

A SHARED COURAGE LIST

Shows & books that help

Gentle stories for kids who communicate or experience the world a little differently, and the people around them. A great companion to the “Being a Great Friend” guide.

Shows & episodes

› **Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood: “Daniel’s New Friend Max”**

PBS KIDS · PRESCHOOL

Daniel befriends Max, who is autistic, and learns to give him a little more time and space and to adapt an activity so everyone can join. The show also features Chrissie, a friend who has cerebral palsy and uses braces and crutches.

› **Sesame Street: Julia**

PBS KIDS · PRESCHOOL

Sesame Street’s first autistic character. Her episodes gently model how friends learn to interact when someone is sensitive to noise or needs things done a little differently.

› **Pablo**

PBS KIDS / BBC · AGES 4+

Follows the vivid imagination of a minimally-speaking five-year-old. The main characters are voiced by autistic actors, which makes it especially affirming for nonspeaking and AAC kids.

› **Carl the Collector**

PBS KIDS · AGES 4+

Carl, an autistic raccoon, and his friends navigate everyday friendship, anxiety in new situations, and sensory differences. Warm, recent, and kid-led.

Picture books: explaining autism & neurodiversity

› **The Awesome Inside Me**

ISABELLA MONROE

A bright, affirming picture book that frames an autistic child’s way of seeing the world as something awesome, not something to fix. A gentle starting point for ages 3 to 8.

› **The Superhero Brain**

CHRISTEL LAND

Written by a mom for her autistic son, it explains autism as a kind of superpower that can feel wonderful and tricky at the same time. Comes in versions for boys and girls.

› **I See Things Differently**

PAT THOMAS, ILLUSTRATED BY CLAIRE KEAY

A clear, reassuring first look at autism for the youngest readers, part of the trusted “A First Look At” series. Good for helping siblings and classmates understand.

› **Dragon and His Friend**

STEVE HERMAN

From the Dragon series, a simple story that explains the basics of autism at a child's level and models how to be a kind, patient friend.

› **The Girl Who Thought in Pictures**

JULIA FINLEY MOSCA

The rhyming true story of Dr. Temple Grandin, who turned thinking differently into a gift. Inspiring for any kid who feels a little out of step with the world.

› **The Big Feelings & Calm Collection**

FIZZA MASOOD

A gentle series about big emotions and self-regulation, including “The Boy Who Drummed His Feelings,” “The Boy Who Learned to Calm His Anger,” and “The Girl Who Calmed Her Worries.”

Picture books: communication & AAC› **A Day with No Words**

TIFFANY HAMMOND, ILLUSTRATED BY KATE COSGROVE

A child who communicates with a tablet instead of spoken words. Touches on apraxia and AAC, and celebrates the many ways we connect beyond speech.

› **More Than Words**

ROZ MACLEAN

A quiet, observant child notices all the different ways his classmates communicate, and helps everyone see that you don't need words to have something to say.

› **Bitsy Bat, Team Star**

KAZ WINDNESS

A new, nonspeaking student named Enzo uses an AAC device and sign language. A teamwork-and-belonging story for the youngest readers.

› **My Brother Otto**

MEG RABY, ILLUSTRATED BY ELISA PALLMER

A loving, sibling's-eye view of a nonspeaking autistic character who uses AAC. There's also a follow-up, "My Brother Otto and the Birthday Party."

Picture books: kindness, differences & being a great friend› **Different, A Great Thing to Be!**

HEATHER AVIS

A spirited celebration of the kids who stand out, and an invitation to see difference as something brave and beautiful.

› **Just Ask!: Be Different, Be Brave, Be You**

SONIA SOTOMAYOR, ILLUSTRATED BY RAFAEL LÓPEZ

Justice Sotomayor draws on her own childhood with diabetes to show that the kindest thing you can do when you are curious is, simply and respectfully, ask.

› **Katie Can**

ERIN PALMER & JOHN JOSEPH

An easy reader following Katie, a girl with Down syndrome, through her day, with the focus on all the things she can do.

› **The Rabbit Listened**

CORI DOERRFELD

After something goes wrong, every animal offers advice except the rabbit, who just sits close and listens. A near-perfect lesson in how to comfort a friend.

› **The Invisible Boy**

TRUDY LUDWIG, ILLUSTRATED BY PATRICE BARTON

Brian feels invisible at school until one small act of kindness includes him. A quiet, powerful look at the child who is always left out.

› **Each Kindness**

JACQUELINE WOODSON, ILLUSTRATED BY E.B. LEWIS

A girl turns away the new kid, then realizes too late what she missed. An honest story about the ripples of kindness and the ache of a missed chance.

› **How to Help a Friend**

KARL NEWSON, ILLUSTRATED BY CLARA ANGANUZZI

A simple primer on the many ways friends feel cared for, from a big hug to quiet space, and how to notice which one someone needs.

› **Sam's Super Seats**

KEAH BROWN, ILLUSTRATED BY SHAREE MILLER

Sam, a girl with cerebral palsy, goes back-to-school shopping with friends and learns that resting your body is part of taking care of it.

› **This Is How We Play**

JESSICA SLICE & CAROLINE CUPP

A bouncy, rhyming celebration of play with a diverse cast of kids, some disabled and some not, all finding their own way to join in.

› **Monster Hands**

KAREN KANE & JONAZ MCMILLAN

Two best friends who sign use shadow puppets to chase away bedtime worries. A sweet story told through American Sign Language.

› **The World Needs Who You Were Made to Be**

JOANNA GAINES

A group of kids build hot-air balloons as different as they are. A warm reminder that the world is better when we each show up as ourselves.

For older readers› **Fish in a Tree**

LYNDA MULLALY HUNT

Ally hides her dyslexia behind trouble-making until a teacher finally sees her brilliance. A beloved middle-grade novel about the smarts that tests miss.

› **Wonder**

R.J. PALACIO

Auggie, a boy with a facial difference, starts mainstream school for the first time. The modern classic that taught a generation to choose kind.

› **Song for a Whale**

LYNNE KELLY

Iris, the only deaf kid at her school, sets out to reach a whale who cannot be heard by other whales. A big-hearted story about longing to be understood.

For grown-ups: parents & caregivers

› **The Reason I Jump**

NAOKI HIGASHIDA

Written by a thirteen-year-old nonspeaking autistic boy, it answers the questions families most want to ask. A rare window into how the world can feel from the inside.

› **The Asperkid's (Secret) Book of Social Rules**

JENNIFER COOK O'TOOLE

A warm, practical guide to the unwritten social rules, written by an autistic author for autistic tweens and teens and the adults who love them.

› **Demystifying Disability**

EMILY LADAU

A plain-spoken, friendly handbook for being a thoughtful ally: language, etiquette, and how to show up well for the disabled people in your life.

› **Scattered Minds**

GABOR MATÉ

A compassionate look at ADHD that reframes it through the lens of development and connection rather than deficit.

› **Be Different**

JOHN ELDER ROBISON

Stories and hard-won advice on growing up autistic, from the author of “Look Me in the Eye.” Practical and validating for families.

Looking for more? We love the disability and difference book lists at ReadBrightly (readbrightly.com) and Penguin Random House, plus Apraxia Kids (apraxia-kids.org) for apraxia-specific reads. New titles arrive every year, so ask your librarian too.