

Note to Caregivers, Counselors, Teachers, and Others

We all want our children to grow up to be happy, prosocial, resilient adults. A key to achieving this goal is to ensure that every child has opportunities to develop character strengths (healthy personality traits) that have been linked to positive life outcomes.

Jimmy & Invo's Superpowers assists parents and child service providers in educating children about character strengths. This children's book is written for preschool, kindergarten, and primary school-age kids and can be used in homes, schools, therapy sessions, and other child service settings. It describes a day in the life of little Jimmy and his friend, Invo the Ostrich. Jimmy and Invo really like superheroes. Jimmy realizes (with the help of his parents) that he possesses many character strengths that are “superpowers”, just like superheroes. Jimmy and Invo decide to spend the day looking for their superpowers both at home and at school. Jimmy's friend, Invo, represents Jimmy's internal voice, hence the name “Invo” (Internal voice). Invo helps highlight Jimmy's internal thoughts about superpowers AND keeps readers engaged in the story, since Invo can be silly.

This children's book features seven “superpowers” (six internal character strengths #1–6 and one external resource #7), which are all important components for leading a psychologically healthy life.

#1 **Being KIND** (Kind to OTHERS; Kind to NATURE; Kind to SELF)

#2 **Having PATIENCE**

#3 **Having FUN** and **LAUGHING**

#4 **Having EMPATHY** (Knowing How Others Are Thinking and Feeling)

#5 **MANAGING YOUR FEELINGS**

#6 **WORKING HARD** Even When Something Is Difficult

#7 Having **POSITIVE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE** Who Care About You

If you have ever been around a person who lacks these “superpowers” (e.g., people who are rude and cruel, who are impatient, who are chronically negative, who only look out for themselves, and/or who get easily frustrated and angry), you quickly appreciate the importance of these attributes.

Research has linked all seven superpowers to positive outcomes for children and adults. These positive outcomes include better interpersonal skills, more social connections, better physical health, better psychological functioning, academic and educational achievements, occupational and career advancements, and more resilient responses to life stressors.

The book content educates children about character strengths AND reminds caregivers and child service providers about the importance of reinforcing and modeling these essential assets. Superpower #7 (Having POSITIVE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE Who Care About You) is included because children who are surrounded by positive, supportive people (at home and at school) have an optimal environment for acquiring healthy character qualities.

To make the content easier to comprehend, you will find simple, easily understood language throughout the book. Instead of using research terminology, the book labels superpowers with user-friendly words; for example, using the word PATIENCE rather than ‘delayed gratification’ and using the term WORKING HARD Even When Something Is Difficult rather than “perseverance” or “conscientiousness”.

There are also self-reflection questions embedded in the story to help children connect the content to their personal lives. The more children understand how the character strengths relate to situations and relationships in their personal life, the more it will become part of their identity.

My hope is that the *Jimmy & Invo’s Superpowers* story, activities, and downloadable slides will assist caregivers and child service providers in fostering “character strengths” in all children. The “content of our character” is a critical component for the development of prosocial people and communities. When we teach, model, and nurture these attributes in children, everyone benefits.



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