

Children's Books

[The Balancing Girl](#) by Bernice Rabe

This book is out of print but we have included a used copy because we like it so much. In this story, an elementary-aged girl who uses a wheelchair is also a domino-stacking enthusiast. Her dominos end up playing a prominent role in the school fair. This book very unusually takes her inclusion for granted instead of focusing on explaining her presence or her disability.

[The Big Little Sneeze](#) by Katja Reider

A hilarious story about overzealous 'help.' When Max sneezes, his friends all want to help make him better — but they don't stop to listen first! This story can open a conversation about the problem with assuming that people with disabilities need intrusive help, the importance of asking first, and the possibilities created by listening.

[Cake and Miracles](#) Barbara Diamond Goldin

Hershel's blindness doesn't keep him from living life. He helps his mother by doing chores, but wishes he could do even more for her. When an angel appears in Hershel's dream and encourages him to make what he sees when he closes his eyes, the boy sneaks into the kitchen, transforming his mother's cookie dough into beautiful hamantaschen for Purim.

[Can I Play Too?](#) by Mo Willems

Another book we use to teach adults at the Matan Institute. It is a good teaching tool, and can be used to open up a conversation about feelings people might have around access issues, and why it's important to include people with disabilities in the process of figuring out how to make things work. It is also a hilarious story.

[The Candlewick](#) Written by Jennifer Rosner Illustrated by Kristina Swarner

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

[DK Braille: Animals](#)

This accessible picture book shows that there is more than one way to read! All of the text is printed in both Braille and standard print, and all of them images can be felt as well as seen.

[Jordan and the Dreadful Golem](#) Karen Goldman

This story follows a group of children who are all defined by their own special and unique abilities. Jordan and his friends must use their talents to defend their home against a monster--while Jordan must also learn to accept himself.

[Kathryn Otoshi's](#) books [Zero](#), [One](#) and [Two](#) will help you speak with kids about inclusion, acceptance & courage.

[Mama Zooms](#) by Jane Cowen-Fletcher

In this book, a young girl whose mother is a wheelchair user tells the story of zooming around together.

[Max's Words](#) by Kate Banks

A young boy collects words the way that others collect coins and stamps. Eventually, Max starts stringing his words into sentences and stories. This is a fairly accurate description of how some people with cognitive and communication disorders experience language.

[The Mitten String](#) Jennifer Rosner

Ruthie loves to knit — and to help people. When her family gives shelter to a deaf woman and her baby, Ruthie realizes there's a way for her to do both at once!

[On a Beam of Light](#) Jennifer Berne

Long before Einstein was a household name, he was just a boy -- a boy with a powerful imagination. This story of a Jewish hero underscores the potential each person's creative mind holds. You can also check out the PJ Our Way story, Who Was Albert Einstein by Jess Brallier.

[The Only One Club](#) Jane Naliboff

As the only Jewish child in her class, a young girl not only learns that each person is unique but is able to share this understanding with her classmates.

[The Princess and the Peanut Allergy](#) by Wendy McClure and Tammie Lyon

A realistic story about discrimination and misunderstanding with a happy ending. A girl with a peanut allergy is almost uninvited to a birthday party because her friend thinks she's being unreasonable by refusing to eat a peanut cake. Eventually, she realizes that peanuts really are that dangerous and that she can celebrate with a princess cake that is safe for everyone.

[Red: A Crayon's Story](#) by Michael Hall

We love Red for both adults and children (in fact, it is part of the Matan Institute curriculum). This is a book about being misunderstood in ways that are very common for children with developmental disabilities — and how that changes when you are understood.

[Rolling Along: The Story of Taylor and His Wheelchair](#) by Jamee Riggio Heelan & Nicola Simmonds

Taylor is excited about getting his first wheelchair because he will be able to move faster and do more by himself. This can help children to learn what wheelchairs are all about without having to make someone else into an object lesson.

[Sign Language Shabbat](#) Alisa Greenbacher & Jennifer Rosner

The children in this book sign words for things people do on Shabbat, such as eat challah, drink wine or grape juice, sing Shabbat songs, and (of course!) read books. Shabbat Shalom!

[Thank You Mr. Falker](#) Patricia Polacco

PJ Library families will be familiar with Polacco's books like [Tikvah Means Hope](#), [The Blessing Cup](#), and [Someone For Mr. Sussman](#). This book follows a young girl, Trisha, as she struggles in school. Through the coaching of a wonderful teacher, Trisha is able to start reading on her own.

[We Can Find a Way](#) Written by Dina Rosenfeld Illustrated by Amy Wummer Hachnosas Orchim

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. Some of the guests have a variety of needs including food allergies, wheelchair users and those who don't like crowds and noise. Will they find a way to include everyone?

[We're Amazing 1, 2, 3!](#) by Leslie Kimmelman and Mary Beth Nelson

This book comes from the Sesame Street and Autism project. Developed with input from the autistic community, this book sends the respectful message that it's okay to be different and that there are a lot of ways to play.

Adult Reads

[Following Ezra: What One Father Learned About Gumby, Otters, Autism, and Love From His Extraordinary Son](#) By Tom Fields-Meyer

Following Ezra will have you laughing and crying as author Tom Fields-Meyer engages you with his compelling memoir. The book is not about autism—it's about a family learning to adapt to the unexpected challenges and gifts of raising a child with a disability.

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

All any of us want is to feel that we belong and that we matter. JDAIM co-founder and faith community disability inclusion movement leader Shelly Christensen will guide your synagogue or organization toward achieving meaningful participation with all people who just want to belong!

[Front of the Class: How Tourette Syndrome Made Me the Teacher I Never Had](#) by Brad Cohen

As a child with Tourette syndrome, Brad Cohen was ridiculed, beaten, mocked, and shunned. Children, teachers, and even family members found it difficult to be around him. As a teen, he was viewed by many as purposefully misbehaving, even though he had little power over the twitches and noises he produced, especially under stress. But Front of the Class is not about self-pity. Brad Cohen's unwavering determination and fiercely positive attitude conquered the difficulties he faced in life. His relationship with BBYO and Hillel provided opportunities to just be himself and to develop his talents on the road to the person he is today— a teacher, assistant principal, husband, father and author. "Front of the Class" is a Hallmark Hall of Fame Film

[Hope Will Find You](#) by Rabbi Naomi Levy

How can I get my life off hold? When will my life really begin? We all ask ourselves the same questions when we are struggling to move forward. As a rabbi, Naomi Levy frequently offered spiritual guidance to people seeking the answers. But when a doctor told her that her young daughter, Noa, had a fatal degenerative disease, Rabbi Levy's own insights could not prevent her whole life from unraveling. In Hope Will Find You, Naomi Levy shares her journey and the wisdom she gained. She describes with humor and honesty how she came through a time of uncertainty and fear and learned how to stop waiting for life to begin. A natural and engaging storyteller, Levy has written a book filled with invaluable lessons for living in the present and for opening the door to an extraordinary future.

[Life, Animated](#) By Ron Suskind

This the real-life story of Owen Suskind, who is the son of the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Ron Suskind and his irrepressible wife, Cornelia. This brilliantly crafted narrative—written by the father but shaped by his wife and children—isn't about autism or Disney, though you'll never view either one quite the same. It's the story of a family's resilience when their world is turned upside down. It's about perseverance and hope. A child disappeared into confusion, frustration, and silence. But deep inside his dark cave of isolation, he and his family began to dig for diamonds, working year by year on a most improbable project: to find a way each of us can learn to animate our lives.

[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 GreatUncle 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.

[Now I See the Moon: A Mother, A Son, A Miracle](#) by 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.

Mental Health

[Don't Tell Me to Relax!: One Teen's Journey to Survive Anxiety and How You Can Too](#)

Part one of this book brings you along on Sophie's personal journey from despair to diagnosis and treatment, and what she experienced along the way. Part two of this book is about you, whether you're a teenager or someone who lives with or works with teens.

[Overcoming Overthinking](#) Deborah Grayson Riegel and Sophie Riegel

Deborah and Sophie share their unique perspective and personal stories as a mother and daughter who both have multiple anxiety disorders—and who are both thriving personally and professionally. It is their goal to give anyone struggling with anxiety a new and more hopeful approach to work, school, and life.

[#Quieting the Silence](#)

For the longest time, the Jewish community avoided talking about issues related to mental health. Even today, a stigma remains that prevents individuals from opening up and seeking help. This book offers a chance for people to share stories and perspectives related to their own life-changing experiences involving mental illness and addiction. Through these personal stories of struggles and loss, we hope to show individuals they are not alone and to work toward eliminating the shame and stigma many feel around these topics.