the tools of resiliency.

## ■ ABOUT THE TITLES IN THIS COLLECTION



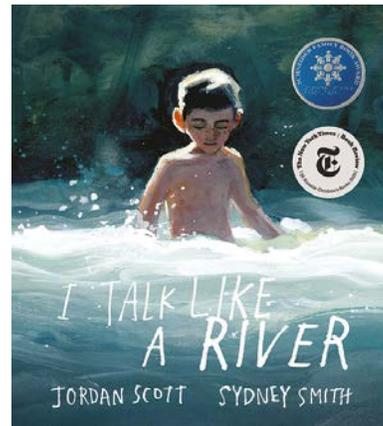
### **I Am Every Good Thing**

DERRICK BARNES  
Illustrated by GODRON C. JAMES

978-0-52-551877-8  
Hardcover | Nancy Paulsen Books  
32 pages | \$17.99 | Lexile: AD610L

Also available: AUDIO DOWNLOAD, E-BOOK

In *I Am Every Good Thing*, author Derrick Barnes encourages young readers to remain positive and affirm their self-worth in the little and big things in life.

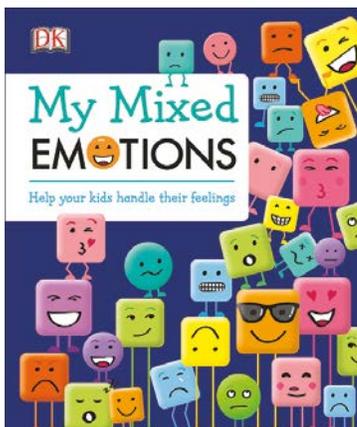


### **I Talk Like a River**

JORDAN SCOTT  
Illustrated by SYDNEY SMITH

978-0-82-344559-2  
Hardcover | Neal Porter Books  
40 pages | \$18.99

*I Talk Like a River*, by Jordan Scott, is the uplifting story of one little boy's struggle to accept his stutter and connect with his classmates.



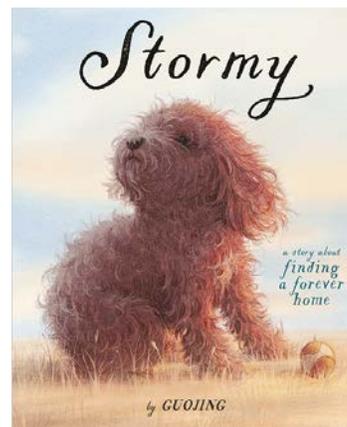
### **My Mixed Emotions**

DK

978-1-46-547332-5  
Hardcover | DK Children  
80 pages | \$17.99 | Lexile: 670L

Also available: E-BOOK

Elinor Greenwood's *My Mixed Emotions* teaches children how to recognize, accept, and manage all types of feelings.



### **Stormy**

GUOJING

978-1-52-477176-8  
Hardcover | Schwartz & Wade  
40 pages | \$17.99 | Lexile: NP

Also available: E-BOOK

With detailed and emotional imagery, Guojing's wordless picture book, *Stormy*, is a tale of patience, resilience, and the meaning of home.

## ■ CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

The following classroom strategies promote equity and inclusion by addressing students' social-emotional learning needs at the beginning, middle, and end of class.

### WELCOMING ROUTINES

These activities help students feel welcome and allow time to transition and prepare for learning.

#### Positive Affirmations

In *I Am Every Good Thing* and *My Mixed Emotions*, children are encouraged to celebrate their individualism. Teachers can make each student feel unique and special with a personalized hallway greeting. Ask students to help design a high-five, handshake, or dance step to perform together as they enter the classroom. Alternatively, greet students with a word of affirmation. It might be a compliment on their appearance, a question about their well-being, or even a special nickname. Personalized greetings help students feel recognized and affirmed, which in turn readies them for classroom interactions and learning. Another way to use daily affirmations is to post them on the whiteboard screen and invite students to say them out loud together before class starts. Examples of these greeting routines are posted below:

<https://tinyurl.com/eeguide1>

<https://tinyurl.com/eeguide2>

<https://tinyurl.com/eeguide3>

#### Morning Meeting

In *Stormy* and *I Talk Like a River*, characters learn the power of connecting with others to enhance confidence and to promote healthy and empathetic relationships. "Morning Meetings" are structured, daily routines that aim for similar goals in the classroom. Developed as part of the responsive classroom model, the morning meeting is a class circle that consists of four parts: a *greeting* where all students acknowledge one another and the teacher; a *sharing* session where classmates listen and respond to each other; a collaborative *activity* that emphasizes social or academic skills; and a teacher *message* connected to the day's learning. For example, students might each offer one adjective about how they have "arrived" in class before interviewing a partner, engaging in a group-building game like Jenga, then discussing an inquiry scenario in small groups to prepare for a science lesson. Regardless of the home environment children have just come from, the routine of morning meetings provides a structure and a space where students feel safe, welcomed, and ready to learn. For an example of a morning meeting, see: <https://www.edutopia.org/video/morning-meetings-creating-safe-space-learning>.

### Mindfulness Minute

In *My Mixed Emotions*, readers are encouraged to engage in mindful breathing exercises designed to calm anxiety, promote awareness, and build student capacity for self-regulation.

Provide students the opportunity to “arrive” each day, turn on their brains, and prepare for learning by leading them in a mindfulness minute prior to starting class. Using a silence signal, such as a countdown or a chime, indicate to students it is time to be silent. Direct them to close their eyes and slow their breathing, to become aware of their bodies, of what they hear, smell, and feel. These directions allow students to focus, to transition, to center themselves, and to prepare their brains for learning. This video from Calm Classroom illustrates the positive classroom impact of a mindfulness minute: <https://tinyurl.com/calmclassroom1>.

### ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

These engaging activities promote student self-efficacy and self-awareness through creativity, movement, and collaboration.

### Emotions Word Wall

Classroom word walls, typically focused on content or spelling, encourage students to build vocabulary and use it on a daily basis. Students will likewise benefit from an emotions word wall that helps them name and explain their feelings. As with all word walls, students should be provided time and intentional activities to internalize this important vocabulary. One activity is a word sort, using emotions words such as those on page 78 in *My Mixed Emotions*. Ask small groups to work together in order to sort adjectives aligned with the four major emotions: *sad*, *happy*, *angry*, and *scared*. Students can work independently or with partners, and the sort can be drawn or built manually with colored index cards. Students might also explore Plutchik’s Wheel of Emotions, a digital tool naming and defining emotions as they intensify in color from outside to inside the wheel (<https://www.6seconds.org/2022/03/13/plutchik-wheel-emotions/>).

### Mood Meter

*My Mixed Emotions* asserts that “all emotions, including anger, fear, and sadness, are important. So go ahead, show your feelings” (p. 12). The mood meter, developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, provides students “permission to feel,” because emotions matter. The meter consists of four colored quadrants and provides children a vocabulary to recognize and express their emotions. Students use words or symbols in the red quadrant to denote anger, the blue quadrant to communicate sadness, the yellow for excitement, and the green for calm.

Once students recognize their feelings, they can choose to take a “meta-moment” and decide what thoughts and actions, if any, should come next. Teachers can choose to provide time for the entire class to read their mood and perhaps write or

talk about it, or they can suggest students use the tool individually as needed. As an extension, teachers can provide each student with a set of colored cards. Throughout the school day, students can place the appropriate card on their desk so that they can acknowledge their feelings and communicate them with trusted adults. More information and examples of the mood meter can be found at the following links:

- <https://tinyurl.com/moodmetergrade2>
- <https://heartmindonline.org/resources/boost-emotional-intelligence-with-the-mood-meter>
- <https://moodmeterapp.com/>

### Song Analysis

Use a popular children’s song to connect students to important ideas in the texts. Disney’s “Let It Go” aligns with themes from each of the texts in this set. Play a video of the song that includes on screen lyrics (<https://tinyurl.com/eeguide4>). Ask students to watch and listen once for enjoyment and to sing along, and a second time to capture any words or phrases that stand out. Afterwards, students can share their selected lyrics with a partner, small group, or the class, and explain what the words mean to them or why they stand out.

Next, discuss specific lyrics that align with the class text. For instance, connect “a kingdom of isolation” to the boy in *I Talk Like a River*, who isolates himself out of embarrassment and shame. Or, point out how “this swirling storm inside” is a metaphor for heavy feelings just like in *Stormy* and *My Mixed Emotions*. Another connection is Elsa’s “I don’t care what they’re going to say,” which is similar to “I am not what they may call me” in *I Am Every Good Thing*. Students are told to “let it go” when *My Mixed Emotions* discusses frustration and anger. As students read the texts in this set, they are better prepared to recognize and understand how metaphors, similes, and imagery help writers express meaning. Students might then use figurative language to express their own feelings.

### Image Analysis

Each of the texts in this set uses compelling visuals to engage student readers as they learn about resilience. Challenge students to analyze an image from one of the texts on their own or with a partner. Picture selections might include the two-page spread in *Stormy* where the dog waits in the rain, the anger iceberg on page 34 of *My Mixed Emotions*, or the two-page spread in *I Talk Like a River* where the boy swims through a river of words. Another example is the illustration in *I Am Every Good Thing* where the boy falls off his skateboard only to get right back up again in the next frame. Model for students how to take multiple looks at a picture, first for an overall impression, then for specific words and images, and finally for implied meaning. For scaffolding, students can use a thinking routine, such as “See, Think, Wonder”, or an image analysis template such as the one below:

See, Think, Wonder: <https://tinyurl.com/eeguide5>

Image analysis template: <https://tinyurl.com/eeguide6>

### I Am Poem

Every page of *I Am Every Good Thing* begins with “I am” or “I’m,” such as “I am a gentleman and a scholar.” This framing provides positive affirmations for young readers. Build confidence and resilience in the classroom by challenging students to write their own “I am” affirmations or poems. Students might imitate the structure of *I Am Every Good Thing*, they can choose to write freestyle, or they can use a template such as this one from Read Write Think: [https://www.readwritethink.org/sites/default/files/resources/lesson\\_images/lesson391/I-am-poem.pdf](https://www.readwritethink.org/sites/default/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson391/I-am-poem.pdf). After writing, students might share with a partner, small group, or the class. One other possibility is to ask students to record themselves using a digital tool such as Flip (<https://info.flip.com>), which is a scaffold for reticent students and a platform for larger audiences. The “I am” poem provides reflection and expression opportunities for the writer, as well as social awareness and peer empathy development for classmates. As an extension, students might create illustrations to accompany their poem.

### Storyboarding

In *Stormy*, neither the dog nor the human gives up on one another. As the dog sits through the dark storm, he keeps his eye on the light, and his patience and persistence is rewarded when the storm is over. *Stormy* is resilient. Explain to students that resilience can be learned and when they change perspective, they can often change their “story.” Provide students with an example of resilience by showing the opening segment from *Inside Out* (<https://tinyurl.com/eeguide7>), the Pixar film about emotions. In this segment, Riley is moving to a new home. In a short span of time, she changes from excited, to disappointed, to worried, before purposely changing perspective and ending up hopeful.

As students watch the short clip, ask them to jot down each emotion Riley experiences. After watching, students can share the various emotions they observed. Discuss: How did Riley get “unstuck”? What did she intentionally do to change her point of view? How has she changed her story? Students’ answers might include that Riley instigates a game, imagines her decorated room, or suggests a pizza lunch. Next, ask students to think of an instance from their own life where they felt angry, disappointed, or sad. What did they do to get unstuck? Or, what could they do next time in order to change perspective? Ask students to create a storyboard illustrating their example using an online template such as <https://www.storyboardthat.com/>.

### Choral Reading

In *I Talk Like a River*, the boy feels self-conscious and lonely due to his stuttering. One way to build fluency and speaking confidence in a collaborative classroom setting is choral reading. Discuss with students how practice is an essential part of mastering a skill. Choose one of the texts in this set, and model a fluent read for the class. Next, read short segments aloud, then prompt students to read the same segments out loud with expression and precision. Stop when needed and ask students to repeat the segment.

As an extension, discuss with students how President Joe Biden stuttered as a child and felt lonely and embarrassed, but practiced until he could speak fluently. Share President Biden’s letter to the Stuttering Association for the Young (<https://www.say.org/letter-from-vice-president-biden/>). Ask: What does Joe Biden say about perseverance? Why does he say “you have nothing to be ashamed of, and you have reason to be proud”? In what ways does Biden’s childhood experience illustrate resilience?

### Discussion Questions

The following questions align with the titles in this set and can be used for partner talks, journal prompts, or large-class discussion.

1. Describe a place that makes you feel strong or safe. Why is it so meaningful to you?
2. What is your best mistake? How did you learn from it?
3. Write a phrase that you can say over and over to yourself when you are angry/sad/scared.
4. Who are some trusted adults you can go to when you are having a tough time? Explain why they are your “go-to” grown-ups.
5. What is your favorite place to be in nature? How does it make you feel?
6. What is a skill you want to learn? What can you do to get better?
7. Name a time you felt left out. Now list some ways you can help classmates feel included.
8. What makes you feel *stormy* inside? What has worked to calm you down?
9. List three things you are grateful for, and explain why each is important to you.
10. How would you advise a friend who feels “stuck”? How can changing perspective help?

### CLOSURE ROUTINES

These end-of-class activities provide time for reflection and promote classroom community.

#### Tic-Tac-Toe Celebration Board

In *I Am Every Good Thing*, Derrick Barnes wants kids to celebrate themselves and each other. Challenge students to fill out a tic-tac-toe board that celebrates one positive word about themselves in the middle square and one positive word about each of their classmates in the other squares. Play music and ask students to walk around and share their celebrations with every classmate in one of the rows.

Students can add the accolades they hear about themselves to the space in the center. In the coming days, students can repeat the activity with a different row on their tic-tac-toe board. Students can refer to these words of encouragement whenever they feel angry, anxious, or down.

### **Closing Circle**

For many students, the end of the day brings exhaustion and anxiety about after-school activities or home life. Closing circle routines aim to promote a calm and hopeful transition by celebrating the day's accomplishments. About ten minutes prior to the end of the day, ask students to sit in a large circle. Ask students to take turns and share a positive takeaway: one thing that went well, one classmate who helped make the day better, or one new thing learned. With this routine, students are more likely to leave with a sense of purpose and positivity about the next day. For more information on closing circles, see <https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/closing-circle/>.

## **RESOURCES**

The following resources provide more information and ideas for addressing student mental health and integrating resilience lessons into teaching and learning.

- <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-the-science-of-resilience/>
- <https://www.common Sense.org/education/articles/inside-out-and-sel-a-movie-guide-and-lesson-plan-for-your-classroom>
- <https://www.edutopia.org/article/5-ways-build-resilience-students>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/child-trauma/understanding-child-trauma>
- <https://tinyurl.com/eeguide8>
- <https://casel.org/sel-framework/>
- <https://tinyurl.com/eeguide9>

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE**

Laura Reis Mayer is an instructional coach and National Board Certified Teacher in Asheville, North Carolina. She has taught middle, high school, and college English, speech, drama, and literacy. As consultant to various education organizations, she develops and facilitates professional learning on high-quality curriculums, college and career ready standards, and educational equity. She has written more than twenty teacher guides for various publishers.



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