

# You Are Growing All the Time



Deborah Farmer Kris

Illustrated by  
Jennifer Zivoin

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free spirit  
PUBLISHING®





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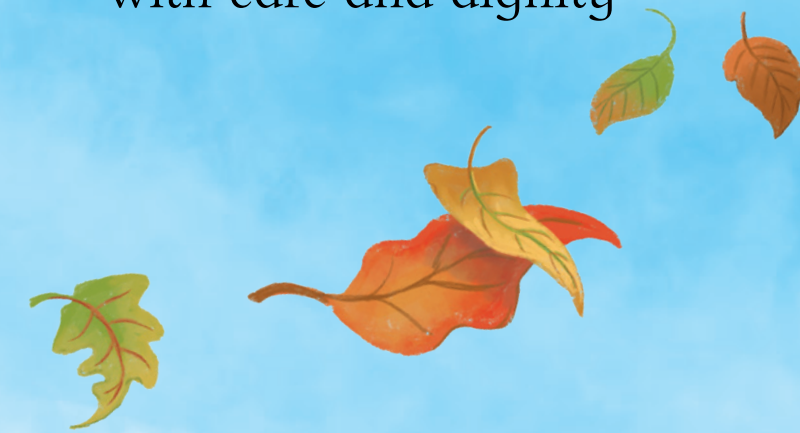
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For Fred Rogers and his timeless  
example of treating children  
with care and dignity





Every year you're taller.  
You need new clothes and shoes.  
You also grow in other ways,  
and that's exciting news!



**You are growing  
all the time.**





Once you crawled on hands and knees—  
I'd pluck you off the floor.



Now you run and skip and slide  
and pull me out the door.



**You are growing all the time.**





## → A Letter to Caregivers ←

The day before kindergarten started, my son was feeling that predictable mix of excitement and nervousness. As I tucked him into bed that night, I told him, “I am so excited for all the books you are going to read this year—and all the words you are going to write, all the pictures you are going to draw, all the structures you are going to build, all the friends you are going to make, and all the ways you will become stronger and more responsible. I love watching you grow!”

That’s the thing about kids: they grow. Sometimes they grow so fast that we want to stop time to savor the moment. And while it’s easy to see how they are growing physically, what they need us to notice most are all the ways they are “growing on the inside.”

That’s a phrase I borrowed from Fred Rogers, to whom this book is dedicated. He wrote, “‘Growing on the inside’ are the words I use when I talk with children about such things as learning to wait,

learning to keep on trying, being able to talk about their feelings, and to express those feelings in constructive ways. These signs of growth need at least as much notice and applause as the outward kind, and children need to feel proud of them.”

In the spirit of Mr. Rogers, here are a few ways to do just that.

### Five Ways to Notice and Applaud Children’s Growth

#### 1. Celebrate Signs of Growth

In the early childhood years, every month seems filled with changes. What are the little things children can do now that they couldn’t do a few months ago? Zip up their jacket? Put away their clothes? Help walk the dog? Name their colors? Write their name? Use their words to tell what they need? Share toys and play cooperatively?

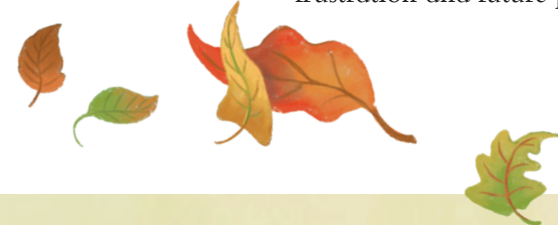


When you see these signs of growth, say so: “You just put on your snow pants all by yourself. You couldn’t do that last year!” Make it a bedtime or mealtime ritual to point out one good thing you noticed that day about your child.

#### 2. Acknowledge Their Effort

Sometimes new learning comes easily . . . and sometimes it doesn’t. Learning new skills takes time and effort—and that can be frustrating for children. As my son once said, “I don’t want to *learn* how to ride a bike, I want to *know* how to ride a bike!” Every child struggles with something—whether it’s learning their letters, tying their shoes, or finding ways to settle big emotions. When frustrations arise, your steady support can encourage children to persevere:

- Be patient and acknowledge their effort: “Putting on shoes by yourself can be tough! I’m so proud of you for trying over and over again.”
- Break it down. Give children an entry point to a challenging task. Instead of saying, “Time to clean your room,” try saying, “Let’s start by picking up all the books and putting them back in the basket.”
- Express your confidence in them: “I know this is hard, but I know you can do it. I’m here to help if you need me.”
- Harness the power of *yet*, and model its use. There’s a big difference, emotionally, between the phrases “I can’t do it!” and “I can’t do it, yet.” The word *yet* is a bridge between present frustration and future possibility.



#### 3. Give Them Age-Appropriate Responsibilities

Early childhood is a great time to introduce chores and responsibilities—because young children are eager to be helpers! Not only do chores help children learn practical skills, but they also support school readiness.

For example, sorting and classifying are math skills that children practice as they sort laundry or put away silverware or toys. Also, think about the mental attention and motor skills it takes to use a spray bottle, set a table, peel oranges for lunch, spread butter on bread, or sweep a room.

And engaging in chores doesn’t just build useful skills—it also builds kindness and helps children feel that their work matters. “There is a strong link between doing things that are good for the whole family and the development of generous behavior,” science journalist Melinda Wenner Moyer told me. “When I ask my kids to help clear the table, I might say, ‘This is

