



Jewish Disability Awareness Month Program Guide

Developed by

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Jewish Disability Awareness Month Program Ideas

A human being mints many coins from the same mold but the Holy One, Blessed be God strikes us all from the mold of the first human and each one of us is unique. Therefore every single person is obligated to say, 'The world was created for my sake'"

(Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5)

The relationship between Judaism and disability goes back to our roots. Why did Eve listen to the snake and engage in risk-taking behavior? Some might say she had ADHD or oppositional-defiant disorder. Jacob challenged the angel and consequently emerged with a physical disability. And Moses cited his speech disability as the reason he couldn't fulfill his leadership role. God knew differently and appointed Aaron as the first known reasonable accommodation so Moses could speak to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites on their journey to the Promised Land.

Having a disability is not, and should never be, used as an excuse to exclude someone from meaningful participation and contribution to this wonderful place we call "The Jewish Community."

Inclusion is the opportunity for every person, regardless of ability, to participate in meaningful ways in the life of the Jewish community. How do we know what is meaningful to another person? We open our doors, we ask and we take the journey together.

This is our philosophy: We do not do things *for* people with disabilities. We do things *with* people with disabilities. We don't always need "special" programs. We need support and a willingness to collaborate. That is how we achieve inclusion and meaningful participation.

How do we get started?

Participation in Jewish Disability Awareness Month will help you get started. Decide what your goals are. Is it raising awareness? Is it getting to know someone in your congregation who has a disability? Is it greeting someone new and sitting with them so they don't feel isolated?

If you are already on that journey of inclusion, this special month of recognition will give you the opportunity to examine other needs in your congregation or organization and create a roadmap to further your initiative.

Inclusion is woven into every aspect of your organization. This guide is a toolbox of useful and inspiring ideas that can be adapted to your organization. Some of the suggestions can be implemented right now, while others require time and energy to develop. Use your creativity!

For additional resources, consider using the [Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities](http://www.jfcsmpis.org/pdf/inclusionordernew.pdf). <http://www.jfcsmpis.org/pdf/inclusionordernew.pdf>

May you have a meaningful journey on the road to inclusion.

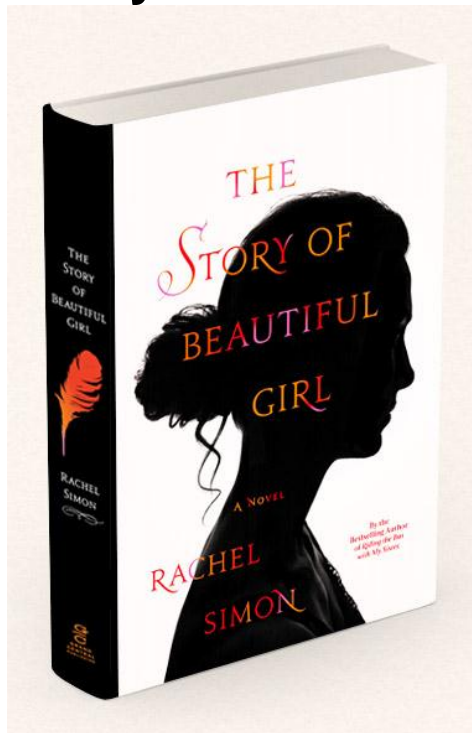
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New for 2012!!!

J D A M R E A D S !!!

The Story of Beautiful Girl



Rachel Simon (author of Riding the Bus with My Sister)

Discussion Guide created by Rachel Simon, Shelly Christensen and Sandra Block especially for Jewish Disability Awareness Month

Great for existing congregational books clubs, Sisterhood, department and team discussions or start a one-time JDAM Reads! in February and discuss sometime during the year.

Links to the Discussion Guide will be available at the following web addresses:

www.urj.org
www.Rachelsimon.com

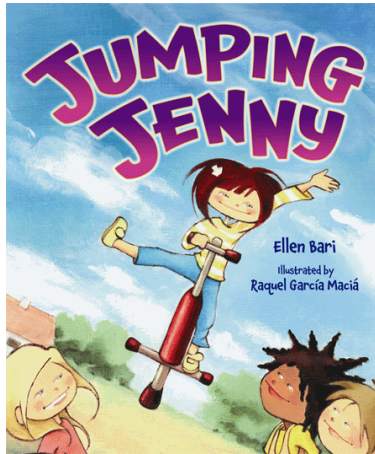
Jewish
Disability
Awareness
Month



February 2012

JDAM Reads for Children!

Jumping Jenny By Ellen Bari



<http://www.jumpingjennythebook.com/>

Children ages 4 to 11 will enjoy reading Jumping Jenny and learn that everyone can truly make a difference in their world.

A specially designed curriculum for Jewish Disability Awareness Month will be available at www.urj.org soon. You can also go to www.karben.com for more information.

Become Inclusive...

...In Your Sanctuary

- Give the sermon on Inclusion. Engage worshippers through discussion.
- Offer tours of the sanctuary to people who are new or visiting so they can become familiar and feel more comfortable. They can see and touch ritual items, stand on the bimah, hold the Torah, and find a seat where they will be comfortable sitting. Familiarity can help ease some anxiety about a new situation.
- Announce page numbers often. Describe the prayer book and commentary by color and size, in addition to name.
- Ask people with disabilities ahead of time to participate in rituals and prayers during the service. Honor them with aliyot and help them practice the blessings. Ask people with disabilities and their family members to give the d'var Torah, carry the Torah for hakafah, light Shabbat candles and say the Kiddush.
- If your bimah is not accessible, move the reading desk to the main level of the sanctuary so the Torah itself is accessible to all.
- Train ushers to welcome and seat people with disabilities. Make sure they know where assistive listening devices and large print prayer books are located.
- Have a congregational discussion during services on ways the synagogue can support life cycle events for people with disabilities.
- Encourage families to hold the ceremony for a child with a disability at Erev Shabbat or Shabbat morning services, whatever the typical tradition of your congregation so that your congregation can attend.
- During this month, include inclusion in Torah study and sermons. Extend the discussion to your board and committee meetings.
- Provide prayer books and Torah commentaries in accessible format (i.e. Braille, large print, audio versions).
- Make your worship service accessible to people who have diverse sensory needs, such as sign language interpretation (set seats aside so those worshippers can see the interpreter clearly) and picture schedule of the service order. Include in your service handout the start and stop time of services, the prayer order and the location of restrooms and drinking fountains.
- Start each service with the opportunity for congregants to turn to their neighbors and introduce themselves. Make sure that every person has someone with whom to share this greeting.

...In Your Organization

- Plan a Shabbat of Inclusion and include people with disabilities on the planning committee.
- Start your Inclusion Committee. This committee can help plan the activities for the Shabbat of Inclusion and continue to guide your congregation afterwards. During the Shabbat of Inclusion, let people know that the Inclusion Committee is seeking new members. (Inclusion Committees are the best way to engage lay and professional leadership in a long-term inclusion plan).
- Identify barriers to participation within the organization. Examine:
 - ◆ Architectural barriers
 - ◆ Communication barriers
 - ◆ Attitudinal barriers
- What does your organizational mission statement say about inclusion? If you have an Inclusion Committee, spend the necessary time to create the mission statement of this committee.
- Promoting Inclusion. Every time you advertise an organizational event or program, include an accessibility statement (see end of this guide for examples of accessibility statements). Also, include a simple statement on all of your printed materials and website that support inclusion of people with disabilities.
- Braille signage on elevators, room and directional signs.
- Have a mezuzah ceremony. Place mezuzot at wheelchair height.
- Start an Inclusion or Accessibility Fund to help provide money for accommodations and modifications and accessible transportation to youth group events.
- Evaluate each of the programming areas as well as architecture to identify barriers to inclusion. Use these evaluations to set priorities and goals for inclusion in your organization.
- Write a monthly column for the bulletin on different aspects of inclusion in your congregation.
- Use language that promotes respect and dignity. For example, Sam is not handicapped or disabled. Sam is a person with a disability. Using Person First language is respectful and does not define a person by their disability, rather, having a disability is just one aspect of who they are.

...For Jewish Disability Awareness Month

- Start a JDAM Reads! Book Club! The selection for 2012 is *The Story of Beautiful Girl* by Rachel Simon. <http://www.rachelsimon.com/the-story-of-beautiful-girl/>. The Discussion Guide is available at www.rachelsimon.com, www.urj.com
- JDAM Reads for Children! The featured book is *Jumping Jenny* by Ellen Bari. Go to www.urj.com for curriculum that engages children through grade 4 to learn more about friendship and how we are more similar than different.
- Host a congregational Shabbat dinner to kick-off Jewish Disability Awareness Month. Invite all members of your congregation, as well as other members of the Jewish community to join you. Put requests for accommodations on the invitation. If someone requests that food be cut for them, do that in the kitchen, not in the dining area. Continue the Shabbat celebration with a special *Erev Shabbat* service.
- Host a congregational Havdallah service with activities. Advertise this as an Inclusion Havdallah for the entire community, and encourage people with disabilities and their families to attend. The music and the scents of Havdallah provide a beautiful setting for art activities, games and stories.
- Integrate Jewish Disability Awareness Month into other activities:
 - ◆ Youth group participation in a community mitzvah opportunity such as bowling with people who live in a group home.
 - ◆ The youth group can provide afternoon activities for children with disabilities so parents and siblings have special time together.
 - ◆ The Men's Club or Brotherhood could sponsor a breakfast and invite a speaker from the community to talk about disability services (such as training service dogs).
 - ◆ Coordinate a program for parents of children with disabilities to bring them together and minimize isolation. Invite a speaker from Jewish Family Services to lead a parent education group. Provide child care.
 - ◆ Organize a program for siblings, such as SibShops, or invite a family life educator to come talk about sibling needs.
 - ◆ Torah Study can include other citations in our text that help us wrestle with inclusion.
 - ◆ Lunch and Learn following Shabbat morning services or on Sunday afternoon brings people together to process what they have learned and experienced from the weekend.
- Your religious school can have age appropriate programming for students focused on the concept of *B'zelem Elohim*—we are created in the Divine Image. Read books and stories written about children with a diverse range of abilities. Prepare teachers to try a different teaching strategy to engage all learners. Invite parents of students who have disabilities to come to class and share their family's story.
- Be responsive to concerns expressed by people with disabilities and their families. Is there something that would be appropriate to address with programming during the weekend?

Welcome People by Communicating Your Accessibility

Auxiliary Aids and Services Request Statements

- Invite people with disabilities to attend worship services, programs and events by including an accessibility statement in *all* of your publications.
- Your website, bulletins, weekly service programs, invitations to events and notices about programs should clearly state that your institution is accessible to people with disabilities.
- The following examples support the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and are provided by the Great Lakes ADA Center. These statements may be used to communicate that you are an inclusive organization and invite individuals to let you know about their need for special accommodations. The regulations implementing the ADA do not require specific language to be used in notifying the public. The obligation under the ADA is for entities covered to provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services in order to allow for individuals with disabilities to participate in the programs, activities or services.
- ◆ Individuals needing special accommodations to participate in the meeting should contact _____ at 222-222-2222 no later than _____.
(name)
(deadline if appropriate)
- ◆ Special Needs accommodation requests should be directed to _____ at _____
(name)
- ◆ 222-222-2222 no later than _____.
(deadline if appropriate)
- ◆ Direct requests for special accommodations _____ at 222-222-2222 no later than _____.
(name)
- ◆ (deadline if appropriate)
- ◆ Requests for sign language interpreter or materials in alternative format should be made no later than _____ to _____ at 222-222-2222.
(deadline if appropriate) (name)
- ◆ Individuals with disabilities requiring additional services to participate in the meeting should call 222-222-2222 by _____.
- ◆ (deadline if appropriate)

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

Shelly's Top Ten Favorite Quotes About Inclusion of People with Disabilities

1. "I love my new life!" Community Member

2. "It's true I will always use a wheelchair and that my speech will always be hard to understand. If people would only let themselves look at me without having any fear of what they see in front of them we all would get along just fine." Community Member

2. "To be known, you have to be shown." My Zadie Max of blessed memory

4. "Good intentions alone not accompanied by action are without value. The main thing is the action as this is what makes the intention so profound." Yehudi Hakadosh

5. "No one does this alone."

6. "We don't do things for people with disabilities. We do things *WITH* them."

7. "Inclusion is not up to one person or one committee-everyone has a role to play."

8. "Inclusion is woven into the fabric of Jewish life."

9. "A procession of angels pass before each person, and the heralds go before them saying 'make way for the image of G-d' (Deut. Rabbah 4:4)

10. "All I've ever wanted was to belong". Community Member

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Good intentions alone without action are without value for it is the action which makes the intentions so profound.

The Great Chassidic Master Yehudi Hakadosh

Ideas that will turn my good intentions into action are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I commit to take these actions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I will invite the following people to join me:

How do I think this will impact the lives of people with disabilities in my own community or organization?

Dated:

Thank you for joining us to ensure that people with disabilities and their families find warmth and welcoming waiting for them.