



A  
WORKBOOK  
+ ACTIVITY  
GUIDE FOR  
KIDS

UNLOCKING THE SECRET STRENGTHS INSIDE OF YOU

# I AM CAPABLE

SISSY GOFF *and* DAVID THOMAS

LPC-MHSP

LMSW



ILLUSTRATED BY RACHEL PRITCHETT, LPC-MHSP

**I AM  
CAPABLE**

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*Braver, Stronger, Smarter*

*Brave*

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*The Worry-Free Parent Workbook*

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*Happy Finds Her Calm* (THE DAYSTAR DOGS series)

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*Capable*

*I Am Capable*

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**SISSY GOFF, LPC-MHSP *and* DAVID THOMAS, LMSW**

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To the families at The Covenant School in Nashville,  
some of the most capable kids and parents  
we have ever had the privilege of knowing.

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## ■ A Note to Parents and Caregivers—

Growing up is hard. And after more than thirty years of counseling kids and families, we believe it's harder than ever before. The kids we love need our help to discover how capable they truly are. They need opportunities to understand and experience the strengths, skills, and strategies that build both confidence and resilience.

We believe this workbook can make a real difference. We're so grateful you've picked it up, and we wanted to offer a few ideas to keep in mind as you walk through it together:

1. Start where your child is.

This workbook was created primarily for boys and girls in elementary and early middle school—an age range that includes lots of different reading and developmental levels. With younger children especially, we recommend reading it out loud so you can clarify ideas and talk about examples along the way. It can also be fun to read and work through together with kids of any age.

2. Let your child lead the way.

As much as you might want to jump in, answer questions, or “help” with activities, your child will gain more confidence and capability when they do the work themselves. Trust the process—and their growing independence.

3. Go slowly.

Encourage your child to take their time with the material. There's a lot here to take in, and it's okay to move through it at

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their own pace—maybe just a page or two a day. Building resilience takes time and practice!

4. Make it a connection point.

Use this book as an opportunity to connect and have fun together. Let your child teach you what they're learning. Try the exercises yourself or let them show you how to do them. Teaching reinforces learning for all of us, and your kids will feel even more capable when they're the ones teaching *you*.

We also encourage you to pick up the companion book we wrote especially for you—*Capable: How to Teach Your Kids the Strengths, Skills, and Strategies to Build Resilience*. It offers deeper insights and even more practical tools to help your child grow the kind of resilience they'll need in the years to come.

Our hope is that this workbook becomes a meaningful part of your and your child's journeys. That you'll learn together, laugh together, and strengthen your connection as you discover—side by side—just how capable God has made each of you to be.

With gratitude,  
Sissy & David

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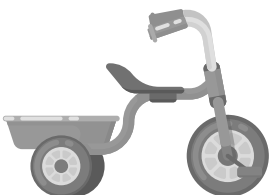
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# INTRODUCTION

Have you ever heard of Sherlock Holmes? The Hardy Boys? Nancy Drew? Or Harriet the Spy? Every one of these characters has something in common. They're detectives. Actually, they're super sleuths.

Super sleuths find clues, solve mysteries, and discover hidden truths. They make a difference. You know what else is true about them? They're smart, brave, resourceful—and very capable.

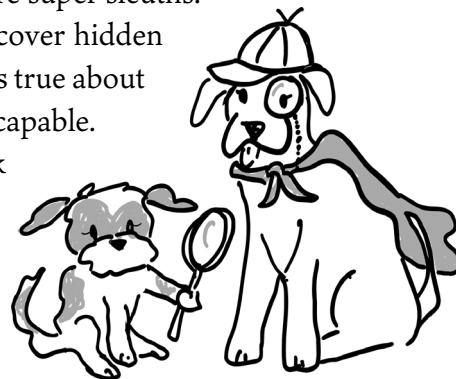
If we were going to tell you what this whole book is about . . . actually, we're not going to tell you yet. You may need to do your own detective work. But just the fact that you're reading this book means you're a super sleuth too.

It means you're smart enough to find the clues.

You're brave enough to solve the mysteries.

And you're resourceful enough to discover secret strengths inside you and what's true about yourself and people you love.

We are going on an adventure together through the pages of this book. You're going to laugh and learn. You might even get a little wet. But through it all, you will be on a journey of doing the detective work it takes to discover more about who God made you to be. And here's our biggest hint: It's all contained in the word *capable*.



# CAPABLE

Small paw prints are scattered below the word.



# THE CASE FOR CAPABLE

Have you ever worried about making new friends at the start of the school year? **Yes | No**

Have you ever wondered who you would sit next to on a field trip? **Yes | No**

Do you feel anxious when you get a shot at the doctor's office? **Yes | No**

Do you ever feel nervous at the free throw line? **Yes | No**

Have you ever been frustrated over homework and wanted to rip it up and throw it away? **Yes | No**

Have you ever gotten mad at your mom or dad, and then even more mad at yourself later for what you said? **Yes | No**

Have you ever gotten frustrated with your brother or sister or a friend for messing up your room or a Lego project? **Yes | No**

If you answered **yes** to any of these questions, this book is for you. It's for you if you've ever wondered if you have what it takes.

Wondered if you are strong enough. Or brave enough. Or funny or talented or *anything* enough. Even enough of a good friend. Or, if you've simply ever wondered if you are capable of doing the things that your parents—or teacher or coach—ask you to do.

Okay, we need to stop right here and introduce ourselves. We're Sissy and David. We work in a little yellow house called Daystar, where we have the privilege of sitting and talking with kids about their feelings. One third grader called us "feelings doctors," although we're not really doctors. We're just grown-ups who love helping kids understand and know what to do with their big feelings.

Oh, we have one more question for now: Do you like dogs?

We do, and we get to take our dogs to work with us every day. How cool is that? Someday you could have a job where you take your dog to work too.

Patches is Sissy's teeny tiny Havanese puppy with a big personality (who's sometimes a little mischievous). June is David's yellow Labrador retriever. She's NOT tiny. If she met you, she would tackle you and cover you with sloppy puppy kisses. Patches and June have big jobs in this little book. They're helping you solve the mystery of what we already know is true about you: that you're capable.

Now we want to know about you!



What is your name? \_\_\_\_\_

How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

If you have brothers or sisters, what are their names?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any pets? (If so, write their names below or even draw pictures of them.)

What is one thing you really like to do? (Again, draw a picture of it, if you want.)

You might be wondering why we like the word *capable* so much. Well, we believe the idea of capable—and your knowing how capable you are—is important enough to build a book around. (There’s even a book about capable for your parents.) We’ll talk more about what

capable means in the next chapter. But for now, here's what you need to know:

**CLUE**

Capable kids believe they have and know how to use the strengths, skills, and strategies needed to deal with life's challenges.

Those challenges include the things we mentioned in the yes/no questions at the beginning of this chapter, plus things that kids face regularly:

- getting a test grade that's lower than you hoped for
- missing a goal in soccer
- not being invited to a birthday party
- disappointing your parents or yourself
- being okay when plans change at the last minute
- not knowing what the schedule will be
- not being able to fall asleep
- giving up when something is hard
- trying to be grateful even when you don't get what you want
- calming yourself down when you're worried, overwhelmed, or angry

What challenges do you face that you would add to the list?

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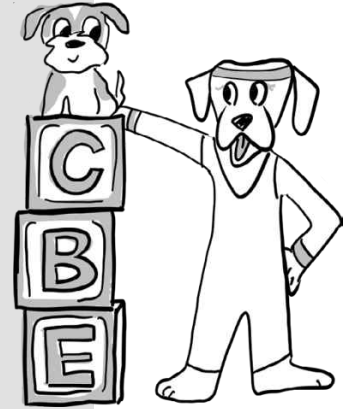
We both already know you're capable, so we're going to spend the rest of this book helping *you* see how capable God has made you to be. Let's practice right now!

### CAPABILITY-BUILDING EXERCISE (CBE)

Stand up. Lift one foot and hop fifteen times on the other while singing "Happy Birthday to You."

**Bonus Round:** Do it again, while holding your favorite stuffed animal.

**Even More Capable (EMC):** Do it a third time, with a stuffed animal in one hand and a book in the other.



How did you feel when you did that?

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How many times did you have to do it to get it down? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you keep going when it got hard, or were you tempted to give up? \_\_\_\_\_

Could you laugh at yourself if you made a mistake, or were you frustrated? \_\_\_\_\_

We hope it took you *several* times to do the exercise(s). Why? Because growing a strength, skill, or strategy takes practice. Just like for your favorite sport. Or for dance. Or even math.

This book has a lot of fun activities to help you feel proud of yourself, feel more confident, and learn how capable you are. There will be exercises for your body and for your brain and ones you do with a

grown-up you love. We know you can do every one of them because, you guessed it, you're capable. In fact, we call the activities Capability-Building Exercises (CBEs) because they will help you build your capability. Each CBE has a Bonus Round AND an Even More Capable (EMC) exercise to remind you that you really CAN do hard things!

Do you know how long we've gotten to do this really cool job of helping kids? Over THIRTY years! That means we have talked to around 10,249 kids. Actually, we don't know exactly how many, but trust us, it's a LOT. And we believe kids today feel less capable than ever. Kids *aren't* less capable, though.

On a scale of one to ten, how capable do you feel right now?



Now ask your mom or dad to mark how capable *they* think you are.

We have a feeling your parent gave you a higher number than you gave yourself. And guess what? We believe your parent.

Because here's the deal: It's normal to not feel capable at some times and for some reasons. It might be because

- You feel like other kids make friends more easily than you do.
- You feel like everyone else makes better grades or scores more goals or is more artistic.
- Something happened to you that made you feel like you can't handle one more challenge.
- Someone in your life told you that you're not capable (or you even told that to yourself)
- You feel like you're different from other kids, and that no one understands.
- You aren't sure you really are capable.

What reasons would you add to this list?

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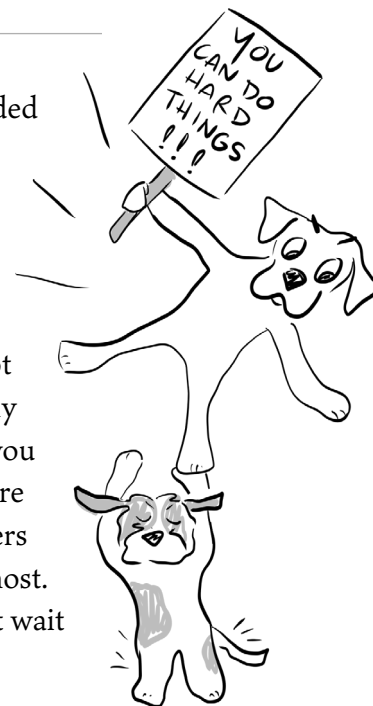
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Hebrews 12:1-2 in the Bible tells us, “Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”

The journey to capable is like being in a race. You’re going to need a lot of perseverance and practice. But you are not alone. You have a great cloud of witnesses, which basically is like an entire stadium full of people (and pets) cheering you on. We’re there, and Patches and June are too. Your parents are there. And your grandparents and aunts and uncles and teachers and coaches. Most important, Jesus is cheering you on the most. Every single one of us believes you are capable. And we can’t wait to see you discover how capable you are too.



## DOING YOUR DETECTIVE WORK

What are three things you don’t feel very capable of doing right now? (Might be math, or jumping off a diving board, or finishing chores, or not getting frustrated with your little brother, or something else.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What are three things you *do* feel capable of doing? (Might be math, or doing a cartwheel, or hitting a baseball, or painting, or something else.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Go ask your mom or dad to tell you (or write down themselves) three times they've seen you be capable in the last week.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

### CAPABILITY-BUILDING EXERCISE

Are you ready for another challenge?

Find an open space. Walk backward while counting to ten.

**Bonus Round:** Walk backward while counting backward from 10.

**EMC:** Walk backward while counting backward and balancing a book on your head.



You did it! You read the first chapter and are already proving how capable you are. Keep reading to keep doing your detective work.

## THE RACE TO CAPABLE

Do you remember the last time you put on your favorite shoes, only to find that you had outgrown them? Or you noticed there was a hole in the toe of your favorite tennis shoes?

Remember the verse in Hebrews we mentioned before that talks about the race we're running? What are the top three things you think you'd need for a race?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

If Patches and June were getting ready for a race, they'd need training, new shoes, and an extra-special treat to help them finish.

Several years ago, we had a friend at Daystar who was just about your age. She had been sick for a long time and wasn't sure when she was going to feel better. She had to go to a lot of doctor appointments. Appointments, appointments, and more appointments. Because she had been sick and missed so much school, keeping up with schoolwork was hard. Sports were hard. Even making and keeping friends was hard. And because of all of these things put together, she felt sad and worried and anything but capable. Her mom decided it might help for her to talk about her feelings. She brought her daughter to the little yellow house because she wanted her



to learn that, even though things were hard, she was still capable. One day, after talking with us, our friend looked at her mom and said, “Mom, you know that journey you always talk about us being on? Well, coming to Daystar has made me feel like I have new shoes for the journey.”

We want this book to be your new shoes. The reminder that you are capable, no matter how hard things are, no matter how sick you feel, no matter how behind you might be in school, or even how lonely or left out you feel sometimes. Your new shoes are the strengths, skills, and strategies you’re going to learn as you work your way through this book. But remember, sometimes it takes a little while for new shoes to feel good. In the meantime, keep practicing. In fact, here’s a CBE we want you to do right now:

### CAPABILITY-BUILDING EXERCISE

Find one or two blank pieces of paper and draw a picture of your favorite pair of shoes.

**Bonus Round:** Draw the shoes again with the hand you don’t normally use to write or draw.

**EMC:** Draw the shoes a third time with your eyes closed.



When you opened your eyes, did you like your drawing(s), or not so much?

---

When is a time in your life you felt like you had new shoes?

---

Who helps you feel that way?

---

Remember, we said capable kids believe they have and know how to use the strengths, skills, and strategies needed to deal with life's challenges. Let's talk about those strengths, skills, and strategies.

What are three things about you that you would consider strengths?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

This time, instead of asking your parent, choose another trusted adult like a grandparent, aunt or uncle, teacher, or even a close family friend. Ask that person what they believe are three of your biggest strengths and write their answer here.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Those strengths are an important part of your capability. So are the skills and strategies we'll be talking about in the rest of the book. Strengths, skills, and strategies are different, but they're connected to each other.

Think about it like this: Have you learned to ride a bike yet? Have you ever seen a baby try to ride a bike? Nope. That's because they don't yet have the **strength** to learn. But you do. Your muscles are strong enough, at your age, to hop on a bike and ride down your driveway. The skills, however, might not quite be there yet.

To develop bike-riding **skills** takes practice. You place your foot on the pedal and press down. Then you press down on the other pedal, all while keeping your balance and holding the handlebars. Bike-riding skills can take a long time to develop.

Once the strengths and skills are there, we get to learn **strategies**. Have you ever stood up on your bike to pedal uphill?



That's a strategy to make riding uphill easier. Or have you learned to brake slowly going downhill? That's a strategy to keep you from flying over the handlebars. And then there are fun strategies, too, like biking with no hands or popping a wheelie.

## CLUE

We've got to have the strengths first, then learn the skills, so that we can use the strategies. And we're going to have fun doing all three!

Can we teach you a fun strategy in running that can help you with strengths, skills, and strategies in other parts of life? Let's think back to our shoes. Have you ever heard of something called the "kick"?

Have you ever been running a race or a mile for school, and felt like your energy ran out before the race was over? The kick is when your body starts to feel like your energy has run out but you push through even harder. It's the little burst of energy you give at the very end to finish well. With the kick, your energy gets low, but your determination gets high. You run harder. Bike faster. Even act braver when you feel afraid. You push yourself past what you thought you could do because you know how capable you truly are.

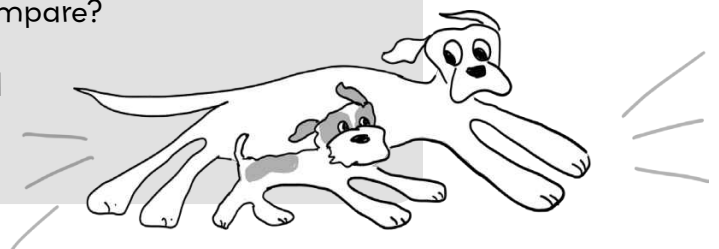
Let's try the kick together.

### CAPABILITY-BUILDING EXERCISE

Ask a parent to go outside with you. Have them time you running up and down your driveway or across your yard.

**Bonus Round:** Now, use the kick at the end so that when you're almost back to where you started, you run your very fastest. How did your time compare?

**EMC:** Try to beat your second time with a little extra kick.





## DOING YOUR DETECTIVE WORK

---

What are three strengths you'd like to grow? (They could be something like patience with your little brother, endurance for homework, learning to manage big feelings, or perseverance with chores.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What are three skills you'd like to develop? (Could be running, drawing, riding a bike, cooking, spending the night away, or doing a cartwheel.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Brainstorm with a grown-up three strategies that can help you with the skills you're developing, like square breathing when you feel worried, going to the calm-down corner when you feel angry, or taking brain breaks when you feel overwhelmed with homework. (See chapter 9 to learn more about square breathing and calm-down corners.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_