



WALDEN
WISE

CoCreating WITH KIDS Summer Reading List

Curated by Walden Wise CEO, Kathleen O'Brien, Ph.D.





Dear CoCreators,

We are thrilled to invite you to embark on a special journey to nurture the emotional well-being of the kids in your life through the magic of reading.

As part of the Walden Wise community, we believe in championing kids' emotional health through our guiding practices. To support you in this endeavor, I have personally curated a collection of books that align with our guiding practices. Each book choice is a meaningful step in fostering the emotional growth of kids.

By reading together, you create precious moments of bonding, empathy, and joy. It's an opportunity for emotional connection, comfort, and confidence to flourish. As you explore different characters and their feelings, children develop empathy and a deeper understanding of their own emotions, building essential emotional intelligence. Reading also expands their emotional vocabulary, providing them with the tools to express themselves effectively. They discover coping strategies and learn that it's okay to feel a range of emotions. It becomes a natural stress reliever, offering a tranquil escape from the busyness of everyday life.

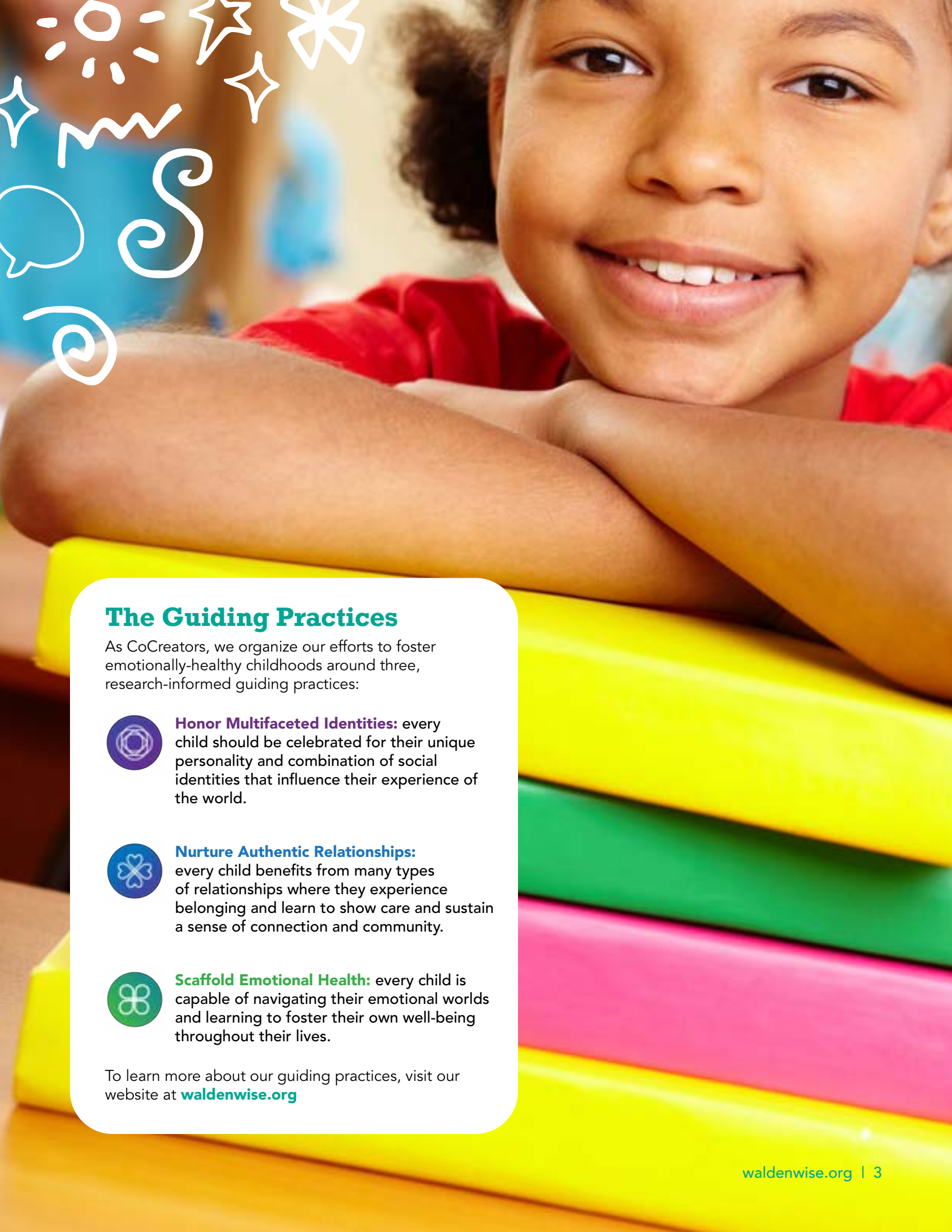
Books spark imagination and creativity, allowing children to explore new worlds and ideas. Through imaginative play and storytelling inspired by their reading adventures, kids develop creative thinking, further supporting their emotional well-being. Get ready to dive into a world of wonder with our specially curated book list, where each selection is thoughtfully designated under our guiding practices: Honoring Multifaceted Identities, Nurturing Authentic Relationships, and Scaffolding Emotional Health. These delightful reads will not only captivate the imagination, but also nurture emotional growth in alignment with the practices we hold dear.

Let's embrace the power of reading together and create a world where emotional health thrives. Snuggle up, open a book, and embark on this beautiful adventure of connection and growth.

Enjoy your joy-filled journey,

Kathleen O'Brien, Ph.D.
CEO, Walden Wise

PS. Did you receive our summer book list for CoCreators specially curated by our Founding Scientific Advisors that serves as a companion piece to this book list for kids? If not, [get it here.](#)



The Guiding Practices

As CoCreators, we organize our efforts to foster emotionally-healthy childhoods around three, research-informed guiding practices:



Honor Multifaceted Identities: every child should be celebrated for their unique personality and combination of social identities that influence their experience of the world.



Nurture Authentic Relationships: every child benefits from many types of relationships where they experience belonging and learn to show care and sustain a sense of connection and community.



Scaffold Emotional Health: every child is capable of navigating their emotional worlds and learning to foster their own well-being throughout their lives.

To learn more about our guiding practices, visit our website at waldenwise.org

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Extend the reading experience and engage in meaningful conversations with the kids in your life using these questions. By exploring the emotions, relating to the characters, discussing emotional management strategies, imagining different perspectives, and applying the story's lessons to real life, you further support children's emotional health and growth.

Let the magic of storytelling spark insightful discussions and create lasting connections.

› How did the characters in the story feel?

Encourage children to identify and discuss the emotions experienced by the characters. Explore why certain events or situations evoked specific feelings. This question helps children develop emotional awareness and empathy.

› Have you ever felt the same way as the characters?

Invite children to reflect on their own experiences and emotions that resonate with the story. Encourage them to share personal connections, helping them relate the story to their own lives and foster self-reflection.

› How do you think the characters managed their emotions?

Discuss the strategies employed by the characters to cope with their emotions. Explore whether those strategies were helpful or if there could have been alternative approaches. This question promotes emotional regulation and problem-solving skills.

› What would you do if you were in the character's situation?

Encourage children to consider how they might react if they found themselves facing similar challenges or emotions. This question fosters perspective-taking and empowers children to think critically about their own emotional responses.

› How can we apply what we learned from the story in our own lives?

Prompt children to reflect on the lessons or messages conveyed in the story and discuss how they can be applied in real-life situations. Encourage them to brainstorm ways to incorporate the story's themes or strategies into their own emotional well-being practices.

These questions serve as springboards for meaningful CoCreator conversations, allowing children to dive deeper into the emotional aspects of the story and relate it to their own emotional health.



CoCreating With Kids Book List



Honor Multifaceted Identities

[I Am Enough](#)

By Grace Byers

This gorgeous, lyrical ode to loving who you are, respecting others, and being kind to one another comes from Empire actor and activist Grace Byers and talented newcomer artist Keturah A. Bobo.

We are all here for a purpose. We are more than enough. We just need to believe it.

[IntersectionAllies: We Make Room for All](#)

By Chelsea Johnson, LaToya Council, Carolyn Choi

The brainchild of three women-of-color sociologists, *IntersectionAllies* is a smooth, gleeful entry into intersectional feminism for kids. Featuring gorgeous illustrations on every page and powerful introductions by activist and law professor Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term “intersectionality,” and Dr. Ange-Marie Hancock Alfaro, author of *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History*, the story’s nine characters proudly describe themselves and their backgrounds, involving topics that range from a physical disability to language brokering, offering an opportunity to take pride in a personal story and connect to collective struggle for justice.

[Where Are You From?](#)

By Yamile Saied Méndez

This resonant and award-winning picture book tells the story of one girl who constantly gets asked a simple question that doesn’t have a simple answer. A great conversation starter in the home or classroom.

[Sulwe](#)

By Lupita Nyong’o

Sulwe has skin the color of midnight. She is darker than everyone in her family. She is darker than anyone in her school. Sulwe just wants to be beautiful and bright, like her mother and sister. Then a magical journey in the night sky opens her eyes and changes everything.

[My Shadow is Pink](#)

By Scott Stuart

My Shadow Is Pink is a beautifully written rhyming story that touches on the subjects of gender identity, self-acceptance, equality and diversity. Inspired by the author’s own little boy, the main character likes princesses, fairies and things “not for boys.” He soon learns (through the support of his dad) that everyone has a shadow that they sometimes feel they need to hide. This is an important book for a new generation of children (and adults alike) which exemplifies the concepts of unconditional love, respect and positive parenting.

CoCreating With Kids Book List



Nurture Authentic Relationships

[Meeting Mimi: A Story About Different Abilities](#)

By Francie Dolan

Introduce your child to the magic of reading, friendship, and inclusion with this children's book. Mimi is new at school, and everyone is excited to get to know her. Join Mimi's classmates as they learn about her different abilities, appreciate diversity, and most of all, make a new friend.

[I Wish You More](#)

By Amy Krouse Rosenthal

From the incomparable team of author Amy Krouse Rosenthal and illustrator Tom Lichtenheld, this exuberant, inspirational book for kids holds more than a single wish or even three wishes—it is filled with endless good wishes. Wishes for curiosity and wonder, for friendship and strength, laughter and peace. Whether celebrating life's joyous milestones, sharing words of encouragement, or observing the wonder of everyday moments, this sweet book is for wishers of all ages.

[Have you filled your Bucket Today? A guide to daily happiness for kids](#)

By Carol McCloud

While using a simple metaphor of a bucket and a dipper, author Carol McCloud illustrates that when we choose to be kind, we not only fill the buckets of those around us, but also fill our OWN bucket! Conversely, when we choose to say or do mean things, we are dipping into buckets. All day long, we are either filling up or dipping into each other's buckets by what we say and what we do. When you're a bucket filler, you make the world a better place to be!

[Right Now, I Am Fine](#)

By Dr. Daniela Owen

The perfect anxiety relief book for kids that teaches essential coping skills. Lots of worry can make kids' tummies feel like they're tied up in knots, making it difficult to concentrate on anything else. *Right Now, I Am Fine* spells out anxiety for kids in a way they'll understand, making it one of the best story books for kids ages 4-8 that equips children with the tools they need to quickly get out of an anxious state.

[We're Better Together](#)

By Eileen Spinelli

Showing that we're better together when we play, when we make music and when everyone pitches in, this beautifully illustrated kindness book celebrates people coming together to solve problems, support communities and honor differences. It's perfect for young children ages 2-5 who are learning about empathy and cooperation, and for sparking meaningful conversations at home or in the classroom.

CoCreating With Kids Book List



Scaffold Emotional Health

[Thank You Body, Thank You Heart](#)

By Jennifer Cohen Harper

Invite a child to explore the many reasons to be grateful for their own body in this engaging bedtime practice. Make this colorful and charming body-scan book a regular part of the nighttime routine and help the children in your life establish greater self-awareness and self-compassion.

[Your Fantastic Elastic Brain: A growth mindset book for kids to stretch and shape their brains](#)

By JoAnn Deak Ph.D.

Did you know you can stretch and grow your own brain? Or that making mistakes is one of the best ways your brain learns? Awarded as one of the best growth mindset books for kids, *Your Fantastic Elastic Brain* teaches all the ways that the brain can develop with exercise, just like the rest of our bodies.

[How To Tame My Anxiety Monster](#)

By Melanie Hawkins

Is there any way to tame him? Can he be a helpful monster that you just might not mind having around? Find out in this delightful new book with practical solutions just for kids that deal with anxiety. Children may also feel empowered as the child in this story becomes more confident. While learning new coping strategies to deal with his anxiety, his Anxiety Monster shrinks. He may not be able to make his Anxiety Monster go away completely, but he can learn to tame him.

[Gratitude Journal for Teens: Prompts to Cultivate a Habit of Awareness and Improve Well-being](#)

By Scarlet Paolicchi

Dealing with stress and uncertainty about school, friends, and the future can be hard for teens—but practicing gratitude can make it easier. This journal helps them record a little bit of gratitude every day, so they can get in the habit of keeping a content and resilient mindset. Each entry includes a brief writing prompt or reflection that encourages teens to notice and remember what they're grateful for.

[The Growth Mindset Workbook for Teens: Say Yes to Challenges, Deal with Difficult Emotions, and Reach Your Full Potential](#)

By Jessica L. Schleider, Ph.D. and Michael C. Mullarkey, Ph.D.

Written by experts in growth mindset and neuroscience, this easy-to-use workbook will show adolescents how to change the way they think, so they can change their life. Learn powerful, proven-effective skills for coping with difficult feelings—including sadness, worry, and anger. And, most importantly, find the tools needed to transform a fixed mindset into a growth mindset, make change happen, and reach your highest aspirations.



**WALDEN
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Walden Wise is a community dedicated to bringing caring adults closer to each other and what works on behalf of children. Our community includes parents, caregivers, teachers, grandparents, aunts, advocates, coaches, physicians, researchers and more who want to improve the lives of children by attending to their emotional health.

Please join us as we share valuable resources, connections and experiences to help you nurture the emotional health of the kids in your life.

To join our community and receive more of the resources we offer, go to **waldenwise.org**

We'd love to hear from you and how you're using this reading list. Email us at **waldenteam@waldenwise.org**