

Zach Hangs In There



William Mulcahy
illustrated by
Darren McKee

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PUBLISHING®

Dedication

To Kegen, Makenna, and Masen.
Never forget: Life and love are extraordinary. Hang in there.

Acknowledgments

Thank you once again to Eric Braun, master editor and occasional mind reader.

For ideas on the makeup of persevering, thank you to Rebecca Toetz, principal at Cushing Elementary, and Kelli Lewis.

For the endless nourishment I have received through the years while working there on my stories and my life, thank you to Rochester Deli.

To the rest of the crew that circulates ideas and images in my heart and mind at home: Thank you, Liam, Luke, and Jack.

Lastly, I am thankful for Melissa, for the great gift of parenthood, and for our newest addition. Welcome, Shannon Helen.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Mulcahy, William, author. | McKee, Darren, illustrator.

Title: Zach hangs in there / William Mulcahy ; illustrated by Darren McKee.

Description: Minneapolis : Free Spirit Publishing, 2017. | Series: Zach rules series | Audience: Age: 5–8.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016034106 (print) | LCCN 2017005177 (ebook) | ISBN 9781631981623 (hardback) | ISBN 1631981625 (hardcover) |

ISBN 9781631981630 (Web PDF) | ISBN 9781631981647 (ePub)

Subjects: LCSH: Goal (Psychology)—Juvenile literature. | Self-esteem—Juvenile literature. | BISAC: JUVENILE FICTION / Social Issues / Self-Esteem & Self-Reliance. | JUVENILE FICTION / Social Issues / Friendship. | JUVENILE FICTION / Social Issues / Emotions & Feelings.

Classification: LCC BF505.G6 M85 2017 (print) | LCC BF505.G6 (ebook) | DDC 158.1083—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016034106>

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Reading Level Grade 2; Interest Level Ages 5–8;
Fountas & Pinnell Guided Reading Level M

Edited by Eric Braun

Cover and interior design by Tasha Kenyon

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America

B10950217

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Zach finished his math test and handed it in to Ms. Rosamond. It was almost time for recess. He started thinking about those tricky trapeze rings.



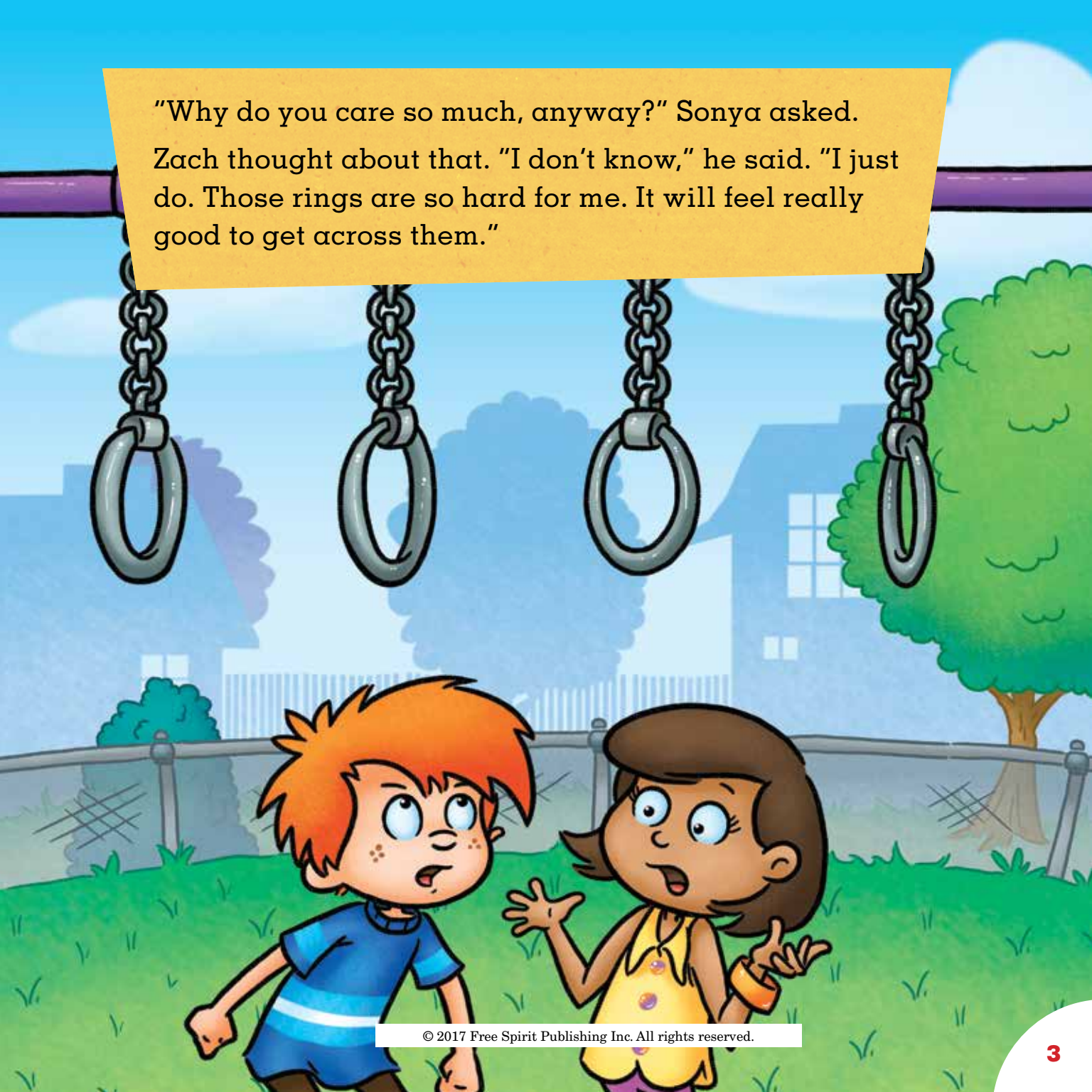
Zach went out to recess with his best friend, Sonya.

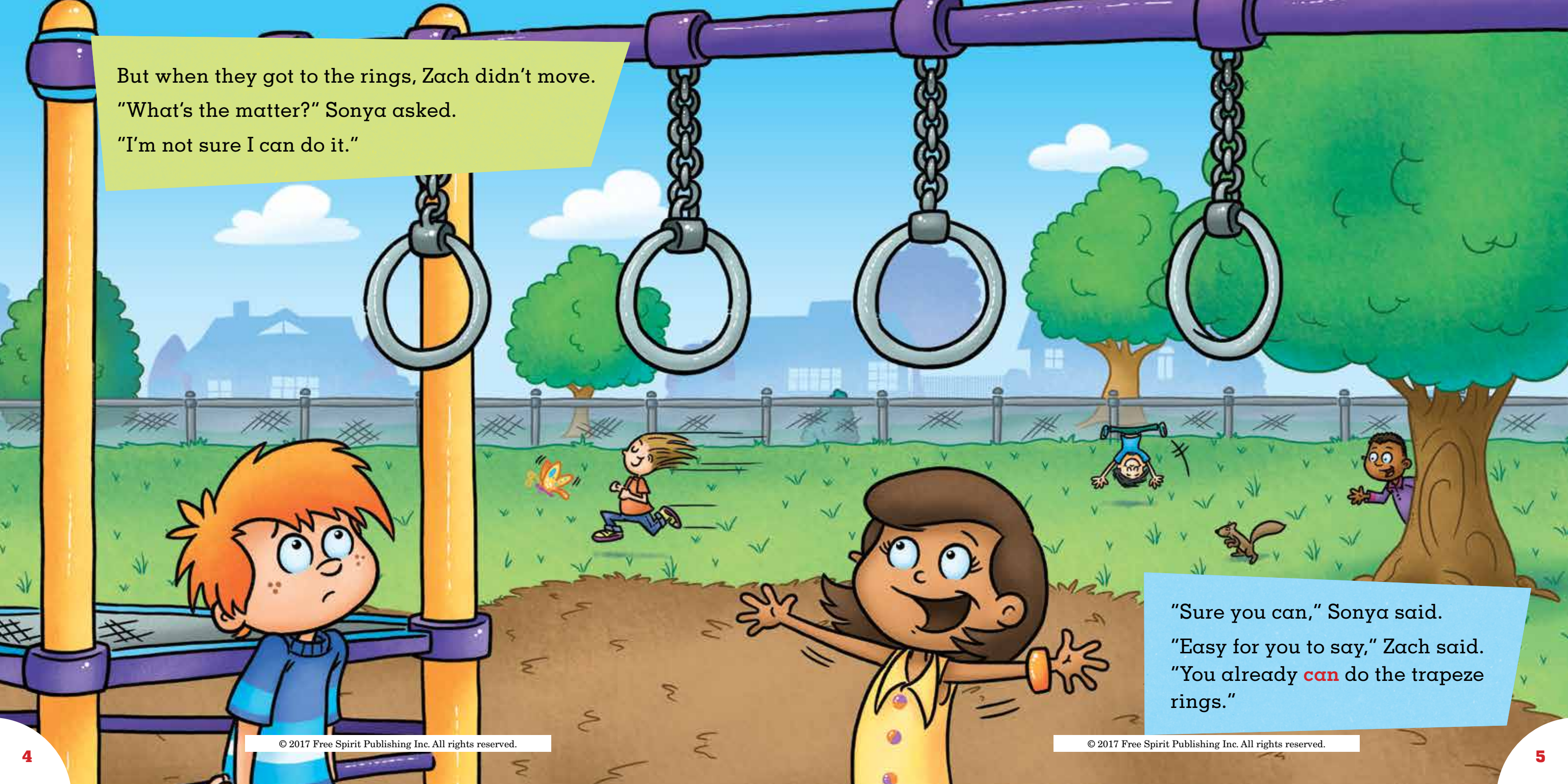
"Are you going to the trapeze rings **again**?" Sonya asked. Lately they had been going there every recess.

"I have to get across them," Zach said.



"Why do you care so much, anyway?" Sonya asked. Zach thought about that. "I don't know," he said. "I just do. Those rings are so hard for me. It will feel really good to get across them."





But when they got to the rings, Zach didn't move.

"What's the matter?" Sonya asked.

"I'm not sure I can do it."

"Sure you can," Sonya said.

"Easy for you to say," Zach said.

"You already **can** do the trapeze rings."

Helping Children Persevere

Perseverance, or the ability to keep trying even when something is difficult, is by its nature challenging for both kids and adults. For some of us, it is much easier to give up. While most adults have the skills and experience to persevere during difficult times, young children typically need coaching and support to hang in there and keep trying until a task is completed.

It's important to remember that all children have had their own experiences with perseverance before the present learning situation. Some children tend to handle challenges with a fierce determination, becoming intensely focused on accomplishing things. Others are easily discouraged, displaying avoidance, emotional outbursts, complaints, or other behavioral issues. Most children fall somewhere in between, having experienced the benefits and woes of persevering. In any case, children will carry that emotional and behavioral history into the current potential learning situation. The Hang-In-There Rings can empower all children to take an active role in their learning and success, providing a road map to work through the struggles, doubt, and emotional upheaval that often surface while facing obstacles.

The Hang-In-There Rings comprise a four-step process that not only helps kids get through the challenge they are facing, but also better prepares them for challenges in the future. It gently shows children how persevering can become an "everyday-everyway" habit.

The Hang-In-There Rings are most successful when children and adults partner in learning and practicing the steps. It is vital that adults offer children reassurances and encouragement and be willing to support them with an eye to gradually lessening that support so that children become independent in using the rings—and ultimately in trying new things and learning.

The Hang-In-There Rings have the power to:

- Provide clear guidance on how to stick with it through tough times
- Build confidence
- Help kids distinguish between ideas that work and those that don't work
- Help kids learn responsibility and feel empowered
- Foster autonomy and a sense of accomplishment
- Improve positive self-talk
- Help kids make constructive choices
- Help us all understand the importance of the journey as well as the end goal

Here is more information about the four steps of the Hang-In-There Rings and some tips to help guide your child:

- 1. Start with a goal.** In this step, children identify what they are trying to accomplish and why it's important. Insist that kids make clear to themselves—specifically—what they are shooting for. Don't be afraid to push them to answer why the task is important to them. How will they feel when they finish? What will be different for them? If they don't know what their goal is, they can stumble around aimlessly wasting time and energy and setting themselves up for failure. The type of forward-thinking needed to set a goal and know why it's important is essential in helping children grow into critical thinkers and dynamic learners.
- 2. Make a plan.** Here, children take an active role in piecing together a viable plan that will allow them to accomplish their goal. Encourage them to analyze a problem or situation and develop a system or a way to attack the task at hand. Feedback and directions from adults can be a powerful coaching tool during this step, but be sure you are *supporting* as children develop their own abilities to analyze problems and construct plans to achieve goals.
- 3. Make a new plan if you need it.** Sometimes your first plan doesn't work. When that happens, children review and revise the strategies they have been using. One of the vital ingredients in this step is helping kids develop the awareness that something isn't working and give themselves permission to try something new. Proactively encourage and coach kids to brainstorm new tactics and develop more problem-solving strategies. Don't forget to give them the needed time to sift through the possible solutions for accomplishing their goals.
- 4. Keep trying to the end.** In this step, children learn how to keep trying until their task is accomplished. Teach kids to visualize themselves working through the difficult moments *all the way to the end*. Teach children positive self-talk to assist themselves as they are attempting to persevere. Phrases such as "Don't give up," "I can do it," and "Believe" are powerful prompts to continue even when things get hard. Don't forget to encourage children to examine how they accomplished what they set out to do and appropriately celebrate their efforts and achievement.