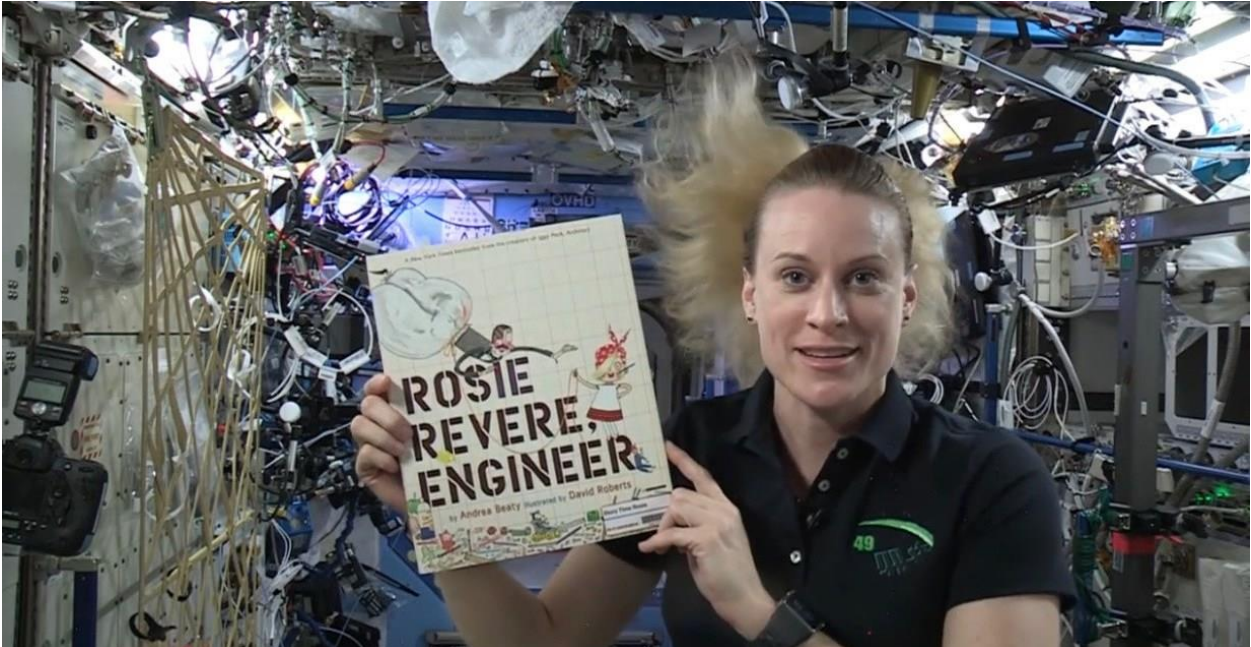


Children's Books that Teach Optimism



Astronaut Kate Rubins reading to children from the International Space Station. Readings are available on the *Story Time From Space* website. <https://storytimefromspace.com/>

Ada Twist, Scientist, Andrea Beaty, Harry N. Abrams, 2016.

Ada is curious and passionate about science. She perseveres in her efforts to figure out the world.

The Big Orange Splot, Daniel Pinkwater, Scholastic, 1977.

After a big orange splot of paint lands on Mr. Plumbeans' house, he has nonconforming, optimistic dreams of how to redecorate.

The Big Umbrella, Amy June Bates and Juniper Bates, Simon & Schuster, 2018.

Using an umbrella as a symbol for inclusion, children learn that the more you give, the more you get.

Bluebird, Lindsey Yankey, Simply Read Books, 2014.

This little bird is used to flying with help from her friend the wind. When the wind goes missing, she is afraid to try to fly on her own. How will she gain the confidence she needs to fly?

Bully, Laura Vaccaro Seeger, Roaring Brook Press, 2013.

Bully is a bull, and he is—at least for now—also a bully. After a mean older bull tells him to go away, he shouts “No” at his friends when they ask him to play and calls them unkind names. Eventually, Bully faces up to his mean ways and develops empathy.

The Carrot Seed, Ruth Krauss, HarperCollins, 2004.

In this book first published in 1945, an optimistic little boy has faith that his planted carrot seed will grow despite all the naysayers telling him otherwise.

Charlotte and the Quiet Place, Deborah Sosin, Plum Blossom, 2015.

Charlotte yearns to be in a quiet place, but everywhere she goes there is noise from her dog, sirens, swings, and more. She searches until she finds a quiet place where she can be calm.

Chip the Little Computer, Dr. Hope. Alpine Publishing, 1999. In English and Spanish.

Chip personifies the values of perseverance and optimism in fulfilling his dream of teaching children to learn.

Chocolate Milk, Por Favor: Celebrating Diversity with Empathy, Maria Dimondy, Cardinal Rule Press 2015.

Gabe, who comes from Brazil, speaks Portuguese. Johnny, a classmate at his new school, is not happy to have Gabe join the class. Through their shared love of soccer, the boys learn to communicate and appreciate each other.

Daydreamers, Tom Feelings, Dial, 1981.

The poetic voices of young African-American children are heard through daydreams of hope and optimism. This was the very first book featured on the PBS Kids' TV show *Reading Rainbow*.

The Dot, Peter H. Reynolds, Candlewick, 2003.

A wise and thoughtful teacher inspires a child who says, "I can't draw," to express her ideas and feelings in imaginative ways.

The Energy Bus For Kids: A Story About Staying Positive and Overcoming Challenges, Jon Gordon, Wiley, 2012.

Joy, the bus driver, is able to turn around George's bad day by showing him how a positive attitude can overcome any challenge.

Everyone Can Learn to Ride a Bicycle, Chris Raschka, Schwartz & Wade, 2013.

For many children, learning to ride a bike is a huge accomplishment and a mark of independence. This book outlines the steps in choosing and then learning to ride a bike from using training wheels to removing the training wheels to riding solo.

Extra Yarn, Mac Barnett, Balzer + Bray, 2012.

Annabelle uses her never-ending yarn to transform a black and white world to one of happy colors. The book shows that happiness can't be bought — or stolen.

Girl, You Are Magic! Ashley Aya Ferguson, Copy & Content Boutique, 2018.

Especially powerful for girls, this book is in the form of an inspirational poem. The text focuses on identifying and believing in one's unique abilities.

Glad Monster, Sad Monster, Ed Emberley and Anne Miranda, LB Kids, 1997.

Brightly colored monsters act out different emotions in this book. The text will help children name, identify, and handle their feelings.

Good News Bad News, Jeff Mack, Chronicle Books, 2012.

Using only the four words of the title as text, the adventures of good friends optimistic Rabbit and pessimistic Mouse are explored through their contrasting dispositions.

Happiness Is A Choice, Suzy Liebermann, Happy Language Kids LLC, 2015.

On the island of Optimism, Hugo the Starfish finds that true happiness begins with optimism.

Howard B. Wigglebottom Learns to Listen, Howard Binkow. Lerner Publishing Group, 2006.

Howard is a distracted rabbit who has trouble listening. His teacher and friends find this behavior annoying. He realizes he must change and learn to pay attention.

The Hyena Who Lost Her Laugh: A Story About Changing Your Negative Thinking, Jessica Lamb-Shapiro, Childsworld/Childsplay, 2001.

Hillary the Hyena learns that by thinking optimistically, life is better and she can find her lost laugh.

I Can Do It Myself!, Diane Adams, Peachtree Publishers, 2013.

Emily Pearl can do many things on her own. She often tells her mother, "I can do it myself!" There comes a time, however, when Emily needs to ask for help.

If You Plant a Seed, Kadir Nelson, Balzer + Bray, 2015.

Through the nuanced illustrations, readers learn the importance of kindness and generosity by watching a rabbit and mouse wait patiently for their planted seeds to grow.

Justine, We're Late!; Give It Back!; and No, It's Mine! (series on teaching conflict management to children), Shimrit Nothman, Self-Published, 2014.

Available on Kindle.

Written by a professional conflict negotiator, these three books focus on the same characters, Benjy and Justine, who must figure out how to handle their disagreements.

Last Stop on Market Street, Matt de la Pena, G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2015.

This multi-award winning book (both Caldecott and Newbery Awards for 2016, among others) tells the story of a boy and his grandmother taking the bus home after church services one Sunday. While the boy sees only negativity—they have no car, the

neighborhoods are run down—his grandmother looks at the same things and sees only beauty and positivity.

The Little Engine That Could, Watty Piper, Philomel, 1930; 2005.

This classic book, familiar to generations of children, is the quintessential story of the value of optimism. Encourage children to join in with the little train as he says, “I think I can,” again and again. Some would contend that the book is a metaphor for the American dream.

McElligot’s Pool, Dr. Seuss, Random House Books, 1947.

This 70-year old classic proves that a child’s optimism can’t be stopped by adult cynicism.

Mouse Was Mad, Linda Urban, HMH Books for Young Readers, 2012.

Mouse’s friends get mad in different ways—stomping, hopping, and screaming. Mouse wants to express his feelings in a way that works for him, is appropriate, and helps him calm down—being still and quiet.

My Mouth is a Volcano, Julia Cook, National Center for Youth Issues, 2006.

Louis has very important thoughts and sometimes they come out so fast that he interrupts other people. This book can help children learn to respect and listen to others while waiting for their turn to talk.

Pass It On, Sophy Henn, Philomel Books, 2017.

This sunny book highlights the power of being kind by passing on a smile and bringing happiness to others.

Pete the Cat and His Magic Sunglasses, Kimberly and James Dean, HarperCollins, 2013.

It takes a pair of magic sunglasses for Pete to realize there’s an optimistic mood inside of him—with or without the glasses.

Rain!, Linda Ashman, HMH Books for Young Readers, 2014.

When rain comes to town, an optimistic young boy is able to change a grumpy old man’s attitude.

Rosie Revere, Engineer, Andrea Beaty, Harry N. Abrams, 2013.

Quiet by day, Rosie is a brilliant inventor at night. To help her aunt reach her goal of flying, Rosie builds a flying contraption. It doesn’t work, but her aunt encourages her to keep going in the face of failure.

Saffron Ice Cream, Rashin Kheiriyeh, Arthus A. levine Books, 2018.

Rashin misses her old life in Iran—especially the saffron ice cream she shared with her best friend. Despite her sad feelings, she optimistically realizes there are new memories to be made in her adopted country.

Sink or Swim, Valerie Coulman, Lobster Press, 2017.

This book reprises Ralph the Cow's role as the quintessential optimist who won't let a little thing like being a cow limit his possibilities.

Spin, Rebecca Janni, Grosset & Dunlap, 2017.

Through the metaphor of persevering on a bike ride through the hills and valleys of life, we learn that we can reframe anything into something positive.

Talk and Work It Out, Cheri J. Meiners, Free Spirit Publishing, 2005.

In simple words and an engaging format, this book reviews how children can use conflict resolution to resolve their disagreements.

Terrific, Jon Agee, Dial Books, 2017.

Shipwrecked on a desert island, the world's biggest curmudgeon is stranded with an optimistic talking parrot who makes him want to surrender his pessimistic ways.

Theo's Mood: A Book of Feelings, Maryann Cocca-Lerffler, Albert Whitman & Company, 2013.

On Mood Monday the children share how they feel after spending the weekend at home. Theo has a hard time deciding how he feels. After listening to his classmates, he realizes he has multiple feelings.

Tomorrow Most Likely, Dave Eggers, Chronicle Books, 2019.

This bedtime book focus on all the possibilities that tomorrow might bring. "Tomorrow most likely will be a great day because you are in it."

Too Shy for Show-and-Tell, Beth Bracken, Picture Window Books, 2012.

Sam is a quiet giraffe with a wonderful thing to share at show-and-tell. Unfortunately, he is so quiet he is scared to talk in front of the class. He ultimately overcomes his fear and takes a risk so his classmates can learn more about him.

The Tortoise and the Hare, Jerry Pinkney, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2013. Available in Chinese and English.

From Caldecott-award-winning artist and storyteller Jerry Pinckney, this version of the classic tale can foster discussions about the value of perseverance. Slow and steady wins the race.

Trouble at the Watering Hole: The Adventures of Emo and Chickie, Gregg F. Relyea and Joshua N. Weiss, Resolution Press, 2017.

The forest animals are fighting with each other because their watering hole is too small. A bird and a bear cub work together to figure out how to solve the problem without fighting with each other.

Two Problems for Sophia, Jim Averbeck, Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2018.

Noodles, Sophia's pet giraffe, has two problems: his kisses are sloppily wet and his snoring keeps everyone awake. Sophia's family tells her that she must solve these problems, which she cleverly does.

Unstoppable Me, Adam Kirks with Bethany Hamilton, Zonderkids, 2018.

Makana the lion loved to surf until the day she wiped out. Now she is scared to surf. Her friend helps her find her courage to try again and persevere.

What Do You Do With a Problem? Kobi Yamada, Compendium, Inc., 2016.

A child has a problem that won't go away. The longer the child avoids the problem, the bigger it gets. What will happen when he gains the courage to face the problem?

What If?, Frances Thomas, Hyperion, 1999.

A Little Monster is worried about the "what if's" of life. His mother reframes his negative questions into positive thinking so that he can go back to sleep.

When Pigs Fly, Valerie Coulman, Lobster Press, 2003, 2017.

Ralph the Cow wants a bicycle, despite the fact that everyone tells him cows can't ride bicycles. Ralph shows everyone, however, that perseverance and a growth mindset triumph over negativity.

Tips on Reading Optimism-Related Books with Children

- Read the book aloud, all the way through, at least once at group time and one-on-one with individual children.
- Read the book together again with the same group or individuals as before. This time, stop frequently to ask pertinent questions and engage children in discussion.
- Discuss the choices the main characters make, whether their reactions are based on facts or fears, and how they resolve the problem confronting them optimistically. You can tailor your questions to fit the story and the children:
 - What happened to _____ in this story?
 - How did this make _____ feel?
 - What do you suppose _____ was thinking inside his/her head?
 - What would you say to _____?
 - What would you have suggested that _____ do?
 - How did _____ think things through?
 - What plan did _____ come up with?
 - What do you think will happen next time _____ has a problem?

- Would you have ended the story like this? If not, how would you end the book? Why did you pick this ending?
- Relate the main characters' experiences to those of the children. Make sure the children understand the book's message and how thinking optimistically makes life better.
- Repeat the steps with the children (both one-on-one and with groups) reading aloud as many books as you can fit into your daily program.