

“A sweet tale with a strong moral about appreciating differences.”

--*Kirkus Reviews*

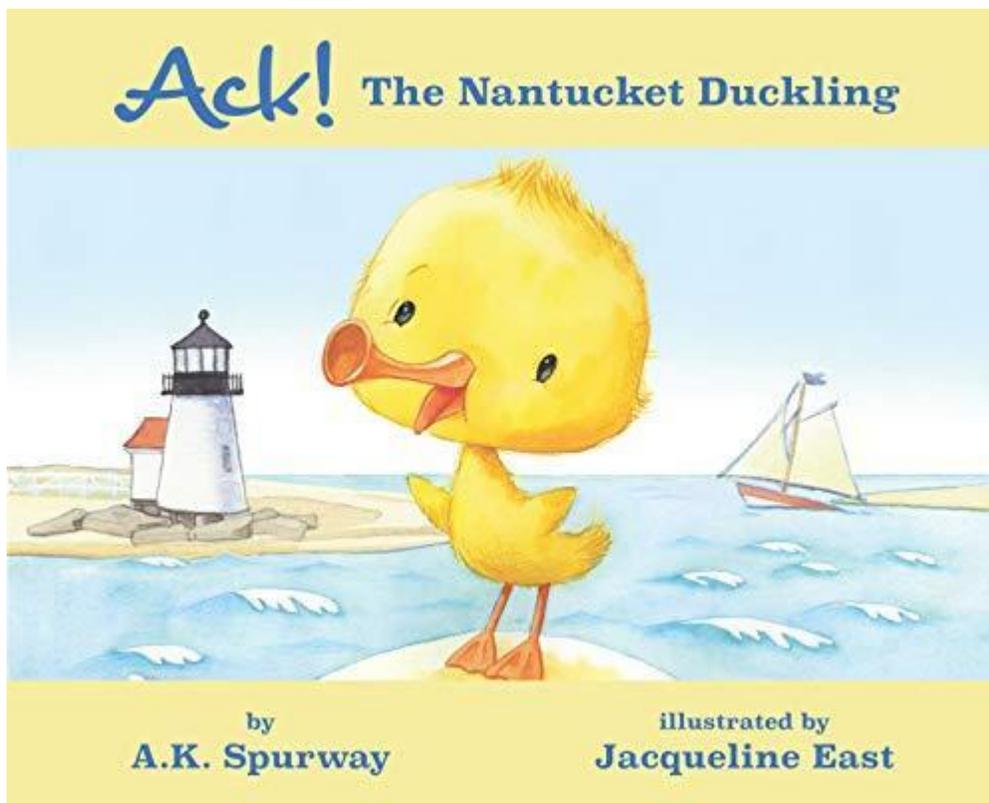
“This book is just too adorable...I have been gifting it to all my friends and family with young children.

--*Nantucket Magazine*

[No. 1 Amazon Children's Duck Books](#)

[No. 4 Amazon's Children's Classic Literature](#)

A Wonderful Duck Teaches Us Not To Bully Those Who Are Different From Us, To Embrace What Makes Us Unique, & To Feel Loved Unconditionally



“Too often, kids mock one another for something about their looks, from their skin color and size, to glasses and acne,” notes parenting expert and mother of three, A.K. Spurway.

So how do we teach children at a young age to embrace what makes them different, to not bully another over these differences, and to feel loved unconditionally? By reading a wonderful, new tale to them, *Ack! The Nantucket Duckling*, a Mom’s Choice Awards-winning, Amazon-best-selling children’s book.

“As a child, I was bullied,” shares Spurway, who suffers from Attention Deficit Disorder. “No one wants to be ridiculed or felt left out of the action. Part of Ack’s story and character comes from what I

experienced. I wanted to make sure my own children – and children everywhere – feel appreciated and accepted for who they are.”

Ack, born with a deformed beak, is afraid to march in the annual Duckling Parade. Will he be laughed at over the shape of his beak and the funny sound that it makes? Will the other kids stop ignoring him and treating him meanly? Ack ends up being a hero – and all because his unique beak with its ability to trumpet a warning sound saves the day. Children will see Ack as a positive role model who shows how to have the courage to be comfortable with who they are.

Spurway, with a Master’s from Harvard University, is also certified in Positive Parenting. Having taught parenting courses for several years – and now raising two twin nine-year-old boys and a four-year-old girl, she understands full well that in these times of disruption and uncertainty, exposing children to positive messages of inclusivity can help transform their thinking and change the trajectory of their future.

Spurway is available to discuss the following:

- Why it can be so difficult for children to value their uniqueness when what makes them different can be seen as a weakness, oddity, or disability.
- How Ack’s story can help parents, educators, and others engage with children on a variety of important topics, including bullying, racism, and self-love.
- Why the story concludes with the line: “Turns out that being different made Ack the luckiest duck of all!”
- How a child can go from being an outcast to a hero.
- Her mantra: “Always remember, you are loved just as you are.”

“**Ack!** is a celebration of unconditional love and self-acceptance,” says Spurway. “Ack’s transformation from timid, self-doubting duckling to courageous, heart-warming hero encourages us to escape the competitive trap of comparison and rejoice in the freedom of simply being who we are.”

“Spurway has written a truly wonderful children's book, *Ack! The Nantucket Duckling*. As a child psychologist, I frequently recommend the book to parents given its important message; that being different isn't just okay, it's something to embrace and to celebrate. Spurway does a wonderful job of telling the story of "Ack," who, through unconditional love and meaningful connections with others, transforms himself from being timid and self-doubting to courageous and wonderful -- to accepting himself fully for who he is. Great children's book for children between the ages of 3 years of age to 9 years of age.” --**Michael Oberschneider, Psy.D, NCCE, NCPC, Founder and Director Ashburn Psychological Services for Counseling & Mental Health**

“Ack is a heart-warming story that teaches children about embracing individual differences... the illustrations are exceptional... flawlessly edited... I am unable to suggest any improvements or name anything I dislike about it. I rate Ack! 4 out of 4 stars!” --**Onlinebookclub.org**

“On the island of Nantucket lived a little duckling with a big problem.

“His name was Ack, and just like all the other ducklings, he could march in line behind his mother, paddle across the pond, and duck dive all afternoon. But there was one thing that made Ack different, and it was stuck right in the middle of his face.

“Long and narrow with a wide brim at the end, Ack’s beak was shaped more like a shiny brass trumpet than a duck bill. Worst of all, it made a funny ack, ack, ack sound instead of a proper *quack, quack, quack.*”

--Excerpted from **Ack!**

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A.K. Spurway

Biography



A.K. Spurway, the mother of twin boys in elementary school, and a daughter in preschool, knows that from a young age, it's important to inspire children to celebrate what makes each of us unique and to feel loved unconditionally. She is getting a wonderful message out in her debut, award-winning, critically-acclaimed Amazon-best-selling children's book, ***Ack! The Nantucket Duckling***, and in her empowering product and clothing line.

Ack is a tiny duck with an unusual beak. He looks and sounds different. He is treated as an outcast. Not sure of his self-worth or where he fits in, he feels bullied and isolated. A.K. can relate.

As a child, like many others, she was the target of occasional bullying from her classmates. As an adult, she suffered from a facial paralysis due to Bell's Palsy, and was treated differently as a result. She also has Attention Deficit Disorder. A.K., who received her BA in Liberal Arts and a Master's Degree, both from Harvard University, helps children treasure who they are and to see their differences as an asset, not a hindrance.

Certified in Positive Parenting, A.K. has a passion for helping others raise healthy, confident, and happy children.

Her book is the recipient of Mom's Choice Awards Honoring Excellence.

A.K.'s journey has taken her to living three years in Europe, split between France and England. Her global perspective was also shaped by her volunteer work. She served with the Red Cross to set up the first post-Hurricane Katrina school in New Orleans. She also helped in the aftermath of a devastating tsunami in Sri Lanka.

A.K. and her book have been featured in numerous media, including: *Kirkus Reviews*, *Nantucket Magazine*, Family Entourage Blog, WEEI-Boston, WWVX-Boston, Business Talk Radio, KGNW-Seattle, and Fox 5-TV in San Diego.

Raised in Watertown, Massachusetts, she visited Nantucket (home of Ack) numerous times as a child. She resides in Leesburg, Virginia with her husband and three young children. For more information, please consult www.nantucket.com.

A.K. Spurway
Q & A
Ack! The Nantucket Duckling

1. A.K., what inspired you to write a children's book?

I felt the book was needed. Young kids need a role model or a champion for bullying, self-love, and accepting differences in themselves and others. As a parent and educator, I know how important it is to reach kids at an early age. The book is a wonderful way to spread positive, empowering messages. Kids can never hear enough stories about feeling appreciated for who they are.

2. One of the themes expressed in your book relates to bullying and being treated as an outcast. Did you experience the same thing?

My life was changed nearly 10 years ago when I was afflicted with Bell's Palsy. My face was paralyzed and unlike many who suffer from the condition, I was only able to recover a small amount of movement. I found it difficult to adjust. People treated me differently, and not always in a good way. As a mom, I see it all the time. When kids are different, they are not treated the same by other children. Studies show one out of every five students are bullied in school. I believe all people should be loved and accepted, just as they are. That's the inspiration behind Nanducket. I created a brand with a mission to help people – especially kids – to celebrate their differences, and learn to be inclusive.

3. In your story, what made this little duck different helped him to become a hero to save the day. How can we come to see even a perceived hindrance, weakness, or disability as an asset?

Just about everyone has characteristics that society sees as weaknesses, and generally when we're being raised, we're encouraged to change or eliminate these things. Of course, some of them are just innate, and we can't change them no matter how hard we try. What if we could see these so-called "weaknesses" as potential assets, though? It's a question of finding the right situations where those things become assets. That's what happened in the case of Ack. For people who have these differences that they see as weaknesses, I'd encourage them to explore them, and try to find things in your everyday life where they become an asset. Finding those things can change your perception of both that attribute and yourself.

4. Why do we tend to feel insecure about what makes us different?

Because we're told to feel that way. Anything that falls outside of what we are told to believe is normal is generally perceived as a negative -- this is how we're socialized to see the world from a very early age. To elaborate on that, the reason kids end up not embracing other kids with differences is that when kids see differences in others and ask their parents about it, all too often the parent shuts down the conversation, because they don't want to call attention to or embarrass the person with the difference. For example, if a child spots another child in a wheelchair in the supermarket, and starts loudly asking questions about it, a parent's first instinct is to shush them and move away. So they're basically unknowingly teaching their child to be afraid of the other child's difference.

5. What challenges do parents confront today while they try to raise healthy, happy, and safe children?

Our world is so complex now, and parents face so many challenges, which can change dramatically depending on individual circumstances. What I do know is that learning to appreciate and celebrate differences in others will benefit any child regardless of their situation. And that Social and Emotional

Learning (SEL) is a programmatic approach to this that could be hugely impactful in children's lives if adopted more widely by educational institutions. SEL teaches and promotes children's self-awareness, collaborative problem solving, and social decision-making skills in a proactive way. It helps children feel better about themselves and others. In the long term, children who have access to SEL build a better social foundation and more self-confidence, resulting in better performance — academically, and later in life.

6. Harvard educated and an international traveler, what moved you to get certified in Positive Parenting?

When my twins were born, I immersed myself in all sorts of reading material about parenting. I was kind of obsessed. As I read more, I found the Positive Parenting approach really resonated with me. It's an approach that starts from a place of mutual respect between parent and child. It's non-punitive and the goal is to build children up, increasing their confidence and self-reliance. The goal is to achieve discipline and increase a child's self-esteem, without breaking their spirit. It's just a great approach, and I've seen how effective it can be when done right.

7. How have you taught your twin sons and pre-school-aged daughter to love themselves and to feel loved?

The best thing we can do is model that behavior ourselves -- so we try to encourage an environment where we show our kids that our love is unconditional, and doesn't depend on the choices they make. We make them feel like we're listening when they talk to us, and we try to give them opportunities to take responsibility and ownership over things and stretch outside their comfort zone. It's ok to make mistakes and learn from them, and where they feel empowered over their own lives.

8. Why is it hard for kids to accept one another for who they are, especially when they are a little different?

The reason kids end up not embracing other kids with differences is that when kids see differences in others and ask their parents about it, all too often the parent shuts down the conversation, because they don't want to call attention to or embarrass the person with the difference. So they're basically teaching their child not to engage with those people.

9. Why did you choose a duck to tell your tale?

The inspiration for the story comes from the real Nantucket duck parade. Paul McCarthy, a Nantucket native and master woodcarver whose work is visible today in signs and other work throughout the island. Mr. McCarthy lived on the island and had his workshop on Orange Street, close by a tidal marsh, fed by freshwater springs, which was home to a large duck population. The ducks would march across the street to visit Mr. McCarthy, who welcomed them into his yard and fed them. At times, hundreds of ducks would visit Mr. McCarthy. The part of the street where the ducks crossed was marked with a sign – “Duck Crossing” – and it became an island landmark. To this day, ducks cross the road at this spot, and are a familiar sight on the island.

10. Why did you set your story on the island of Nantucket?

Nantucket is one of my favorite places on earth. I have many happy memories of visiting there for years, first as a child, and later with my own family. My husband and I were married on the island. It is a beautiful place that we feel a special connection to. Knowing the island sparked the idea for a story about a duck. And of course, it only made sense that we would name the hero of our book — a young duckling — after Nantucket's famous airport, ACK.

11. Were you surprised to see it win an award?

It's a great honor to be placed on the Amazon Best-seller list and be selected as a winner by the Mom's Choice Award for Excellence. I was really excited about making the list and winning an award so early on. Obviously, recognition like this helps create awareness and get our message out that's what's most important to me. Just to see over 100 five-star Amazon reviews helps give momentum

to what is turning out to be a movement. It's not just a book, it's a movement towards self-love, appreciating others for their differences, while unifying us.

12. *Kirkus Reviews* says your book is “A sweet tale with a strong moral about appreciating differences.” What kinds of differences are you referring to?

We're all different. There's no real set of parameters here -- it could be wearing glasses, being in a wheelchair, having autism, their size and shape, or having freckles. Just about anything. Some kids feel that what makes them different makes them weaker, or less than. What we want to do is encourage them to see there is nothing to be ashamed of and in some cases see their differences as a strength. The goal of this book was to teach a lesson in an entertaining way.

13. You volunteered with the Red Cross to help people heal after Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana and a tsunami hit Sri Lanka. What can we do to instill the values of charity and community service in our children?

First, you can show them by example. If charity and community service is an important part of your life, then your children will model that behavior. Second, involve them directly. Even if it's picking out some old toys to donate to needier kids, or making a small donation out of their savings, explaining the value of charity and helping them participate is important. Finally, teach them empathy. Help them understand how some people are less fortunate and need more assistance than others. Sometimes that means exposing them to these circumstances, and then having a conversation with them about it.

14. *Ack* is not just a cute children's book. It's part of a movement. Tell us what you are doing to get *Ack's* message out there?

Events have been pretty limited due to COVID, but I've done some radio interviews and other press. We are also proactively engaged with folks who are raising children and those influencing the next generation. Parents, educators, caregivers, and grandparents have really embraced this message. There is a clothing line and doll line connected to the book. We are pushing out an empowering, and hopeful message. We are also exploring donating books to schools and non-profits, and to applying legislative influence on schools to teach courses that encourage emotional and social learning skills. We are not just a book or a commercial venture. People love to find great information and interact with us on Instagram @Nanducket, or Facebook @nanducketstyle

15. Let's see. We have Donald Duck, Daffy Duck, the Aflac Duck. Is there room for *Ack* in the pantheon of lovable, mythical ducks?

Ack differentiates himself by being (1) a duckling, so he's way cuter than any of these other famous ducks, and (2) having a very unique personal characteristic. He has fears and insecurities, and he's discovering his world, so he's more childlike -- which makes him more relatable to kids. In my experience, he connects with children in a way that few characters do. So yes, there's definitely room for *Ack*!

Sample of 138 5-Star Amazon Reviews

Loves to read

5.0 out of 5 stars Memorable Read!

Over the years our family has read hundreds of children's books, some were good, some were great, some were just plain forgettable. Sorry, I'm not one for plot spoilers, but "Ack, The Nantucket Duckling" is one we will be reading again and again.

Kmarie

5.0 out of 5 stars Cute story with great message!

I have been looking for some good books to read to my infant that can also grow with his age. This one will sure become a favorite. It is a sweet short book about a duck that gets bullied for being different but he ultimately learns the most important lesson in life. It is okay to be different. Your differences are what make you special. It's a great message for kids and the illustrations are cute to help keep kids' attention. I recommend adding this one to your collection.

MSM

5.0 out of 5 stars Great children's book

My son (6 years of age) and I enjoyed this book tremendously. It is such a cute way to deliver such a powerful message all kids need to hear--that it's perfectly okay to be different! I recommend this book to anyone with kids. Well done!

Jessica Going

5.0 out of 5 stars Cute book with a good message.

What an adorable book! It has a great message about accepting your differences that I think can really grow with kids over the years. I was also impressed with the way it built suspense.

Tbot

5.0 out of 5 stars Easy to read, good message

This is a great children's story. It is cute, has nice illustrations, and has a great message about diversity. This is the perfect message to give to a child especially with what is currently happening socially. Our niece (5 years old) had no issues following along to the story as I read to her. One person found this helpful

Jessica Gragg

5.0 out of 5 stars Heart Warming

A great book to read to your little ones at night. Every child goes through a point in their life where they dislike something about themselves because it isn't what their friends and family think is right. This heartwarming story tells a story of how to overcome those moments. I would definitely recommend it to those parents and teachers that are wanting to teach a very good lesson about life and physical appearance.

Pamela Ervin

5.0 out of 5 stars The cutest little book ever with an amazing message!

My son loves ducks and this book was perfect for him! Not only does it appeal to him because of the cute ducks but it also helps us in teaching him about people being different and how we should treat one another no matter the difference. This is a staple in our house hold now. love it!