



# When I Grow Up (I Want to Be Me)

## Classroom Guide

*For kids who want to be everything*

**CASEL Competency:** Self-Awareness

**Grade Level:** Pre-K–2

**Duration:** 40–50 minutes

**Category:** Growing Up

## Learning Objectives

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- Understand that having MANY interests is a strength, not a problem to solve
- Learn that "what I want to be" is less important than "who I already am"
- Discover that the qualities inside you (curiosity, kindness, creativity) matter more than any job title
- Practice celebrating varied interests without pressure to choose just one

## Overview & Preparation

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### Key Vocabulary

Future • Career • Interest • Qualities • Identity • Explore • Passionate • Curious • Dream • Celebrate

### Materials Needed

- The personalized story
- Costume props or paper cutouts (hats, tools, etc.)
- Large paper
- Markers, stickers
- Optional: dress-up clothes

## Before Reading

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### Connection Question

*What do you want to be when you grow up? What if you could be THREE things? What if you could be EVERYTHING?*

### Background Building

Everyone keeps asking: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Our hero doesn't KNOW. A magic door opens to the Future Fair, where you can try on ANY future! Astronaut! Chef! Doctor! Artist! Each one is exciting but doesn't feel quite right. When the hero tries to wear ALL the costumes at once, the pile-up is so ridiculous the whole fair stops. But when everything falls off and the hero just stands there being THEMSELVES, the fair erupts — because the most interesting exhibit was them all along.

## During Reading — Pause Points

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- **When the hero tries on career costumes one by one** — Each career is exciting but doesn't feel EXACTLY right. Have you ever tried something and thought, "I like this, but it's not ALL of me"?
- **When the hero piles on ALL the costumes and they collapse hilariously** — The hero tried to be EVERYTHING at once and it was a ridiculous mess! Why doesn't that work? Can you really be everything at the same time?
- **When the hero stands there just being themselves and the fair celebrates** — With no costume at all, the hero was the BEST exhibit! What were people celebrating? What did they see?

## Discussion Questions

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1. The hero felt pressure to pick ONE thing. Do you ever feel pressure to know what you want to be? Where does that pressure come from?

↳ Is it okay to say "I don't know yet"? Is it okay to say "I want to be everything"?

2. Each career costume was exciting but didn't feel like the WHOLE hero. What does that tell us about identity?

↳ Are you one thing, or are you made of many parts?

3. When all the costumes fell off, the hero was the most interesting exhibit. Why was their TRUE self more interesting than any costume?

↳ What makes YOU interesting that has nothing to do with a future job?

4. The Future Fair transformed into a tent celebrating everything the hero loves. If YOUR tent showed everything you love, what would be in it?

↳ Would anyone else have the exact same tent? Why not?

## Facilitation Tips

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Be careful with "What do you want to be?" questions — this story is about releasing that pressure, not adding to it. Some children already feel anxiety about not knowing. Validate ALL answers: "I want to be a doctor" and "I have no idea" and "I want to be everything" are all perfect. The lesson isn't to reject career dreams but to celebrate the PERSON behind them.

## Emotional Payoff

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*The most common question in childhood transforms from pressure to celebration. "I want to be ME" is the most powerful answer because it includes everything the child already loves. The message: who you are right now — with all your wild, contradictory, beautiful interests — is already extraordinary. No costume needed.*

## After Reading Activities

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### The Costume Pile-Up

Duration: 10 min | Materials: Costume props or paper cutout hats/accessories

Recreate the story's funniest moment! Each child adds one costume piece (hat, scarf, tool, cape) until someone is wearing ALL of them and it's hilariously unstable. When it all collapses: "That's the hero! That's the story! You can't be everything at once — but you CAN be YOU, which is better."

### My Future Fair Tent

Duration: 15 min | Materials: Large paper, markers, stickers, magazines for cutting

Each child designs their own Future Fair tent — a booth that showcases EVERYTHING they love and are good at, with no pressure to pick just one. Include: favorite activities, skills, things that make them happy, people they admire, and dreams (plural!). Present to the class: "Welcome to my tent!"

### The Qualities Inside

Duration: 10 min | Materials: Paper, crayons

Draw yourself — but instead of clothes or costumes, fill your outline with QUALITIES written inside: curious, kind, funny, brave, creative, helpful, etc. These are the things that stay no matter what career you choose. Share: "No matter what I become, I will always be \_\_\_\_."

## Writing Prompts

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- List five things you love that seem totally different from each other. Now find the thread — what do they have in common? (Hint: YOU!)
- Draw your Future Fair tent. What exhibits are inside? What would visitors discover about you?
- Write a letter to your future self: "Dear Future Me, I hope you still love \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. And whatever you become, remember that the best part of you is \_\_\_\_."

## Home Connection

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### Family Letter

Dear Families,

Today we read "When I Grow Up (I Want to Be Me)," about a child who visits the Future Fair and tries on every career costume — but discovers that the most interesting exhibit was themselves all along. Your child designed their own Future Fair tent showcasing everything they love, with no pressure to choose just one thing.

Here is how you can continue this learning at home:

- Instead of "What do you want to be?", try asking "What are you excited about RIGHT NOW?"
- Make a family Future Fair: each family member designs their tent showing all their interests
- Celebrate when your child adds a NEW interest instead of worrying about "too many" hobbies

With warmth,

Your Child's Teacher

### Related Books

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- When I Grow Up by "Weird Al" Yankovic
- The Wonderful Things You Will Be by Emily Winfield Martin
- I Can Be Anything! by Jerry Spinelli
- Maybe by Kobi Yamada