

The Voice in Their Head: A Grown-Up's Turn

From the practice of Elliott McCray, Ed.S., The McCray Learning Lab

What this builds (transformative SEL): Agency (“I can do it”) with a thread of Identity (“Who I am”).

This practice is grounded in the **co-regulation model** (a flooded brain borrows calm from a steady grown-up before it can reason) and in **Carol Dweck's growth-mindset research** on the word “yet,” which keeps a child reaching instead of quitting. Meet the feeling first, then add the word, then praise the fight, not the finish. And on the hardest nights, the most skillful move is to step back without stepping away: a calm grown-up nearby is the lesson.

The moves, ready to grab

- Instead of “you're not stupid” → **“This feels really hard. I'm right here.”**
- Instead of “of course you can” → **“You can't do it... yet.”**
- Instead of “you're so smart” → **“You stayed with something hard.”**
- When nothing's working → **close the book, stay near.**

This is a **practice tool for rehearsing skills, not therapy, counseling, or a clinical service**. And it never shames the grown-up: the “you're not stupid, you're so smart” instinct comes from love; this is just practice for the words.

Want the kid version? [Open “Level Up Your Mind Game”](#) and read it with your child: same guide Bloom, same three words, told from Kai's side.

Your privacy: if you use the optional “say it” recorder, your voice stays on this device: it is never saved, never uploaded, and it is gone when the page closes.

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