

SLOW DOWN, TUMBLEWEED!



STORYTIME KIT

FIVE ACTIVITIES TO CELEBRATE
LIFE—BOTH MOVING FAST AND
MOVING SLOW

Dear friends,

When my children were young, they each exhibited very distinct ways of being in the world. Whenever we visited a playground, my daughter would swing on every swing, climb on all the bars, and tear through every playground opportunity. My son, on the other hand, liked to quietly lie in the grass. On his stomach, he watched the bugs. On his back, he observed the birds in the sky.

I felt inspired by both of these ways of approaching life, and over time, my observations of their innate styles led to my first children's book, *Slow Down, Tumbleweed!*

Mabel, the main character and little wild child tumbleweed, is, in the end, a blend of these two ways of being. She has many fine adventures on the go, for after all, she is a tumbleweed! However, thanks to a wild windstorm, she is forced to park it next to a barnyard and discovers the richness that comes with being still. Little Mabel reminds us that wonder, awe, and adventure can happen in a quiet, mindful moment. You don't always have to go chasing after it. I was thrilled to work with illustrator Rob Sayegh Jr. who brought Mabel and her world to life with his joyful artwork.

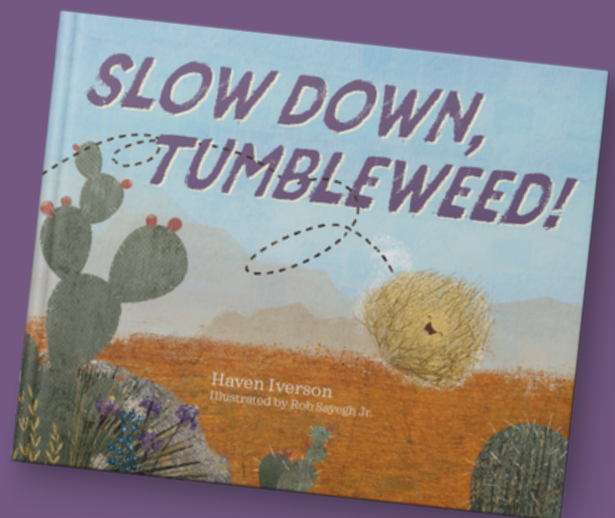
The world today moves quickly. I can very often be like Mabel, a rambling, rolling tumbleweed—always on the go. As adults, we model this for children. The pressure on kids to go and succeed, to attend multiple activities and join the hustle, is only increasing. We may forget to model what it's like to appreciate the wonder and possibility in a still moment or to reinforce that in the children for whom it's second nature.

These days, as a family, we like to explore the awareness and beauty that come with both ways of being. I notice that when we are camping, my daughter will ask if we can hike up a ridge to sit and watch the sun go down. And it is my son who wants to hop on his bike and adventure with speed down dirt trails. Together, like Mabel, we are learning to celebrate life—both moving fast and moving slow.

Happy reading!
Haven



P.S. Mabel and I did a read-along video together. She rambles across the pages while I narrate the story in the background. You can view it [here](#) or search *Slow Down, Tumbleweed* on YouTube.



OPPOSITES: MOVING FAST & MOVING SLOW

As a wild and roaming tumbleweed, Mabel enjoys being on the go. There's so much to see and do! Later in the story, when she gets stuck on a fence, she has no choice but to sit still and look at the scenery. In the end, she learns that sitting in stillness and moving through life more slowly can be fun too.

What are three activities that you enjoy that involve moving fast?

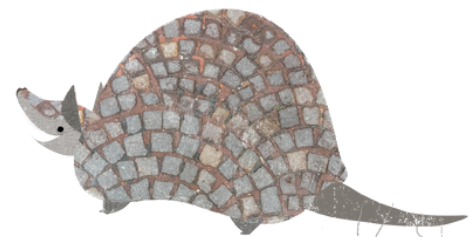
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



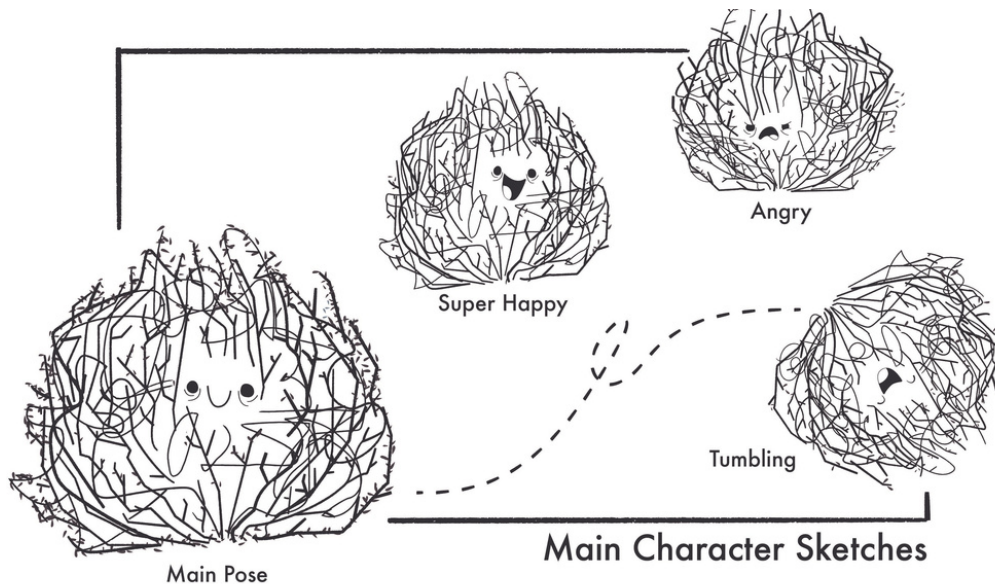
What are three activities that you enjoy moving slow?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Which one is your favorite? What do you like most about it?



A TUMBLEWEED WITH EMOTIONS



Rob Sayegh Jr., the illustrator of *Slow Down, Tumbleweed!*, thought a lot about how to turn a tumbleweed into a live character. He made a lot of sketches to try different things and show the reader how Mabel was feeling throughout the story.

The ones above are his main character sketches (main pose, tumbling, super happy, and angry), but he also gave Mabel many different expressions: sleepy, worried, scared, sad, curious, and peaceful.

YOUR TURN! Draw three different expressions for Mabel. As Mr. Sayegh shows us, it's not only her mouth that tells how she is feeling, but her eyes too. Under each drawing, write a word to describe how Mabel is feeling. You can also color her as you'd like.



MOVING AWARENESS

When we are on the go, sometimes all we can think about is getting from one place to the next. When you're driving somewhere with your family, especially on a long trip, do you sometimes ask, "Are we there yet?"

When Mabel slowed down on her adventures, she saw and heard things she hadn't before: how the clouds stretched across the sky, the wind chime blowing in the breeze, even the eyelashes on a nearby cow. When she finally broke free from the fence and could ramble and rumble on, she continued to notice and appreciate new things like the gentle sunset and a river running through the canyon.

YOUR TURN! This activity is for the next time you're traveling to a place you visit often, like school, a family member's or friend's house, or the grocery store. See if you can notice five new things that you never did before. Write them down or draw them here.



SENSORY SCAN: WELCOME TO THE HERE AND NOW

This practice is shared in *Growing Up Mindful* by Dr. Christopher Willard. It is an informal exercise to help children engage in stillness through their five senses and imagining how animals use their senses. To get started, settle into a still posture and close your eyes.

First, notice physical sensations. A mole cannot see, but it has a strong sense of touch, feeling the sensations and vibrations of its environment. Scan the edges of your body. Notice the sensations on your skin, such as those made by your clothing or the air. Feel deeper inside your body, to your muscles and organs, and notice what you can sense.

Now, notice sounds. A deer's ears are among the most powerful of any animal. Can you listen like a deer? Can you hear any sound at this very moment, near or far?

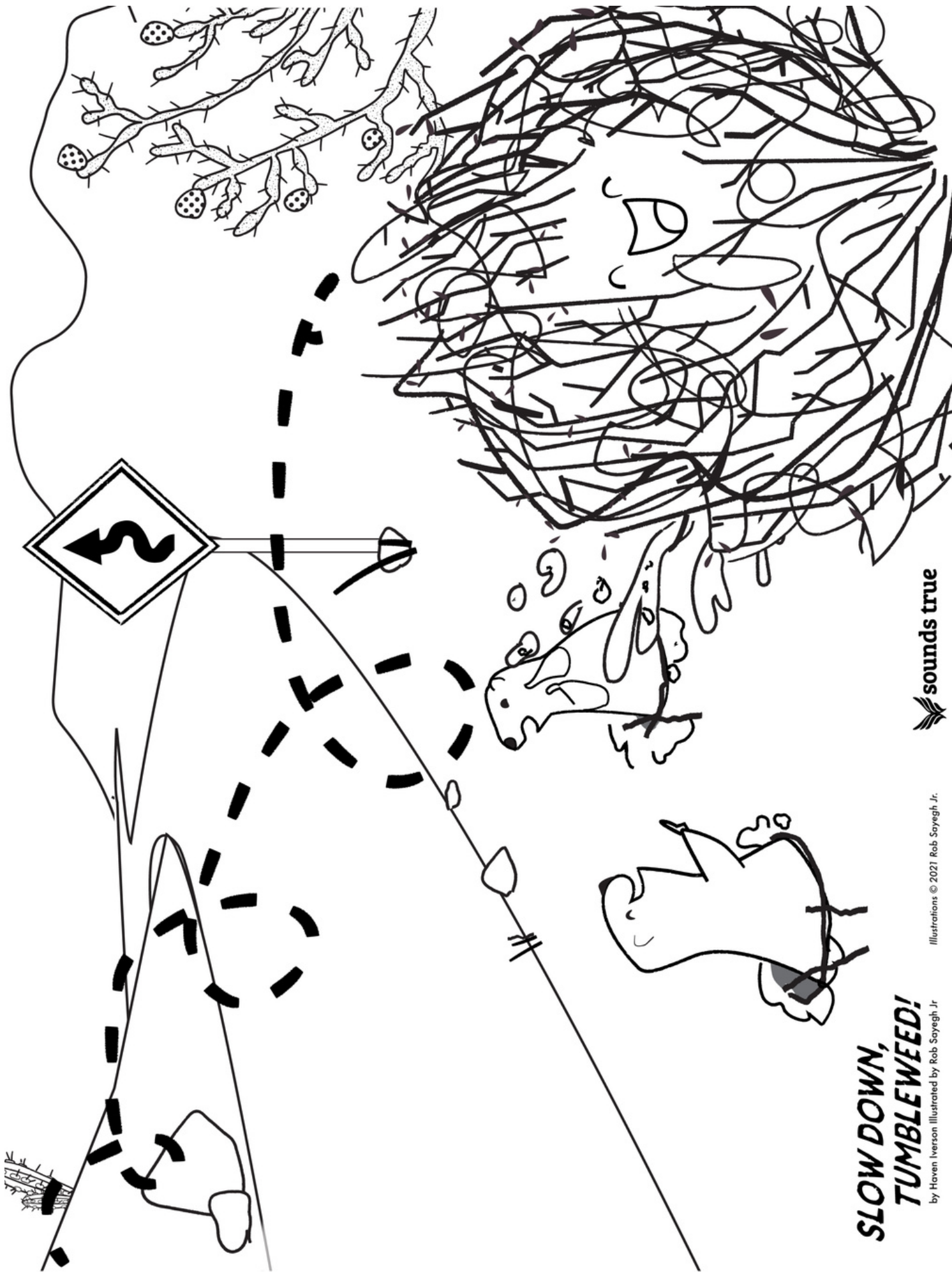
Then, switch to smell. A dog, or a wolf, has a powerful sense of smell that gives it information about the world. Smell like a wolf. As you breathe in through your nose, what smells do you notice? Perhaps food cooking in the distance, the smell of fresh air, or someone's perfume nearby?

Focus on the sense of taste. A catfish is said to have the most powerful sense of taste of any animal. Open your mouth a little bit. Can you taste anything in the environment? What tastes linger in your mouth or on your tongue after you close your mouth?

Now open your eyes. What's in your field of vision at this very moment? Eagles have strong eyes that can zoom in to see a small animal from high above. And small animals take in all their surroundings in order to watch for predators. See if you can take in everything around you, or just focus in on something beautiful.

Welcome to the here and now.





**SLOW DOWN,
TUMBLEWEED!**

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sounds true

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