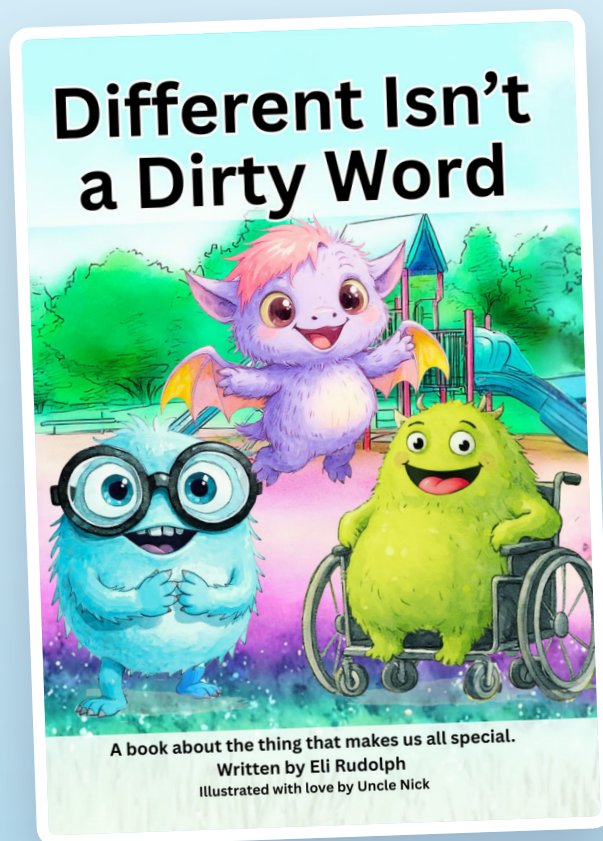


Parent Resource Kit

Conversation scripts, activities, and confidence-builders for
families



Based on *Different Isn't a Dirty Word* by Eli, age 7

Welcome

Different Isn't a Dirty Word was written by Eli, a 7-year-old author who knows what it's like to be the kid other kids ask about. His three monster friends — Neeko (big shiny glasses, one leg a bit shorter), Zara (wings that don't work, so she invents machines to fly), and Max (a wheelchair user who's the fastest one on the playground) — meet stares and questions with a smile, because they know: different is NOT a bad thing. It makes them, THEM.

This kit helps you carry that message past the last page. Inside:

- **Say This Instead** — real scripts for the moments that catch every parent off guard
- **When Your Child Is the One Who's Different** — confidence and self-advocacy tools
- **Conversation prompts** tied to the book
- **At-home activities** with full instructions and printables

Use any page on its own. Nothing here requires preparation, special materials, or a perfect parenting day.



Say This Instead

The rule behind every script: **calm, brief, positive**. Kids take their cue from your tone far more than your words. Shushing teaches “difference is shameful.” A matter-of-fact answer teaches “difference is normal.”

1. The loud grocery-store question.

“Mommy, why is that man in a wheelchair?!”

Skip: “Shhh! Don’t say that!”

Say: “Some people’s legs work differently, so wheels help them get around. Just like Max in your book!”

Why: Answering at normal volume shows there’s nothing shameful to whisper about.

2. Staring.

Your child is openly staring at someone.

Skip: Yanking them away in silence.

Say: (quietly, to your child): “It’s OK to notice people. Staring can feel unfriendly, though — you can smile and say hi instead.”

Why: Redirects curiosity into connection instead of punishing it.

3. “Why does she talk like that?”

About someone with a speech difference or communication device.

Skip: “That’s rude, don’t ask that.”

Say: “Everyone’s voice works differently. Some people use a device to talk, some people’s words come out their own way. We listen the same either way.”

Why: Names it plainly and hands your child the skill (listening) instead of a taboo.

4. “What’s **WRONG** with him?”

Skip: Letting the framing stand.

Say: “Nothing’s wrong! His body works differently than yours. Different isn’t wrong — remember Neeko, Zara, and Max?”

Why: Gently swaps “wrong” for “different” — the book’s whole thesis in one move.

Say This Instead

5. “That’s weird.”

Skip: “Don’t be mean!” (ends the conversation)

Say: “It’s new to you — that’s different from weird. New things are how we learn. Want to learn about it together?”

Why: Converts a judgment word into a curiosity word without shaming your child either.

6. Your child asks about their OWN difference.

“Why do I have to wear these glasses / use this walker / go to therapy?”

Skip: “You’re fine, don’t worry about it.”

Say: “Your eyes/legs/body work in their own way, and this helps them do their best. It’s part of what makes you, YOU — like Zara’s inventions help her fly.”

Why: Honest + positive beats dismissive. Kids can tell when a question gets dodged.

7. Someone asks your child an awkward question and looks at you.

Skip: Answering for your child every time.

Say: (to your child): “Do you want to answer, or should I?”

Why: Builds self-advocacy — and teaches everyone watching that your child speaks for themselves.

8. A well-meaning adult says “I’m so sorry” about your child.

Skip: Absorbing it silently.

Say: “Nothing to be sorry about — he’s doing great. He just taught himself to ride an adapted bike.”

Why: Corrects pity with pride, and models for your listening child that their life is not a tragedy.

Do / Don’t (quick reference)

Do

Normalize differences · answer questions calmly at normal volume · lead with what people CAN do · encourage empathy and hellos.

Don’t

Shush, whisper, or rush away · treat someone’s difference as sad or scary · force interactions · make your child perform explanations.

When Your Child Is the One Who's Different

Half the families reading Eli's book have a Neeko, a Zara, or a Max at home. This page is for you. (It's the page Eli's family lives.)

Build the “It makes me, ME” muscle. Give your child the book's language as their own script. Practice it playfully at home so it's ready when needed: “Why do you walk like that?” → “That's just how I move! Want to play?” A rehearsed answer turns a scary moment into a handled one.

Handle stares together. Name it before your child has to: “I saw that kid looking at you. People get curious about new things. You can wave, say hi, or just keep doing your thing — your choice.” Choice is the key word: your child gets to decide, every time, whether to educate, engage, or ignore.

Lead with strengths, don't erase challenges. The book's model: Zara's wings don't work AND she's a brilliant inventor. Both true. “You work harder at walking than anyone I know, and you're the best storyteller in this family” lands better than pretending the hard part isn't hard.

Feed the identity beyond the difference. Eli is a kid with mobility challenges — and an author, artist, dancer, and inventor. Make sure your child's week has hours that have nothing to do with therapy, appointments, or being The Kid Who Is Different.

Teach self-advocacy in small, real reps. Let them order their own food, tell the coach what they need, answer (or decline) the questions. Start where the stakes are low. Script to give them: “I need ____ so I can ____.” That sentence works at age 5 and at age 45.

Watch your own face. Kids read us constantly. If stares make YOU tense, they learn stares are a threat. The calmest thing you can teach is your own steady smile.

And remind them, in your own words, often: “Your differences make you amazing.”

Conversation Prompts



At bedtime, in the car, or right after reading:

1. Which friend do you feel most like today — Neeko, Zara, or Max? Why?
2. What makes you, YOU?
3. Zara's wings don't work, so she invents machines. What's something YOU do your own way?
4. Has anyone ever stared at you or asked you a question that felt funny? What happened? How did it feel?
5. Have you ever seen someone being left out? What could we do next time?
6. The monsters asked "Why do you look different?" What would be a KINDER way to make a new friend?
7. If our whole family were monster friends, what would each of us look like? What would our superpowers be?

Tip: Answer the questions about yourself too. "Something that makes me, ME, is..." is a better conversation than an interview.

At-Home Activities

1. My Superpower Sheet

10 min. Print the sheet (last page). Your child draws themselves as a monster friend and fills in: something special about me / a challenge I have / my superpower. Do one for yourself alongside them — kids love seeing a grown-up name a challenge. Hang both on the fridge.

2. Family Kindness Challenge — 7 days

5 min/day. Print the tracker (last page). One small act of kindness per day, chosen by the child: say hi to someone new, invite someone to play, help without being asked, give a real compliment, sit with someone alone, teach someone something, family's choice. Color a monster face each day. Day 7: celebrate — the child picks how.

3. Family Differences Portrait

20 min. Big paper, everyone draws the whole family as monster friends — every member gets a difference AND a superpower, drawn proudly. (Glasses, hearing aids, wheelchairs, big feelings, curly hair — all of it goes in.) Title it “Our Differences Make Us Amazing!” and display it where guests will ask about it. That question is the activity working.

4. Feelings Check-In with Monster Faces

2 min, daily. Print the monster-faces card (last page): happy, sad, mad, worried, excited, calm. At dinner or bedtime, everyone points to today's face and says one sentence about why. Small, boring, and quietly one of the most powerful SEL habits a family can have.

Everyone Is Different. Everyone Belongs.

A social story is a simple, repetitive mini-story that helps young children — especially neurodivergent children — rehearse a concept. Read it slowly; let your child echo lines.



This is Neeko. Neeko wears big, shiny glasses. One of his legs is a bit shorter. Neeko loves to hop and play jump rope. Neeko is different.

That's OK!



This is Zara. Zara has wings that don't work. So Zara invents machines — and she flies SO high! Zara is different. **That's OK!**



This is Max. Max uses a wheelchair. Max is super fast, and he does tricks at the skatepark! Max is different. **That's OK!**

I am different too. My friends are different too. Different is not a bad thing. Different makes me, ME!

Sometimes people look at someone different. I can smile. I can say hi. I can ask, “Do you want to play?”

Everyone is different. Everyone belongs.

My Superpower Sheet



At-Home Activity 1

Draw yourself as a monster friend!

My name is...

Something special about me is...

A challenge I have is...

My superpower is...

Family Kindness Challenge



At-Home Activity 2 · one small act of kindness a day, for 7 days

Ideas to pick from: say hi to someone new · invite someone to play · help without being asked · give a real compliment · sit with someone alone · teach someone something · family's choice.

Day 1



Day 2



Day 3



Day 4



Day 5



Day 6



Day 7



Color a monster face each day. Day 7: celebrate — the child picks how.

Feelings Check-In



At-Home Activity 4 · point to today's face and say one sentence about why

Cut out and stick on the fridge.



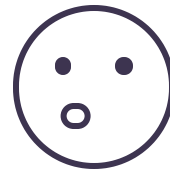
Happy



Sad



Mad



Worried



Excited



Calm

THANK YOU

About the Author

Eli is a 7-year-old author with a big imagination and an even bigger heart. He loves writing stories, making art, dancing, and inventing new things. Even though Eli faces challenges with his mobility and other things that “make me, me,” he never lets them stop him from sharing his creativity and love with the world. This book supports Eli’s dream of attending college.

Supporting Eli’s book supports his dream of attending college.

More free resources at elijahsbookclub.com

Teacher Read-Aloud Guide · SEL Lesson Plan Pack · coloring sheets, and book club fun.

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