

Children's Books that Model Healthier Cognitive Styles for Children

This list of children's books is meant to be a starting point, designed to get your own imaginations going. There are thousands of wonderful books that illustrate the skills children (and the parents that read aloud to them) can use to manage anxious moments, develop flexibility, and revel in the unexpected moments of growing up.

UP to AGE 5

Not a Box by Antoinette Portis (HarperCollins, 2007)

A bunny shows that he won't be boxed in by a box. Teaches kids: imagination, versatility, thinking outside the box

The Carrot Seed by Ruth Krauss, ill. by Crockett Johnson (HarperCollins, reprint 2004)

A classic, simple, sweet tale of internal persistence in the face of grown-up doubt.

Teaches kids: confidence, persistence, determination, positive expectancy

Yahoo for You by Dana Meachen Rau, ill. by Cary Pillo (Compass Point Books, 2006)

This book offers a direct and simple message to little ones about trying new things.

Teaches kids: Flexibility, risk-taking, exploring

Brave, Brave Mouse by Michaela Morgan, ill. by Michelle Cartlidge (Albert Whitman & Company, 2004)

A mouse learns how and when to say yes, and that "no" works, too, sometimes. Teaches kids: selectivity, discrimination, the good combination of risks and limits

We'll All Go Exploring by Maggee Spicer and Richard Thompson, ill. by Kim Lafave (Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2003)

The title is repeated, supporting the simple joys of exploring the world around us.

Teaches kids: exploring, investigating

Make it Change by David Evans and Claudette Williams (Dorling Lindersley Publishers Ltd, 1992)

A science book for children with simple experiments that promote the thinking *and* the doing. Teaches kids: experimenting, change happens, taking action, cause and effect

AGE 4 and UP

The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark by Jill Tomlinson and Paul Howard (Egmont UK, 2004)

Plop the owl learns to see darkness as less scary when he experiences it from others' perspectives. (There are several other books in this series with titles like *The Hen Who Wouldn't Give Up*.) Teaches kids: Flexibility, shifts in perspective, experience is malleable

Time of Wonder by Robert McCloskey (The Viking Press, 1968)

Children experience (safely) a hurricane on their beloved Maine island, and then discover how the landscape changes in interesting ways. Teaches kids: Adaptability, change happens, shifts in perspective, flexibility

Once Upon an Ordinary School Day by Colin McNaughton, ill. by Satoshi Kitamura (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005)

A regular school day takes some unexpected turns in this wonderful, magical book. Teaches kids: imagination, possibilities, thinking outside the box, positive expectancy

Begin at the Beginning: A Little Artist Learns about Life by Amy Schwartz (Katherine Tegen Books, 2005)

An overwhelmed little girl learns how to make a big challenge manageable. Teaches kids: steps and sequencing, accessing resources

Something Might Happen by Helen Lester, ill. by Lynn Musinger (Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, 2003)

Yep. Something might. Teaches kids: How to manage the unknown, experimentation, discovering and accessing resources

The Summerfolk by Doris Burns (Weekly Reader Book Club Edition, 1968)

A shy, isolated, grumpy boy meets a unique cadre of children, and has a good time in spite of himself...a favorite from Lynn's childhood that delights even after thousands of readings. Teaches kids: malleability of experience, flexibility, shifting perspectives, social skills, risk-taking

Wanda's Monster by Eileen Spinelli, ill. by Nancy Hayashi (Albert Whitman & Company, 2002)

Wanda learns of a whole new way to handle a monster in the closet, and learns that worries come, but then go, too. Teaches kids: worries and fears are manageable and malleable, shifting perspectives, creativity and accessing resources

Beverly Billingsly Takes a Bow by Alexander Stadler (Harcourt Children's Books, 2002)

Beverly gets hesitantly into the action, and discovers that good things happen when you put yourself in the game, just sometimes not how you expect. Teaches kids: flexibility, discovery, the ability to create a happy ending, the need to take action

Beverly Billingsly Borrows a Book by Alexander Stadler (Harcourt Children's Books, 2003)

Beverly shows how problems can get bigger in your imagination...this one shows avoidance in action! Teaches kids: action helps more than ruminating and avoidance, the pitfalls of jumping to conclusions, sometimes solutions are simple

Sally Jean, the Bicycle Queen by Carl Best, ill. by Christine Davenier (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006)

Sally Jean grows in and out of her beloved bicycles, while solving many conundrums along the way. Teaches kids: persistence, creativity, resourcefulness, steps and sequencing, mastery

Fortunately by Remy Charlip (Perfection Learning, 2010)

What happens when you're invited to a birthday party thousands of miles away? You figure out how to get there! Teaches kids: resourcefulness, hopefulness, persistence

A Friend Like Ed by Karen Wagner and Janet Pedersen (Orchard/Watts Group, 2000)

Ed is a bit eccentric, and Mildred goes in search of a more "normal" friend, only to return to Ed, kookiness and all. Teaches kids: accepting differences, loyalty, flexibility, the importance and possibility of connection and friendship

Watching... by Suzy Chic and Monique Toursay (WingedChariot Press, 2007)

A sweet little book about patience, and the joys of letting things unfold in their own time. Teaches kids: patience, planning, the opposite of impulsivity, generosity, sequencing

The Frog and Toad Books Collection Box Set by Arnold Lobel (HarperCollins, 2004)

The classic read-aloud stories, all with a moral worthy of discussion. Wonderfully, sweetly written. Teaches kids: all sorts of great things about friendship and bravery and flexibility and kindness

Ming Lo Moves the Mountain by Arnold Lobel (Scholastic, 1986)

Ming Lo and his wife want to move the mountain away from their house, but discover that a change in perspective offers the same happy result. There's more than one way to move a mountain! Teaches kids: flexibility, creativity, problem solving

Fables by Arnold Lobel (HarperCollins 1980)

More tales from Mr. Lobel, with fresh and funny morals and wonderful illustrations. Teaches kids: flexibility, risk-taking, the power of observation, the dangers of getting stuck

Beetle McGrady Eats Bugs by Megan McDonald (Greenwillow Books, 2005)

Beetle McGrady is a daring girl, who takes on the challenge of eating bugs, just to show she can. This will make picky eaters squirm, but Beetle's determination in the face of her cautious classmates is contagious. Teaches kids: persistence, experimenting, risk-taking

The Opposite by Tom MacRae and Elena Odriozola (Peachtree Pub Ltd, 2006)

This is a brilliant book that describes how every anxious kid should tackle the part inside that holds him/her back. We wish we wrote this book and are very glad we came across it. Teaches kids: the critical concept of confronting anxiety and fear rather than avoiding

Alvah and Arvilla by Mary Lyn Ray (Harcourt Children's Books, 1994)

A New England couple decide it's time to see the Pacific Ocean, but have to take their farm animals with them on the journey. Teaches kids: problem solving, flexibility, and determination

Snowflake Bentley by Jacqueline Briggs Martin, ill. by Mary Azarian (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009)

This book tells the story of Wilson Bentley, determined to photograph snowflakes and capture for the world their beauty and individuality. Despite little support or understanding from others, Bentley persevered and revealed to the world what we now take for granted: that no two snowflakes are alike. Teaches kids: perseverance, creativity, and courage in the face of failure