

My name is Sarah Davis and I am the Youth Librarian at the Herman and Kate Kaiser Library.

Be Transparent

I am interested in a lot of different topics: when I want to learn more about a new subject, I go all in. One of the great joys and interests in my life is my baby friends, that is to say, the babies and children of my close friends: among my closest friends, I have eleven babyfriends under the age of 10 and this does not even include children of my cousins. These baby friend and friend relationships involve spending time together at homes and parks, buying and suggesting good books, picking out adorable pineapple outfits at Target, and pouring in to the lives of my friends and their children. Once when I visited my college roommate, I read some new books to her young son Morrison before he went to bed. The next day when he saw me, he pointed to bookshelves behind him and looked back at me and said, "Books!" *On Brand*

Because of these baby friend relationships and my position as a Youth Librarian, I am fascinated by early literacy, child development, play, toys, parenting. Being an aunt, essentially, to these baby friends builds me joy and it helps me connect with the children and parents who visit my library and come to my programs. When a mom at storytime has a question, I often refer to experiences with my babyfriends and to things I've learned while reading about these topics. Because I don't have children of my own, I don't fully understand their experiences as parents, but I'm doing the research, I'm reading the books, and I'm spending time with my friends and their kids do my best to understand.

One book I have been reading lately for this purpose is *The Good News About Bad Behavior* by Katherine Lewis. It emphasizes the importance of teaching children self-regulation, which is a fancy way of saying how to know when to stop and go, start and pause. This helps children, and really all of us, to adjust our behavior when things don't go the way we want. One great way I like to teach this is through song: and now, we're going to try a verse of I'm a Little Fishy (2x):
I'm a little fishy, glub glub
I'm a little fishy, glub glub
I'm a little fishy, glub glub, glub, glub glub

Now when I sing this song in Storytime, I ask my audience for suggestions for what animals to use in the song. One day, a young friend shouted out, "Turtle!" And I said, well what sound does a turtle make?" And he said, "They don't say anything!"

So:

I'm a little turtle, !!!!!

I'm a little turtle, !!!!!

I'm a little turtle, !!!!! !!!!! !!!!!

The whole room laughed and I was able to talk to parents about why this fun change to a simple song can help their child learn the valuable skill of Starting and Stopping. You can turn freezing and stopping into a fun game instead of an unpleasant task. This kind of early literacy tip shares the science and research behind the fun things we do with children. I want to be open about why I lead Storytime the way I do: to be a support for parents and kids.

Children may not be your area of work (although I do believe everyone has something to learn from children), but you have your own interests and your own passions that strengthen your work, that help you to be open and transparent in your life. The world is a difficult and overwhelming place: our attention is drawn in many directions, tragic situations happen to us or to people we love, and sometimes life is just hard. For me, Storytime, kids and parents at the library, my friends and babyfriends, are gifts. I can't tell you the number of times that the excitement and wonder of children at Storytime has encouraged me, sometimes in really trying and difficult days. It's why I do my best to Be All In.