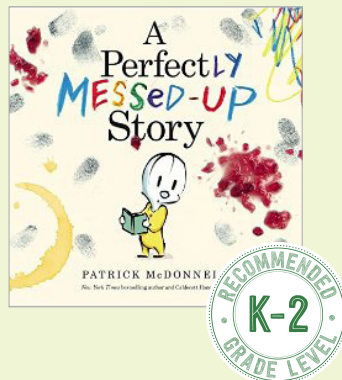


# A Perfectly Messed-Up Story

by Patrick McDonnell

## Themes

Mindset  
Do Your Best  
Never Give Up  
Determination  
Perseverance  
Perfectionist  
Overcoming Obstacles



Little Louie is trying to tell his story but it keeps getting messed up. He badly wants it to be perfect but things keep happening to the pages of his book like a jelly drop and a peanut butter smear. After several tantrums, he finally stops and takes a deep breath and realizes that everything doesn't have to be perfect for it to be good. This story can help your

students accept the fact that life gets messy-it's not perfect but you must work through it and go on.

**Note to teachers:** If your students are not familiar with Growth Mindset vs. Fixed Mindset, we encourage you to first use NED's How to Grow a Brain introductory lesson to build background.

### Key Vocabulary

**Merrily:** in a happy, cheerful way  
**Stain:** a spot or mark, discolored by a different object  
**Respect:** valued or admired, to take care of something because it is important  
**Inspire:** encourage you to do something important or good, influence  
**Ruined:** destroyed,  
**Perfect:** without mistakes or errors

### Tricky Phrasing

**Know in your heart:** totally believe it  
**Arg:** sound of frustration

## Before Reading: Discussion Starters

1. What does it mean if something is perfect?  
*Answers will vary. Without flaws, without mistakes, exactly as planned*
2. Can a person be perfect?  
*Answers will vary. Refer back to their definitions from question 1.*
3. What do you do when you want something perfect and it doesn't come out that way?  
*Answers will vary. Try again, give up, angry, sad, frustrated, determined, etc. Record a large list of emotion words for later discussion*

## After Reading: Discussion Starters

1. How was Louis feeling in the beginning of the story? How do you know (look for clues in the text/illustration) Why did he feel that way?  
*He was happy-smile on face, skipping merrily along, singing tra-la-la-la. He was happy to tell his story because he knew (in his heart) that the story was going to be perfect.*
2. List the obstacles that Louie faced in the story. Why were they challenges to him?  
*Jelly stain, peanut butter blob, fingerprints, orange juice splatters, crayon scribbles. He had a plan*

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to read the story and these distractions kept ruining his plan. He didn't think we would keep reading the book if there were messes on the pages.

### 3. What was Louie feeling as he faced each obstacle?

Answers will vary as students describe his escalating frustration. Add to your word list of emotions: Proud, Confident, Content, Happy, Joyful, Shocked, Surprised, Alarmed, Curious, Angry, Disturbed, Frustrated, Mad, Out-of-control, Pleading, Begging, Determined, Distraught, Give up, Depressed, Sad, Don't care, Persistent, Hopeful,

### 4. Why was Louie upset about the book pages being messed up?

He was upset that they didn't show respect for books. He thought books were important because they teach and inspire.

### 5. Discuss Louie's mindset throughout the story. When did he have a fixed mindset? When did he have a growth mindset? What did he learn when he had a growth mindset?

**First...** When Louie first encountered the stains and plops of food and fingerprints on his book – he never gave up – he felt frustrated that someone would mess up his story but he wanted to get on with his story so he started over again. This is what someone with a growth mindset would do.

**Then...** The second time he encountered the crayon marks – he became a little more upset and gave up. He said "Stop, forget it, it's all over." He was thinking with a fixed mindset who doesn't know what to do when it's hard or seems impossible to keep going. Note that he changed his emotions from mad to sad as he gave up.

**Last...** Then he realized that even though it wasn't perfect – it was fine. He changed his thinking back to a growth mindset and got up and started again.

### 6. How was Louie like NED?

He was determined to finish this and nothing was going to stop him. He remembered the N in NED's name means Never Give Up.

## Writing Prompt

### Now I Can

Use the printable to trace and fill in this sentence: "I could not \_\_\_\_\_ until I \_\_\_\_\_."  
Example: I could not spell elephant until I wrote it over and over again.

### I didn't give up when I ....

Everyone has had to do something that was hard. Having a "never give up" attitude is so important. Just like Louie had to work hard to overcome obstacles in the story, you do too. Write about a time that you had to work hard and not give up to accomplish something.

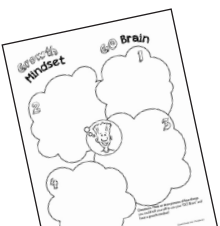
## Activities

**4 Thoughts** Students should write or draw pictures of 4 things they could tell themselves to have a growth mindset, using the printable sheet.

## Activities, Continued



PRINTABLE  
Now I Can



PRINTABLE  
4 Thoughts

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PRINTABLE  
**Fill-in NED  
Feelings**

## NED Has Feelings

Have students add words to each NED head to make a deck of emotion cards. Use the printable sheet of blank NED heads for students to draw in faces and describe what the face tells about feelings.

OR use the predrawn collection of NED expressions to support discussions about “looks tell it all”.



PRINTABLE  
**NED Feelings**

**Growth or Fixed Mindset?** Emotions are real feelings but sometimes they impact how you think. They can stop you from moving forward (like Louie when he saw the crayon marks smeared on the page) or they can motivate you (like when Louie was giving up but then realized that everything was fine and he could just keep reading his story).

Use the Emotion picture/word cards above. Have kids discuss how each of them could lead to having a “GO Brain” or a “Brain Freeze”.

EX: If I was (discouraged), I could have a “GO Brain” by (never giving up and trying it again in a different way).

## I Am Not Perfect Posters

Design class or school posters that reflect this message

- Never Give Up...I'm NOT perfect
- Never Give Up....I can't do it YET
- Never Give Up...Make lemonade out of lemons
- Never Give Up...Go with the flow
- Never Give Up...wipe the slate clean
- Never Give Up...swim with the waves

## Home Connection

Encourage parents to attach to full size magnet stickers or cut out and display on refrigerator with separate magnets



PRINTABLE  
**Magnets**

More Resources

## For more info...

Accelerated Reading Quiz: 170605

Inspire your class!  
Grab this printable  
**GROWTH MINDSET POSTER**  
[MindsetMission.com/Teachers](http://MindsetMission.com/Teachers)



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Trace the letters and fill in the blank. Then, draw yourself and what you can do!

I could not

until I

# Growth Mindset

## GO Brain

1

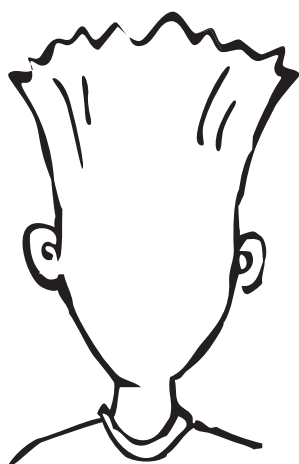
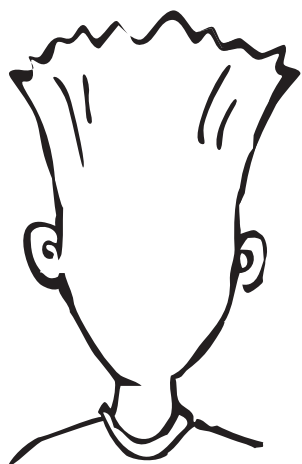
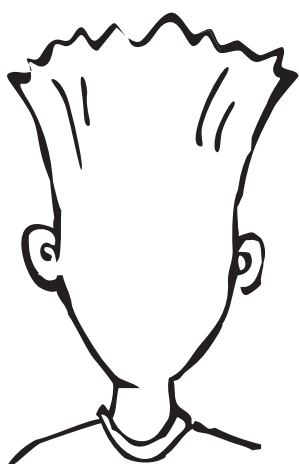
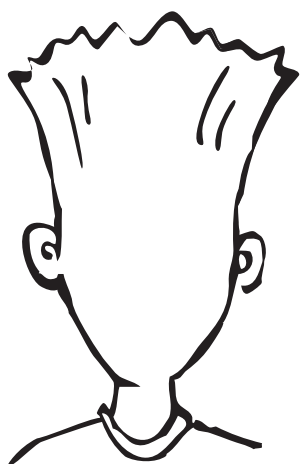
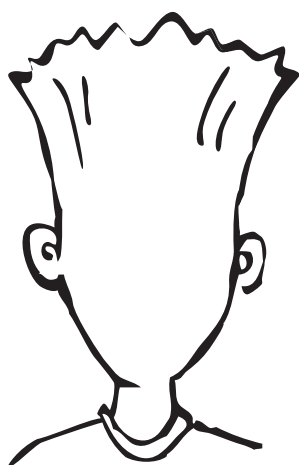
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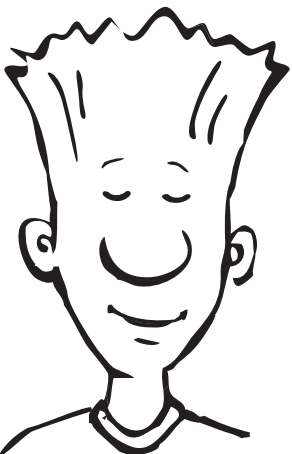
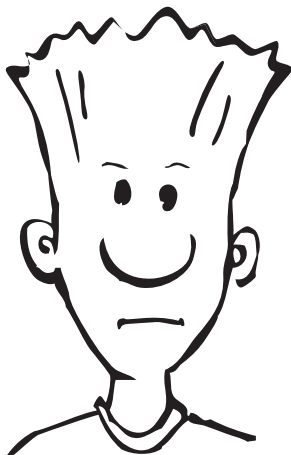
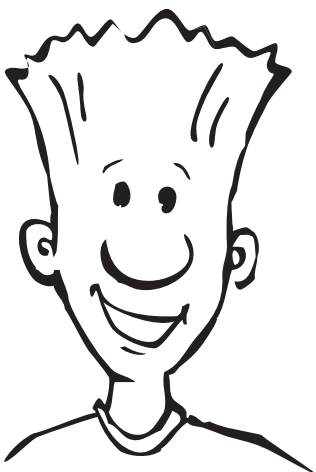
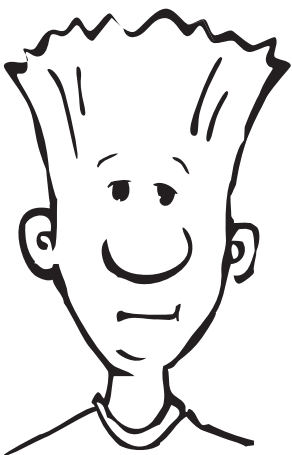
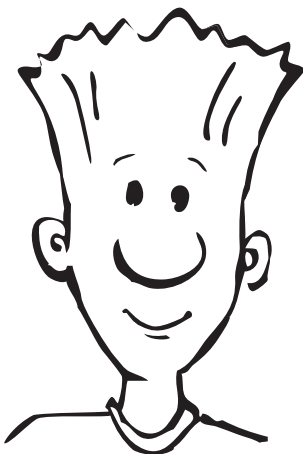
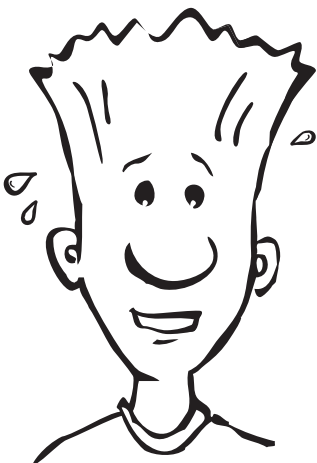
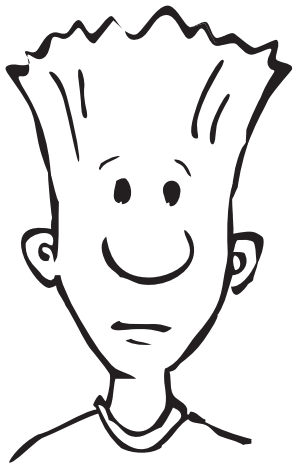
4

Directions: Write or draw pictures of four things you could tell yourself to use your "GO Brain" and have a growth mindset!

Create NED faces to discuss how expressions show feelings.



Use NED facial expressions to discuss different feelings.





# Growth Mindset Magnets

Directions: Print this page onto magnetic paper using an inkjet printer. (Avery Magnet Sheets #3270 are available at most office supply stores). Or, print on cardstock and glue magnets to the backs. These refrigerator magnets will remind kids of NED's three messages, promoting great attitudes. Share the second set with friends or a teacher.

