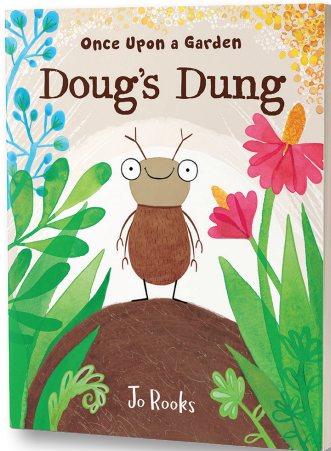




Nurturing Resilience and Mental Strength Through Creativity



Strength is often only considered in only one way: physically. But we also have to teach our children about mental strength which is arguably more important in today's hectic world.

My story, *Doug's Dung*, is about how a dung beetle is mocked by his peers for being too weak to lift the heavy balls of dung like the others.

A passing butterfly helps Doug realize his strength in another way, and it doesn't take long before Doug's creativity begins to blossom! Doug is so inspired to make art that he becomes completely absorbed in it, taking inspiration from the world around him. Even when the other dung beetles criticize or laugh at him, he retains the grit, determination and self-belief to continue creating more amazing art sculptures. When nobody comes to see Doug's first art exhibition, he clearly feels a little sad and disappointed, but he finds the strength to overcome his sadness and disappointment and is more determined than ever to carry on making art. After all, he doesn't need justification from others. It is something which gives Doug happiness in itself. Eventually, the butterfly passes by once more to admire Doug's art and before long, the whole garden has come to see his exhibition.

Our children can sometimes feel down-trodden with the first failed attempt at a new pursuit or can be so influenced by their peers that they begin to doubt their own judgement. It's important to gently express to them how giving up too early can sometimes mean you feel even more defeated and it often takes lots of practice to get better at any task.

Artistic and creative activities are often especially challenging in this way. If your child has a new and exciting idea and others cannot see their vision, it could make them feel it's not worth pursuing. This is something which happens to author-illustrators, like myself a great deal! Sometimes an idea just isn't quite ready to share, sometimes it needs a bit more refining, and sometimes you need a break in order to see the problems within your creative idea. This is all part of the creative process and should be praised. All new ideas from our children should be encouraged. It is great to sometimes work on art with children with the understanding that we don't know the final outcome, it might go differently than planned, or a mistake could turn into a whole new idea and turn into something even better!

Nurturing creativity, rather than avoiding failure, is a great way to also conduct yourself as a grown up. Creative thinking and trying new things is courageous and no matter what your age. You have the ability to ride that creative train just like Doug did. Take the lead with creativity and trying new things, and be unafraid to make mistakes. When you model grit for your child, you show them that risk-taking requires determination and self-belief. Try something new with your kids and let them see how you struggle with new skills or situations—like learning to play their favorite video game, how to ice skate, or cook a new recipe.

Seeing you stretch yourself, while believing in yourself, will be sure to inspire the children around you, and inspiring those around you is possibly one of the most wonderful gifts you can give or receive.

This Article's Authors

Jo Rooks is an award-winning author-illustrator who studied graphic design and illustration at Bath School of Art and Design. She illustrated several award-winning books, including *A Box of Butterflies* and *Hector's Favorite Place*. Visit her at [Jo Rooks Illustration](http://JoRooksIllustration.com) and Follow her on Facebook: @JoRooksIllustration, Twitter: @JoRooksArt, and Instagram: @JoRooksIllustration.