

JDAIM

FEBRUARY 2021

**Jewish Disability Awareness,
Acceptance & Inclusion Month**



**PROGRAM
GUIDE**

Written & Produced by
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www.jdaim.org

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We All Belong

Included

Valued

Respected

Honored

Accepted

Loved

Online and Social Media Resources

Visit us at
www.JDAIM.org

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#JDAIM2021

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**Please use the Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month
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JDAIM 2021— How You Can Build an Inclusive Community Without Walls

Dear Friends,

Years ago, my husband Rick and I took our three sons on a camping trip to the Black Hills of South Dakota. After the brakes of our car blew out on the trip and our idyllic campsite turned out to be downwind from the primitive restrooms, I realized how the best laid plans could go awry or at least be interrupted by things out of our control. After more mishaps I found solace in retail therapy. At a kitschy tourist trap I found a t-shirt that somehow reflected the trials and tribulations of our camping trip. The shirt read, “Life is uncertain. Eat dessert first.”

The year 2020 has flashed that lesson, at least the “life is uncertain” part, so often that sometimes I think that the only certainty is uncertainty.

Since March of 2020, the Jewish community has been diligently focused on how to preserve the essential parts of our communal lives. The uncertainty in the early days of the pandemic has transformed us to reach more people through technology than we could have imagined. Organizations are laser-focused on ensuring that people with disabilities and mental health conditions have access to and can use technology to fully participate in programs, services, education, and social opportunities. We have created a Community Without Walls.

JDAIM 2021 will be observed by more organizations than ever before. The JDAIM 2021 Guide highlights many of our Community Without Walls partners who are providing virtual programs and resources for you to access.

Living as a member of the Community Without Walls is not just for some people. We must ensure that each of us, created in the image of God, feels the embrace of belonging. That much is certain.

B’Hatzlacha,

Shelly Christensen, MA, FAAIDD

Co-founder of JDAIM

Co-host of [Everyone’s Welcome](#)—A Fresh Conversation About Disability

Author [From Longing to Belonging](#)—A Practical Guide to Including People with Disabilities and Mental Health Conditions in Your Faith Community

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www.jdaim.org



About Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month

Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month (JDAIM) is a unified effort among Jewish organizations worldwide to raise awareness and foster acceptance and inclusion of people with disabilities and mental health conditions and those who love them. JDAIM is a call to action for all of us to act in accordance with our Jewish values, honoring the gifts and strengths that we each possess. Established in 2009 by the Jewish Special Education International Consortium, JDAIM is observed each February.

Mission Statement

The mission of Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month is to unite Jewish communities worldwide to raise awareness and champion the rights of all Jews to be accepted and included in all aspects of Jewish life like anyone else.

Why You Should Participate in JDAIM

- Raise awareness and affirm that inclusion and belonging are essential to well-being and quality of life of people with disabilities, mental health conditions and caregivers—like anyone else.
- Underscore the importance of choosing one’s own Jewish journey.
- Support people with disabilities and mental health conditions in *all* aspects of communal life—as they choose.
- Be part of a growing worldwide initiative to support participation and involvement in communal life.
- Advocate for the civil rights of people with disabilities and mental health conditions.
- Understand and overcome stigma, prejudice, biases, stereotypes, and myths about disability and mental health conditions.

Use the JDAIM Logo



Please use the Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month logo on all of your communications & events. Available at www.jdaim.org



JDAIM and Technology

Streaming Events and Services

Since March, 2020 we have adapted to new ways of connecting—and belonging. JDAIM 2021 programs, services and events will mostly be streamed on Zoom, FaceBook Live, YouTube and other virtual platforms. Now more people than ever before can participate in JDAIM! This section reviews accessibility and inclusion considerations for virtual services and events.

What do people with disabilities and mental health conditions need to participate in streaming services and events?

By now it would seem that nearly everyone has a smartphone, computer or tablet and access to the internet. That's not necessarily the case. Some people don't have the technology or know how to use online platforms. Here are several considerations to make JDAIM accessible to all people.

What you can do

Make Devices Available

- Make Chromebooks and tablets available for people to check out.
- Ask people to donate their extra working laptops and tablets. Publicize the need. Encourage people to update their devices with the meeting platform you use.
- Arrange several collection days.
- Make sure Zoom or the streaming platform you are using is easy to access.
- Arrange volunteers to drop off the devices at peoples' homes or have individuals or family members arrange a pick-up time.
- Ask the recipients how to drop off the devices to a secure location. Congregate living facilities including nursing homes, assisted living, group homes, and senior residences may not allow visitors.

Access to Technology

- Call people to find out if they have access to email so you can send links to programming.
- If someone doesn't have access to the internet, you can pre-pay hot spots for them to use.
- Not everyone is familiar with Zoom. Find out if people have support staff or family members who can help them connect.
- Many people have Facebook accounts and are more comfortable using Facebook than a streaming service. Stream live events on Facebook Live and provide the link.
- Some organizations have a cadre of volunteers who can visit individuals to set up their devices and show them how to use Zoom and other platforms. If social distancing is not possible, or if it's not a safe location, this isn't an option. Volunteers may be able to guide staff or family members to set up access.



Pre-recording

If you are concerned about technical issues with a live stream, consider pre-recording some of your content. If you do this, save the recording to YouTube which will then automatically caption the video in English. YouTube captioning is fairly accurate. If the speaker has an accent or speech disability, or speaks softly, you'll need to check the captioning and correct it before posting or streaming. The process is quite simple.

You Tube captions take a day or two to process in videos. People will have to click on the CC box once they have opened the video in order to access the captions. Include instructions for how to do this when you list the YouTube link in communications.

Accessible Communication on Streaming Platforms

The same considerations for making services and programs accessible to all participants before the pandemic haven't changed. We'll examine captioning, sign language interpretation, and audio descriptions.

Captioning

Captioning is an essential protocol for streaming in general. Captioning is gaining in popularity among many different segments of the community, including some deaf people and those who are hard of hearing. Some deaf people use American Sign Language, so remember to include an accommodation request on your registration sign-up to make sure that people receive the services they need in order to participate.

- Some streaming services offer automatic captioning while others have an option for your organization or a third party to caption in real time. If you aren't sure about captioning, consider how so much of the service or program is presented verbally.
- Zoom has a real time captioning option. To use it, either someone from your organization would type captions or you can hire a third-party provider, such as [Rev.com](https://www.rev.com) to caption for you. Zoom does not automatically caption. [How to Caption on Zoom](#).
- Microsoft Teams offers automated real time captioning in English. The ideal situation requires the speaker to be in a quiet space with close proximity to the microphone. The captions are only available on a live stream and won't appear on a recorded version. Captions on [Microsoft Teams](#).
- Google Hangouts is accessible for deaf and hearing-impaired users with live captions. When you turn on the caption feature on your device, they will only be visible on your device. In order for other participants in the meeting to see captions, they have to individually turn this feature on for their devices. Like Microsoft Teams, the captions won't be available on recordings. [Google Hangouts](#)
- Other platforms with automated speech to text availability include AdobeConnect, WebEx, Skype.



American Sign Language Interpreters

Zoom and other platforms offer a way for ASL interpreters to be seen on screen during services. Be sure to include an accommodation request option for any webinar and meeting registrations so anyone needing an ASL interpreter can make that request.

Audio Description

Remember to announce page numbers regularly. Double check the page numbers in the version of a book you are using with the e-book and flipbook versions beforehand.

As a matter of course, describe what you are doing for blind people and those with low-vision. Remarks can be conversational.

“Rabbi A and Rabbi B, along with Chazzan C are on the bimah this morning. Rabbi A is standing at the left podium, Chazzan C is standing at the middle podium, and Rabbi B is standing at the left podium. They are spread about 8 feet apart from each other.”

“We are taking the Torah scroll out of the Aron Kodesh. The mantle, or cover, is pale blue velvet with silver threads woven in.”

Include an Accommodation Statement

Accommodation statements belong in all of your written and electronic communications, on the front page of your website, invitations to events, and notices about programs you offer.

These statements invite individuals to tell you about their needs in order to participate. Always include contact information and a due date for requests to be made.

Sample Language

“If you require an accommodation in order to participate in (the meeting/services/event, etc.) please contact (name of individual who is responsible for taking requests, if applicable) at (phone and email) by (due date to make the request.)”

“We welcome and support children, teens, and adults with disabilities, mental health conditions, and their families and caregivers. We make every effort to ensure our programs, equipment, and facilities are accessible. Please phone or email us if you have any questions or would like to request an accommodation.”

Additional language may be added to state that requests for accommodations made after the advertised date will be honored to the maximum extent feasible.



JDAIM 2021 Community Without Walls Partners

The JDAIM 2021 Community Without Walls Partners are committed to making this JDAIM the most far-reaching call to action to date. With an enduring commitment toward supporting people with disabilities, mental health conditions and allies to be full participants in all life domains, including faith community participation, these organizations have embraced innovation and provide free resources for JDAIM.

As you go through the Community Without Walls Partner pages, look for ways to engage your organization or community in the many offerings. You'll find webinars, discussions, entertainment, and free resources during JDAIM.

JDAIM Community Without Walls Partner Jewish Federations of North America



There are over 180 national and local partners for [Jewish Disability Advocacy Month \(JDAM\)](#). The theme for our month-long series of programs is "**From Empowerment to Advocacy**," and with your support, JDAM will have incredible reach and impact in educating, building solidarity, and empowering the community to advocate in support of people with disabilities. Visit the [JDAM website](#) for programs, registration, a promotional toolkit and more!

Promotional Toolkit

Use the materials in the [Promotional Toolkit](#) to promote JDAM in your community. We have created several variations, including a generic version, and encourage you to choose the one that best suits your needs. The official hashtag for the month is #JDAM. If you have questions about how to use the toolkit, please contact [Alexandra Coffey](#).

A Different Theme Each Week

Hear from thought leaders and experts about the current state of disability rights, and what can be done to promote the best inclusion and supportive care practices. Learn new advocacy strategies and take action to put the needs and rights of people with disabilities squarely on the policy agenda of the Biden administration and the 117th Congress.

Closed captioning available throughout.



JDAIM Community Without Walls Partner

Ruderman Chabad Inclusion Initiative



ShabbaTTogether

ShabbaTTogether

February 12, 2021 *Rosh Chodesh Adar*

www.shabbaTTogether.com

The Ruderman Chabad Inclusion Initiative is celebrating the 3rd Annual ShabbaTTogether, A Global Shabbat of Disability Inclusion and Mental Wellness on February 12, 2021, Rosh Chodesh Adar.

Jewish communities around the world on 6 continents are planning events and programs for a global Shabbat of unity focusing on Disability Inclusion and Mental Wellness.

This year, Mental Health has become an even more important focus as the whole world is currently struggling to find a balance and maintain our own mental wellness in these challenging and uncertain times. Covid-19 has hit every community hard and for those who have a disability or history of mental health conditions, the struggle can be even more difficult. The ShabbaTTogether resources this year are created with virtual programming in mind with in-person options if needed.

A sample of our programs this year include:

- Five Mental Health Activity Games for children, teens and young adults at home or via Zoom
- Mental Health Program for Teens and Young Adults
 - Includes an Interactive activity, printable materials and discussion prompts
- *We Can Find a Way*, a children's picture book sponsored by RCII showing ways to be inclusive of everyone.
 - Activity Guide
 - Book reading and guide for Zoom
- Collaborative program with PJ Library's *The Mitten String*

Visit the website for practical resources you can use for JDAIM, or anytime and to learn more about [ShabbaTTogether](http://www.shabbaTTogether.com).

The Ruderman-Chabad Inclusion Initiative (RCII) is coordinating ShabbaTTogether.



JDAIM Community Without Walls Partner

Faith Inclusion Network



CommunityForAll
Interfaith Disability Inclusion Weekend

Community for All
February 26-28, 2021

[Community for All](#) (C4A) is an interfaith awareness campaign started in Norfolk VA by Faith Inclusion Network (FIN). We encourage all faith communities to focus on belonging and inclusion at services and programs February 26-28, 2021. To kick it all off join us for our virtual conference.

Community for ALL CONFERENCE 2021

An opportunity to participate in both local and national conversations on disability inclusion

On **Friday, February 26, 2021** FIN will host our most ambitious conference ever. The virtual conference will provide the opportunity to learn from nationally recognized leaders, connect with people from around the country and find the resources you need to better include people affected by disability in your faith communities.

Our conference this year will feature over 25 video presentations, including these reknown speakers in the Jewish community—Howard Blas, Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer, Aaron Kaufman and Shelly Christensen. Be part of a huge national community conversation on Zoom and the opportunity to gather virtually with local inclusion groups established around the country. **FIN Community Groups** are forming now, including groups in Washington DC, Texas, Rochester NY, and Philadelphia with more in the works. If you are interested in forming your own FIN Community Group, contact Karen Jackson at faithinclusionnetwork@gmail.com

Check out the [registration info](#) and please consider supporting and/or participating in FIN's 7th bi-annual conference.

When our faith communities fully open up, you will want to be ready to welcome ALL people into the congregation. We hope you will join us in February!



JDAIM Community Without Walls Partner **Everyone's Welcome-A Fresh Conversation About Disability**



Don't Miss These January and February Episodes!

Everyone's Welcome is a fresh virtual conversation series about disability inclusion hosted by Inclusion Innovations' Shelly Christensen and Whole Community Inclusion's Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer. Join Shelly and Gabby as they sit down for conversations with people who share their stories and experiences around disability and mental health. Everyone's Welcome is produced twice-monthly on Zoom.

January 12 - Authors Roundtable. Join JDAIM Reads! authors as they talk about their books! Scheduled to appear: Elaine Hall, Rachel Simon, Tom Fields-Meyer, Dr. Barry Prizant, Liane Kupferberg-Carter, Sue Baer, and Meredith Polsky.

January 28 - Sarah Kranz-Ciment (ShabbaTTogether), Aaron Kaufman (Jewish Disability Advocacy Month), Karen Jackson (Community for All), and Shelly Christensen (JDAIM) talk about exciting February programs you and your community can access virtually!

February 9 Mental Health – Pastor Dave Eckert of Access Services – Intersect, and Gabrielle Spatt of The Blue Dove Foundation discuss supporting people with mental health conditions in faith communities.

February 23 Join leaders of the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition as they share how faith communities can advocate at local, state and national levels for the rights of people with disabilities.

Past Episodes

[Spirituality of People with non-speaking Autism](#) Dr. Karenne Hills

[Inclusive Arts and HBO's Autism the Sequel](#) Elaine Hall

[Disability Policy and Self-Advocacy](#) Liz Weintraub

[Supporting People with Mental Health Conditions in Faith Communities](#) Rev. Hollie Holt-Woehl

[What Led Us to Become Disability Inclusion Advocates](#) Gabby Kaplan-Mayer and Shelly Christensen

[What the ADA Means to Faith Community Advocacy](#) Aaron Kaufman

[Autism Advocacy](#) Dr. Stephen Shore

[Inclusive High Holidays](#) Rabbi Rebecca Dubowe

[Disability Employment Month](#) Deborah Fisher PsyD

[The 4 A's of Autism](#) Dr. Stephen Shore

[Inclusion and Social Distancing](#) Liviya Mendelsohn

[How to Support People Throughout the Holidays](#) Rev. Bill Gaventa



JDAIM Community Without Walls Partner

Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project



[The Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project \(RSIP\)](#) is a partnership between CJP in Boston and the Ruderman Family Foundation that supports synagogues in creating communities where people of all abilities are valued equally and participate fully. Our resources include the following:

Getting Started. Inclusion can seem like an overwhelming challenge. We've got good news: there are many steps that you can take today that will make a difference. And we've got even better news: your congregation is not alone. RSIP can help you access consultants and network with other congregations who have undertaken this important work. Start by reading the resources on this page.

Covid-19 Inclusion Resources. COVID-19 has caused many of us to experience isolation, loneliness, and anxiety. It's important that we keep our mental health top of mind and keep our synagogue communities inclusive.

Jewish Learning. What do Jewish sacred texts have to teach us about inclusion? How can reading familiar words from a different perspective change and benefit us all? These discussions of curated readings can help us hear truth, find our own way, and see the image of God reflected in the faces of our congregations.

Resources and Solutions. Becoming more inclusive involves changing how we think, how we act, and how we use our physical space and other resources. Here, you'll find articles and policies authored by inclusion experts as well as best practice examples from other congregations. We've got helpful advice on everything from learning how to get feedback on your inclusion efforts, how to address food allergies, and how to create inclusive b'nei mitzvahs to how to welcome people of all abilities.

Reflections. Our differences can challenge, strengthen, and even inspire us. See what you can learn from these thoughtful writers, parents, professionals, and congregants who have experienced the difference that an inclusive synagogue can make for everyone.



JDAIM Community Without Walls Partner

RespectAbility



RespectAbility fights stigmas and advances opportunities so that people with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of community. We do this by promoting authentic portrayals of people with disabilities, promoting best practices in education, jobs & accessibility, and strengthening a diverse talent pipeline of people with disabilities. Specifically, we provide a full complement of webinars and toolkits to meet all of your access and inclusion needs and collaborate to help you become more inclusive. Additionally, we provide training to leaders and speakers with disabilities who seek to serve the Jewish world, and through our Speakers Bureau, provide access to those speakers to Jewish organizations so the Jewish world can benefit from their talent. Visit the [Solutions Center](#) for resources on many different topics.



JDAIM Community Without Walls Partner**The Blue Dove Foundation****THE JEWISH MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE CONVERSATION**

When communities seek to become beacons of mental wellness, they promote an atmosphere of honesty, authenticity, and dignity. But shame and stigma frequently prevent us from living up to our fullest potential. The Jewish community has the power to move toward becoming a more inclusive, stigma-free space that uplifts us all. Doing so will encourage people to seek the aid they need and promote the overall well-being of everyone.

The Blue Dove Foundation envisions a greater Jewish community where authenticity is valued, where support is accessible without fear or shame, and where we can offer effective and affirming responses to the needs of organizations, individuals, and families.

**You do not need to be an expert to make a substantial impact.
You just need to be caring and informed.
But you also need to be aware of your limits.**

Jewish literature and discussion have focused on healing, wellness, and community for years, yet we often shroud mental health in a cone of silence. To emphasize the role the Jewish community plays in promoting mental wellness, the Blue Dove Foundation focuses mental health and addiction education through a Jewish lens. We look at our Judaism and spirituality as a guide.

Visit us online at thebluedovefoundation.org for additional tools and resources to bring a Jewish mental health conversation to your community, organization or congregation.

About the Blue Dove Foundation

The Blue Dove Foundation was created to help address the issues of mental illness and addiction in the Jewish community and beyond. Based in Atlanta, we work with people and organizations across the United States and around the world.

Our mission is to educate, equip, and ignite our global Jewish community with tools to understand and overcome the challenges presented by mental illness and substance abuse.

THEBLUEDOVEFOUNDATION.ORG // #QUIETINGTHESILENCE // @BLUEDOVEFOUNDATION



JDAIM Community Without Walls Partners

Free Resources for JDAIM and Beyond



Jewish Learning Venture's new website jkidACCESS.org is a virtual space for resources and information for families raising Jewish children with disabilities. We are here to be a resource for YOU to find the support and accommodations needed for full inclusion in Jewish life.

- Check out our [downloadable resources](#) to help your family adapt Jewish practices and rituals to meet your child's needs.
- Join us for [jkidphilly's sensory-friendly programs and parent seminars](#) on adapting Jewish home rituals.
- Learn more about how to receive [PJ Library books](#) that best match your child's developmental level.
- [Sign up](#) to receive resources and event updates by email.
- Contact us to receive [one-on-one support and guidance](#) to support your family's accessible Jewish journey.

Jewish Learning Venture's [Whole Community Inclusion](#) initiative helps to ensure that families raising Jewish children with disabilities find the support and accommodations needed for full inclusion in Jewish life. [JDAIM values-based lesson plans](#) for preschool, elementary and teens are free.



Matan is excited to share free [JDAIM lesson plans](#) for students in kindergarten through high school (and beyond)! New for 2021, ideas for virtual implementation are included! Remember to follow Matan on [Facebook](#) for daily updates, ideas, tips and more!





Remote Learning Resources

Gateways: Access to Jewish Education presents recordings of two virtual workshops 2020 which provide strategies that religious school educators can use to ensure that remote learning programs remain accessible and meaningful to students with diverse learning needs. The first workshop, a collaboration with Maimonides and the Prizmah Center for Jewish Day Schools, is [“Effective Practices Engaging and Supporting Diverse Learners in a COVID-19 Virtual Environment,”](#) and the second is [“How to Effectively Support Diverse Learners Remotely.”](#)

Building Inclusive Virtual Communities:

As part of the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project, Gateways offers [a video](#) on how synagogues can include congregants of all abilities and needs in their virtual communities in a time of social distancing.

Gateways Haggadah: A Seder for the Whole Family

Gateways: Access to Jewish Education offers an accessible [Haggadah](#), empowering children with special needs to participate in the Passover seder. This first-of-its kind Haggadah contains over 150 Boardmaker symbols® to assist those with speech, language, and learning challenges, and features step-by-step photographs that illustrate what to do throughout the Seder.

High Holiday Resources:

Gateways: Access to Jewish Education has an extensive collection of [High Holiday resources](#) to help children with special needs engage meaningfully in services and rituals for the Jewish High Holidays. These free, downloadable resources include High Holiday blessings with Boardmaker symbols®, creative ideas for adaptable High Holiday crafts, and customizable High Holiday social stories and social skills supports.



The [ReelEducation online portal](#) provides FREE film kits for educators and parents to teach children about disability. By logging onto our website, you can choose an age-appropriate film to watch and download a lesson plan that will guide you through important conversations and engaging activities to accompany the film. Contact shiraw@mnjcc.org at the Miles Nadal JCC in Toronto with questions or for more information. ReelEducation is part of [ReelAbilities Film Festival](#).



THE MIRACLE PROJECT

[The Miracle Project](#) is a fully inclusive theater, film and expressive arts program focused on building communication, self-esteem, job and social skills for individuals with autism and all abilities – speaking and non-speaking. Using groundbreaking and evidence-based methods developed by our founder, Elaine Hall, The Miracle Project focuses on the strengths and abilities inherent in each participant while developing a unique neurodiverse community. TMP's cornerstone programs include 13 year-round evidence-based social skills classes, four musical theater after-school programs as well as summer workshops, a job-training program, free monthly community events and parent support groups. For more information and for all February events - visit our website www.themiracleproject.org



[Montreal Federation CJA](#) provides an evolving COVID-19 Community Inclusion Resources Portal that contains information about local programs, databases, and resources for people living with disabilities and their families in the Montreal community.



A Culture of Belonging: How the JCC Movement is Leading the Way on Equality and Inclusiveness We will explore the theme of empowerment with a JCC presentation on a trip to Israel created for people with disabilities, a look into creativity and excellence from a JCC professional's perspective and an conversation with a parent whose blog post "What the Exit Interview with our Son and Daughter Revealed" provides a glimpse into family dynamics and reflections on growing up having a sister with disability. February 4, 12pm EST.



JDAIM Planning Tips

- Establish a planning group for JDAIM. Invite:
 - Your inclusion committee
 - Representatives from other committees
 - Clergy and professional staff
 - People with disabilities and mental health conditions and family members. “Nothing about us without us!”
- Set goals for what you can accomplish during JDAIM.
- Brainstorm activities and programs. Ask how each activity will have an impact **AFTER JDAIM**.
- Use #JDAIM2021 to share on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest
- Make JDAIM the springboard for what you can do the rest of the year.
- Advertise and join the many great offerings available online from our JDAIM Community Without Walls Partners and in your community!
- Discuss the weekly Torah parshiot with an inclusion lens in board and committee meetings, religious school classes, Shabbat sermons, and in Torah study.
- Use social media to promote inclusion.

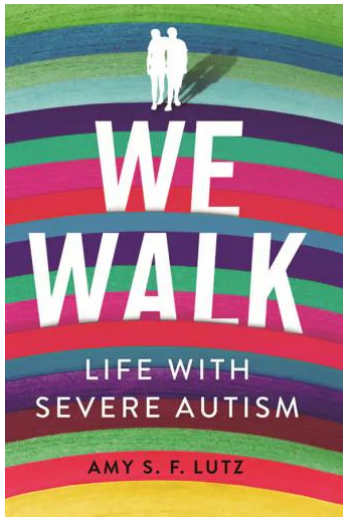
Events and Programs for JDAIM

- Host a congregational *Havdalah* service on Zoom. Advertise this to your entire community and encourage people with disabilities and their families to participate.
- Choose one of the films in this guide and do a “movie night.” Choose a film that people can stream and host a discussion. Have a thoughtful discussion about how people with disabilities and mental health conditions are portrayed in Hollywood.
- Coordinate a program for parents of children with disabilities. Invite a speaker from Jewish Family Services to lead a parent education group.
- Schedule a Shabbat afternoon conversation on Zoom. Invite a speaker to discuss employment, housing, or policy issues around disability and mental health conditions.
- Start a book group and read one of the 2021 JDAIM Reads! selections. We’ve also included great selections from past years.
- Host a bedtime story event on Zoom. Read the JDAIM Reads for Kids selection or choose a book from previous years. Make sure to have hot chocolate and marshmallows at the ready.
- Create a calendar of events in your community. Check back on the www.jdaim.org website for updated calendar listings of national online events.
- Gather representatives from every Jewish organization to convene an inclusion roundtable that will meet regularly after JDAIM to discuss the needs and work toward building capacity in the community.



JDAIM Reads! 2021

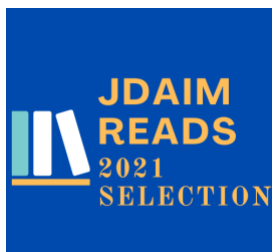
JDAIM Reads! is a popular program, providing organizations and communities another avenue to raise awareness and educate people about a wide variety of disability and mental health related topics, family concerns, Jewish community inclusion, and history.



We Walk: Life with Severe Autism By Amy Lutz

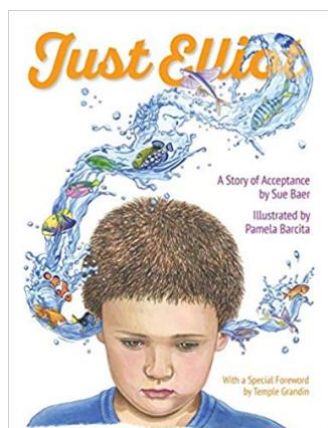
In this collection of beautiful and raw essays, Amy S. F. Lutz writes openly about her experience—the positive and the negative—as a mother of a now twenty-one-year-old son with severe autism. Lutz's human emotion drives through each page and challenges commonly held ideas that define autism either as a disease or as neurodiversity. *We Walk* is inspired by her own questions: What is the place of intellectually and developmentally disabled people in society? What responsibilities do we, as citizens and human beings, have to one another? Who should decide for those who cannot decide for themselves? What is the meaning of religion to someone with no abstract language? Exploring these questions, *We Walk* directly—and humanly—examines social issues such as inclusion, religion, therapeutics, and friendship through the lens of severe autism.

In a world where public perception of autism is largely shaped by the "quirky geniuses" featured on television shows like *The Big Bang Theory* and *The Good Doctor*, *We Walk* demands that we center our debates about this disorder on those who are most affected by its impacts.



JDAIM Reads for Kids!

JDAIM Reads for Kids selections are a great way to teach our youngest members of the community about belonging and inclusion. Some have activities for home and school to accompany the books for fun learning experiences!



ages 5-9, grades K-4



Just Elliot By Sue Baer

Foreword by Temple Grandin

Just Elliot is a simple but groundbreaking story about a six-year-old boy with autism attempting to explain the challenges of his life on the spectrum. From the sensation of stinging bees on his head as he gets his haircut, to his revulsion of certain colored foods, to the simple need to hum as he concentrates on his schoolwork - very real revelations certain to be eye opening to Just Elliot's intended audience of young, non-autistic readers. A Readers Guide for parents is presented at the back of the book.

Based on the life of a real boy with autism, *Just Elliot* takes us on a journey, from his point of view, through the tough job of navigating the world on the autism spectrum. *Just Elliot* is a tool to help explain autism to neuro-typical (not on the spectrum) children. Beautifully illustrated, *Just Elliot* includes a resource guide and questions to facilitate starting the discussion. As Temple Grandin says in the foreword, "This book will help neurotypical children understand and empathize with a classmate who has sensory problems."

Limited quantity available on Amazon. You can order directly from bearpawprint@gmail.com. Discounts for quantity orders from Bearpawprint. Payment through credit card or Venmo @Sue-Baer.5

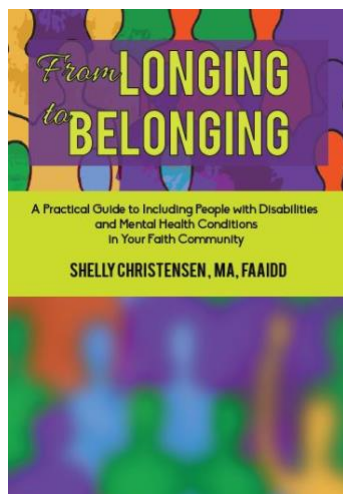
Home and School Activities: Make a list of people who could benefit from a little extra inclusion, kindness or understanding. Make another list of how that could be made to happen.

At school: This will work on Zoom or other school platforms. For groups of ten or more. Unmute everyone. Have each participant mimic a sound they might hear in the background (car going by, footsteps, whispering, airplane overhead, humming...) all at once. During the noise, ask a simple question (such as, "What is two plus two?"), then have them stop the noise and ask who heard the question. Many will not. Follow with a discussion about distractions and noise overstimulation can effect learning for many people such as Elliot in the story and how one must continually filter out distractions to get to what is important and what can be ignored.



Previous JDAIM Selections

Each of these books have been chosen as JDAIM Reads selections that entertain, inspire, and promote great discussions to achieve a more inclusive community.



From Longing to Belonging— A Practical Guide to Including People with Disabilities and Mental Health Conditions in Your Faith Community Shelly Christensen, MA FAAIDD

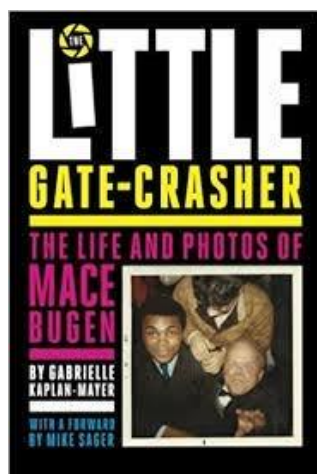
A perfect follow-up to JDAIM. All any of us want is to feel that we belong and that we matter. JDAIM co-founder and faith community disability inclusion leader Shelly Christensen will guide your organization toward achieving meaningful participation with all people who just want to belong—like anyone else!

“From Longing to Belonging is truly the bible that guides us to create the sacred space where we all belong. Shelly illuminates the need for and the ease with which to open congregational doors to becoming a more welcoming community.”

***Elaine G.F. Hall, Award-winning author, Founder of The Miracle Project®
Featured in the HBO films Autism The Musical and Autism The Sequel***

Shelly Christensen has created an invaluable "how to" guide for faith communities. She speaks to the personal challenges and possibilities of a parent of a child with disabilities and how that translated into a call to action for faith communities. The book stands on a powerful faith-based foundation—that key to all people is the basic need to belong and feel valued just because they exist. *From Longing to Belonging* is an essential tool.

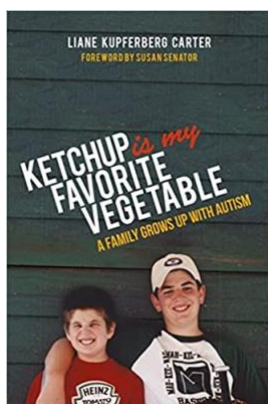
Rabbi Richard F. Address, D.Min, Director: Jewish Sacred Aging



The Little Gate Crasher—the Life and Photos of Mace Bugen By Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer

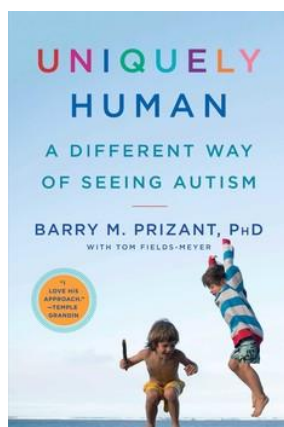
Mace Bugen was 43 inches tall with an average-sized head and a torso set on small, twisted legs—but that didn't mean he was a pushover. In truth, he was smarter than most. Over the years, he learned to effectively turn what society in those days called a handicap into a powerful tool he could use to his advantage. Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer's The Little Gate Crasher is a memoir of her amazing Great-Uncle Mace Bugen, an unstoppable spirit, first generation Jewish American, self-made millionaire, celebrity gate-crasher. Mace's unstoppable spirit defied the challenges of his own physical limitations and society's prejudices towards people with dwarfism.





Ketchup is My Favorite Vegetable: A Family Grows Up with Autism. By Liane Kupferberg Carter

How do you create an ordinary family life, while dealing with the extraordinary needs of an autistic child? Meet Mickey - charming, funny, compassionate, and autistic. In this unflinching memoir, Liane delivers a mother's insight into what really goes on in the two decades after diagnosis. If you've ever wondered how families adapt and adjust to a diagnosis of autism or any other disability, you must read Liane's masterfully written, open-hearted book, [Ketchup is My Favorite Vegetable: A Family Grows Up with Autism](#). You will never look at parenting any child the same way.

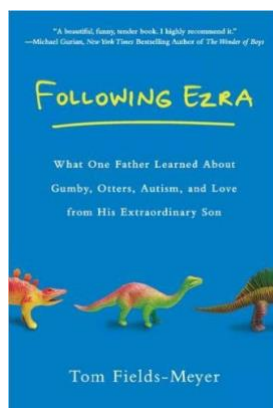


Uniquely Human: A Different Way of Seeing Autism Barry M. Prizant, PhD, with Tom Fields-Meyer

“This is by far the most empathic, wise, and insightful book I have ever read about autism, and is one of the most empathic and wise books I’ve ever read about being human. I can’t overstate the transformative power of this book: it breaks open the heart, extends vision where there was only fog, and inspires keen insight where there was only reflexive response.” —**Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, Dean's Chair and Vice-President, American Jewish University and parent**

Backed by cogent, compassionate anecdotes drawn from his many years in the field, Dr. Prizant also points out that many of the behaviors that people without autism may label as odd—like echolalia—stem from a child’s attempt to cope with a stressful situation, such as overstimulation or frustration at not being able to communicate their feelings or needs. Instead of dismissing these “regulating” behaviors as weird or even unacceptable, adults should embrace them as constructive methods by which children can return to homeostasis. By admitting, “it’s not you, it’s me,” we can reorient the way we perceive and embrace people with autism, helping them live joyous, meaningful lives. As the author wisely notes, we must embrace their uniquely human experience, not subvert it.—**Kirkus Reviews, June 1, 2015**





Following Ezra: What One Father Learned About Gumby, Otters, Autism, and Love From His Extraordinary Son Tom Fields-Meyer

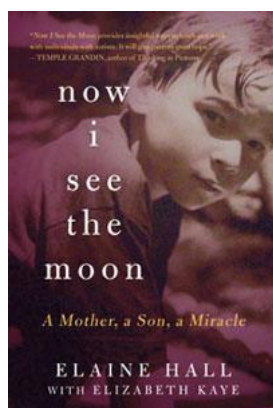
A heartwarming, intimate and amusing memoir of a father's experience raising his autistic son.

When Tom Fields-Meyer's son Ezra was three and showing early signs of autism, a therapist suggested that the father needed to grieve.

"For what?" he asked.

The answer: "For the child he didn't turn out to be."

That moment helped strengthen the author's resolve to do just the opposite: to love the child Ezra was, a quirky boy with a fascinating and complex mind. Full of tender moments and unexpected humor, *Following Ezra* is the story of a father and son on a ten-year journey from Ezra's diagnosis to the dawn of his adolescence. It celebrates his growth from a remote toddler to an extraordinary young man, connected in his own remarkable ways to the world around him.

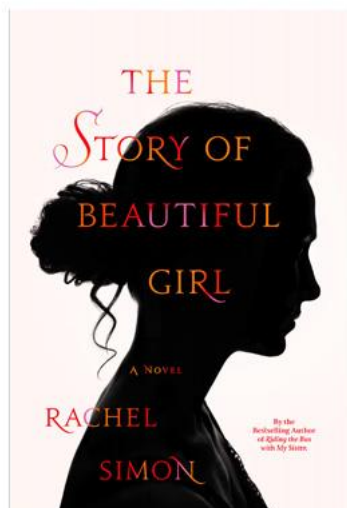


Now I See the Moon: A Mother, A Son, A Miracle Elaine Hall

Now I See the Moon is the especially timely, painstakingly positive work of a children's film coach who recounts her adoption of a troubled Russian toddler and her long, tortuous, ultimately enlightening journey to treat his nonverbal autism. Hall was a successful "baby wrangler" for Hollywood feature films, former actress, 40-something wife and active in her Jewish faith. You will be moved by Hall's spiritual and emotional journey of resilience and tenacity as she raises her son Neal and helps others believe in their own possibilities.

Elaine is "Coach E," the founder of The Miracle Project, which is featured in the award-winning film, "Autism the Musical" and the new HBO film, "[Autism the Sequel](#)."





The Story of Beautiful Girl Rachel Simon

It is 1968. Linnie, a young white woman with a developmental disability, and Homan, an African American deaf man, are locked away in an institution, the School for the Incurable and Feeble-minded, and have been left to languish, forgotten. Deeply in love, they escape, and find refuge in the farmhouse of Martha, a retired schoolteacher and widow. But the couple is not alone-Linnie has just given birth to a baby girl.

When the authorities catch up to them that same night, Homan escapes into the darkness, and Linnie is caught. But before she is forced back into the institution, she whispers two words to Martha: "Hide her." And so begins the 40-year epic journey of Linnie, Homan, Martha, and baby Julia-lives divided by seemingly insurmountable obstacles, yet drawn together by a secret pact and extraordinary love.

The Story of Beautiful Girl was the first selection of JDAIM Reads!

Meet the JDAIM Reads! Authors

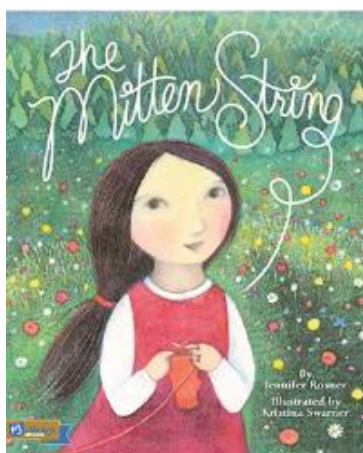
January 12, 2021

1:00 EST, noon CST, 11am MST, 10am PST

JDAIM Reads authors will discuss their books on the January 12, 2021 episode of Everyone's Welcome-A Fresh Conversation About Disability



Previous JDAIM Reads for Kids



The Mitten String
Written by Jennifer Rosen
Illustrated by Kristina Swarner
A PJ Library Selection

When her family invites a deaf woman and her baby to stay, Ruthie, a talented knitter of mittens, wonders how the mother will know if her child wakes in the night. The surprising answer inspires Ruthie to knit a special gift that offers great comfort to mother and baby—and to Ruthie herself.

An original folktale about a girl who knits, a deaf woman, and a piece of blue yarn. The Mitten String begins the story continued in The Candlewick.

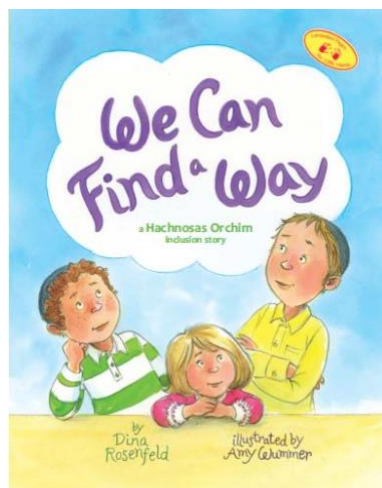


The Candlewick
Written by Jennifer Rosen
Illustrated by Kristina Swarner
A PJ Library Selection

The Candlewick is a story of friendship and kindness. The two main characters, Ruthie and Bayla, clearly care for each other. As they live some distance from one another, Ruthie travels to Bayla's home for an extended visit.

Ruthie's friend Bayla is deaf, but Bayla has come up with ways to communicate with the hearing world. When Ruthie visits Bayla and realizes Bayla can't hear her doorbell, Ruthie thinks of another idea to help her stay connected to the world around her.





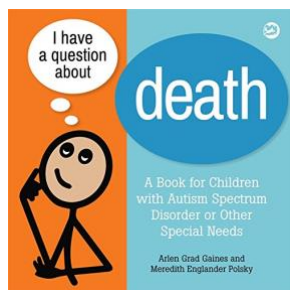
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We Can Find a Way Written by Dina Rosenfeld Illustrated by Amy Wummer

Hachnosas Orchim means inviting guests... but it also means making sure that those guests feel comfortable and included! Eli, Zev and Leah look forward to hosting a celebration for their Bubby's birthday. However, meeting the needs of every guest requires sensitivity and lots of creative thinking. Two of the toddlers have food allergies. Can they eat birthday cake? Their uncle uses a wheelchair and there are stairs to get in. One of their cousins is sensitive to crowded noisy events. Will Eli Zev and Leah find a way to include everyone? Hopefully, when planning an activity or event of their own, young readers will understand the value of inclusion, and make sure to find a way!

"I Have a Question" Book Series Meredith Englander Polsky MSW, LCSW, MS Arlen Grad Gaines, MSW, LCSW-C, ACHP-SW

How do you answer those difficult questions? These books address precisely that in a manner that young children will understand. Not just for children with disabilities—but for any child with questions about difficult events in their lives. Ages 5-11.



I Have a Question about Death

A Book for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or Other Special Needs

"What does it mean when someone dies?" "Why did someone I love have to die?" This book asks questions like these that a child might have about death before offering answers. It uses straightforward text and clear illustrations to explain what death means to children with ASD and other special needs.

I Have a Question About Divorce

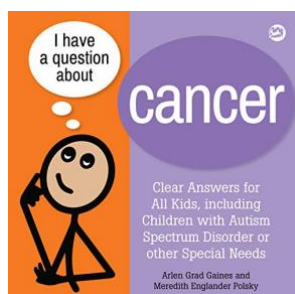
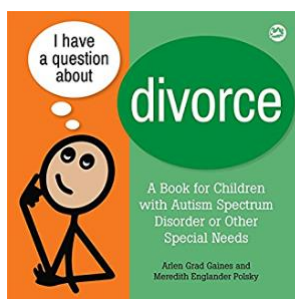
A Book for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or Other Special Needs

Considering questions a child might have about divorce, this book gently offers answers to them using straightforward text and clear illustrations.

I Have a Question about Cancer

Clear Answers for All Kids, including Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or other Special Needs

Using a question and answer format, this book explores the life changes and feelings of uncertainty a child may experience if a loved one has cancer. Illustrated with SymbolStix, a symbol-based language for visual thinkers, this book explains a difficult topic to children who might otherwise struggle to understand it. The book also features a short picture story that repeats the complete story for children who process information best through visual cues. Additional guidance for parents and caregivers provides ideas to help children cope with this experience.



JDAIM Film Recommendations

This year we invited a number of people to share their favorite films for JDAIM. Their comments are in italics. The films offer diverse perspectives on living with a disability or mental health condition. Let us know on our [JDAIM Facebook](#) page what films you are screening this year!

[Float](#) animated short 7 minutes. Appropriate for all ages. Disney/Pixar. Available on Disney Plus
We all have special gifts to share with our communities. Each and every one of us.

Dr. Madelaine Werier, co-founder of JOIN- Jewish Ottawa Inclusion Network

[Shoelaces](#) (Israel) *The ending is worth a discussion about better choices for a person's future.*

[Wedding Doll](#) (Israel) *another well-made Israeli film.*

[Anita](#) (Argentina). The story of a young woman with Down syndrome who lives a happy, routine life in Buenos Aires, meticulously cared for by her mother. One morning everything changes when Anita is left alone, confused and helpless after the nearby Argentine Israelite Mutual Association is bombed (the deadliest bombing in Argentina's history). As Anita wanders through the city, she learns not only to care for herself, but touches the lives of those around her. *Anita is my all-time favorite film. The main actress has Down Syndrome.*

Elliot Fix, Past Chair of the JCC Jewish International Film Festival Committee, Rochester, NY., Curator of the Jewish Film Series at the Everett Jewish Life Center Chautauqua Institute, Chautauqua, NY

We showed [Wonder](#) a few years ago, which is not Jewish, although in the book the main character's grandmother is Jewish. We framed the movie with the inclusive message of JDAIM, of course. I really liked being able to show a family movie for JDAIM and haven't really found another one that I thought would fit as well.

Rachel Delman Turniansky, Director, Disability and Inclusion Services, Louise D. and Morton J. Macks Center for Jewish Education, Baltimore

[Hors Normes](#) (The Specials) (France) The story of two men, educators of children and adolescents with autism. The tale of Bruno and Malik, two friends who have lived for twenty years in a different world: that of autistic children and adolescents. With the support of two non-profit organizations, they train young people to care for people with severe autism. They create an exceptional association, removed from the traditional environments, for extraordinary characters. *Hors Normes* closed the Cannes Festival. In French with English subtitles.

Carly Goodman, Coordinator of Community Inclusion, Federation CJE , Montreal

[Fourteen-and-a-Half Collisions](#) (Germany) A documentary. Sensitive insights into an unusual wheelchair basketball team in Hamburg – and an unusual friendship. After a terrorist attack, 24-year old Asael becomes a wheelchair user. In the summer of 2017 he leaves his home in Israel to try his luck in Hamburg as a wheelchair basketball pro with the BG Baskets. The team consists of nine international top players and lives in the grounds of a casualty hospital. One of them is Ali, an Iranian. Through the sport, he and the Israeli Asael become close friends. *This film touches multiple topics, the athletes are talented and Asael story is compelling.* With English subtitles.



[Extra Innings](#) Set against the enchanting backdrop of 1960's Brooklyn, Extra Innings tells the story of David Sabah, a young man who is caught between pursuing his dream of playing baseball and staying devoted to his Syrian Jewish family that is afflicted with mental illness, but a tragic loss makes reconciling the two worlds impossible. *Based on a true story this is a powerful story that addresses mental health issues. There are scenes that are difficult to watch and not appropriate for all ages. This film can open up a needed discussion about mental health and the avoidance of talking about mental health issues within the Jewish community.*

**Lisa Handelman, Community Disability Inclusion Specialist,
Jewish Federation of Greater Washington**

[Autism the Musical](#) Follow The Miracle Project founder, Coach E—the amazing Elaine Hall—and the kids and their families on a journey of discovery and community in this powerful and joyful testament to the spirit within each one of us. [Autism The Sequel](#) follows the lives of the original stars of Autism The Musical, who are now young adults. Autism The Sequel will air on HBO in April and will be at various film festivals. Contact elaine@themiracleproject.org for a screening near you. *The heart of these films is the cast. They will charm and educate audiences, helping find a space where everyone is valued just for being who they are.*

Shelly Christensen, co-founder of JDAIM, author of *From Longing to Belonging—A Practical Guide to Including People with Disabilities and Mental Health Conditions in Your Faith Community*

[Music Within](#) chronicles the true story of Richard Pimentel, a brilliant public speaker with a troubled past, who returns from Vietnam severely hearing-impaired and finds a new purpose in his landmark efforts on behalf of Americans with disabilities.

Karina Szulc, BMTA Inclusion Manager, Calgary Jewish Federation

Jewish Short Films

[USCJ](#) Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Promoting Inclusion for All

[Ruderman Chabad](#) Inclusion Initiative “We All Belong,” feat. 8th Day

The following films are recommended by Rebecca Wanatick, Manager, Community Inclusion & Program Services, Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ.

Children and Teens

[Dolphin Tale](#) A lonely and friendless boy finds and untangles a hurt dolphin that is caught in a crab trap. He becomes very attached to the dolphin when the tail must be taken off to save the dolphin's life. The boy believes the dolphin would be able to swim normally if it was given a prosthetic tail.

[The Point](#) A father tells his son a bedtime story about young Oblio, who believes that having no point in the fantastical kingdom of pointed heads and things, still has a point.

[The Mighty](#) The story of a strong friendship between a young boy with Morquio's syndrome and an older boy who is always bullied because of his size. Adapted from the novel, *Freak the Mighty*, the film explores a building of trust and friendship.

[A Teen's Guide to Understanding and Communicating with People with Autism](#)

This video is a guide geared towards teens, described by experts as "Not your typical dry educational presentation." "Speaks to students of all ages."



Teens and Adults

[Angst](#) is a documentary designed to raise awareness around anxiety. The filmmakers' goal is to help people identify and understand the symptoms of anxiety and encourage them to reach out for help.. The film and corresponding materials provide tools, resources and above all, hope.

[Life Animated](#) A coming of age story about a boy and his family who overcame great challenges by turning Disney animated movies into a language to express love, loss, kinship and brotherhood

[Keep the Change](#) When aspiring filmmaker David is mandated by a judge to attend a social program at the Jewish Community Center, he is sure of one thing: he doesn't belong there. But when he's assigned to visit the Brooklyn Bridge with the vivacious Sarah, sparks fly and his convictions are tested. Their budding relationship must weather Sarah's romantic past, David's judgmental mother, and their own pre-conceptions of what love is supposed to look like.

[The Peanut Butter Falcon](#) The Peanut Butter Falcon is an adventure story set in the world of a modern Mark Twain that begins when Zak (22), a young man with Down syndrome, runs away from the nursing home where he lives to chase his dream of becoming a professional wrestler by attending the wrestling school. Through circumstances beyond their control Tyler (32), a small-time outlaw on the run, becomes Zak's unlikely coach and ally.

[Praying with Lior](#) Lior has Down syndrome and has spent his entire life praying with utter abandon. Is he a "spiritual genius" as many around him say? Or simply the vessel that contains everyone's unfulfilled wishes and expectations? As Lior approaches Bar Mitzvah different characters provide a window into life spent praying with Lior. The movie poses difficult questions such as what is "disability" and who really talks to God? Told with intimacy and humor, *Praying with Lior* is a family story, a triumph story, a grief story, a divinely-inspired story.

[My Hero Brother](#) A group of young Israelis with Down syndrome embark on a demanding trek through the Himalayas with their siblings. As they deal with physical and emotional challenges, unresolved conflicts come to surface and heartwarming friendships develop.

[Deaf Jam](#) Follow Aneta Brodski, an Israeli-born teenager living in Queens as one of the first deaf youth to participate in a major poetry slam event.

Do you have a coordinated initiative in your community or organization? Let us know on the [JDAIM Facebook](#) page

