

INCLUSIVITY PROGRAMMING

FAMILY FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES

I. One page online story – “God’s Perfection”, the Story of Shaya, the LD-Boy Who Hit the Grand-Slam Home Run:

<http://www.truthorfiction.com/rumors/g/godsperfection.htm#.U6mg9xZhzG4>

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you agree that essentially this is a story of the proof of "God's Perfection?" What is an alternative "moral" of the story?
2. What is your reaction to Shaya's father's decisions to take seriously his son's question if he could join the baseball game by asking one of the ball players? In the same circumstances, would you have made the same choice or a different one?
3. What is the most riveting aspect of this story for you?

II. Online poem “If You’re Happy and You Know It Clap Your Hand” by David Moreau:

<http://www.inclusion.com/ifyouarehappypoem.pdf>

Discussion Questions:

1. David Moreau is a poet who works as a staff person caring for people with developmental disabilities. Why do you think he is initially irritated at Jess' singing?
2. Knowing that several of these individuals only have the use of one hand, he purposely changes the verse he's singing to "If you're happy and you know it clap your hand." What is he trying to communicate by this making this change?
3. Do you agree with one reviewer's statement that Moreau is struggling to verbalize "the true costs of compassion"?

III. Autism: The Musical, an HBO movie production. Running time: 94 minutes.

Description: A dynamic and intimate look inside the lives of several families whose children have autism spectrum disorder.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you know anyone like any of the children portrayed in the movie?
2. Have you had opportunities to interact with that person? If so, what was the interaction like? Would you be interested in becoming friends with that person? What would be hard about the friendship? What would be rewarding about the friendship?
3. Why do you think people have a difficult time making friends with people with disabilities? What stands in the way, and what could make it more successful?

IV. Including Samuel, the Trailer. 12 minute trailer for the movie, “Including Samuel”, a documentary movie by Dan Habib profiling his own family’s journey with their younger son, with Samuel, who has significant developmental disabilities. The movie (and trailer) also provides an introduction to issues of inclusion for people with disabilities. For more information go to www.includingsamuel.com

Discussion:

1. Why do you think Dan Habib was compelled to tell his son's and their family's story?
2. How will watching this trailer (or movie) change the way you think about people with disabilities?

ADULTS AND OLDER TEENS/SOCIAL ACTION ORIENTED ACTIVITIES:

V. "Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities" by Erik Carter This book is an "invitation to faith based communities to practice what they preach", about inclusion and welcoming everyone. Chapter topics include: "Welcoming, Including, and Connecting: Becoming a Responsive Congregation," "Designing Inclusive Religious Education Programs", and "Supporting Individuals with Developmental Disabilities and Their Families: The Other Six Days". 187 pages, paperback, with resource section in the back.

Discussion Questions:

1. Since the book is comprised of 7 chapters, it is recommended that you select one chapter (e.g., Designing Inclusive Religious Education programs), and outline the following. These questions can be applicable for majority of chapters.
 - a) Identify inclusive strategies that B'nai is already putting in place.
 - b) Highlight ideas/strategies that you recommend for B'nai.
 - c) Highlight potential barriers to the implementation.
 - d) Highlight potential solutions for the barriers.
 - e) Highlight next steps toward implementation.

VI. Online article: "Creating what I Know About Community" by Judith Snow.

<http://www.inclusion.com/artcreatingwhatiknow.html>

Discussion Questions:

1. What resonated with you in this article?
2. Consider the Anglican Church Peter began attending. In what ways does B'nai Havurah parallel the community of that church? In what ways might that community serve as a model for B'nai Havurah?
3. To what degree does the B'nai Havurah community participate in the process of "gifted listening and waiting"? How does or how might B'nai Havurah "listen" for each individual's uniqueness, encouraging and challenging the "dreamer", waiting to move forward until the dreamer is truly ready to move, and setting aside some of our own dreams to truly empower the dreamer?

VII. **“Faith Communities and Disability”** is a 9 minute video from *PBS’s Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*. In this short video we hear from an imam, a reverend, and a rabbi (Daniel Grossman, Adat Israel Congregation in New Jersey). Disabled people and their families share thoughts on their search for community.

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2009/07/02/july-3-2009-faith-communities-and-disability/3440/>

Discussion Questions:

Sufyan’s mother says that “When I think back as a child, I don’t remember seeing anyone like Sufyan at the mosque, no one... and I don’t think that was by mistake.” She suggests that some families are embarrassed by their disabled children. She also notes that church members without a disabled child attribute the child’s behavior to bad parenting. Joshua’s mother says that they rarely go out in public because people stare at Joshua. Sam’s mother explains that when they were at a different synagogue Sam’s occasional outbursts were not tolerated.

1. Are you surprised by these families’ stories of rejection and isolation from religious community?

Rabbi Grossman says “I’ve had so many people over the years say it feels like they’re part of a real, living community as opposed to an artificial community where only perfect people are sitting here.”

2. Creating a “real, living community” can be messy, especially at first. Do you think the religious values of “not doing to another person what you would not want done to you,” and “seeing each person as created in G-d’s image” are powerful enough to counterbalance the difficulties that arise when people with challenging behavior or with physical or mental challenges are included in programs, events, and services?
3. What difficulties would you anticipate?
4. What creative solutions can you envision?