

A graphic featuring a central orange banner with the text "Diversity Spotlight" in bold black font. Below the banner are several stylized hands in various colors (blue, yellow, orange, red, purple, green, pink) reaching upwards.

## Diversity Spotlight

### **This month we celebrate our differently-abled community members.**

March 13- April 15 is National Deaf History Month. In April, we also celebrate Autism Awareness Month. We are dedicating our April newsletter to differently-abled awareness. In October, we will celebrate national disability employment awareness.

This April we are focusing on resources to talk to our kids about differently-abled individuals. Every parent has had a moment where their child has noticed something different about someone, perhaps they loudly pointed out a physical difference, or they wondered why a friend did not play the same way they did.

We are going to provide some resources for parents to talk with children about the unique abilities of everyone. It is ok to be curious about other people and their disabilities or differences. Children should feel comfortable asking questions to a trusted adult without being made to feel bad about it. When children point out differences in other people, we are often confronted with our own discomfort and oftentimes we tell them to be quiet or we do not respond. By doing what we think may be polite, we could be accidentally teaching our children that being differently-abled is something to be ashamed of. ***As adults, we can encourage curiosity and conversation about what makes everyone different and unique.***

Read on for a collection of resources on having conversations with kids about differently-abled individuals.

---

Resources to get you started!

Here are a few articles about how to have conversations with our children about others with disabilities and even their own disabilities.

A good rule of thumb for both conversations is to focus on similarities rather than differences while recognizing that each and every one of us are individual people with individual strengths and weaknesses. For example,

you may point out that your child and another child both love to watch baseball or trade Pokémon cards, no matter what their differences may be.

1. [“How to Talk to Kids About Disabilities.”](#) The author gives tips on how to talk to your children about people with disabilities in a matter-of-fact way. She explains how to talk to kids about disabilities without emotion by pointing out similarities, learning about disabilities together, and prepares readers for tough questions kids might ask.



2. [“How to Talk to Your Child About Learning and Thinking Differences”.](#) The target audience for this article is parents of children with disabilities, however, the article is helpful to all parents. The author gives three key takeaways at the beginning:

- Talking openly about differences shows kids there’s nothing to be ashamed of.
- The first conversation can be hard, so try to keep it simple.
- Tell your child that everyone is different in some way.

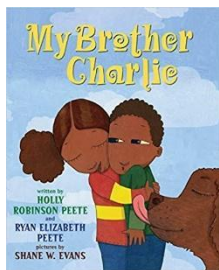


In this article, entitled [“How We Taught Our Neurotypical Children About Autism”](#) a mom to a son with autism and two neurotypical daughters explains the conversations she has with her own children to help other families have honest conversations with their children about kids on the spectrum. She recommends a few books in her article that we will highlight below! Her main tips are:

1. Explain what autism is and give examples they can understand.
2. Use literature.
3. Create a safe space for your child to ask questions and express their thoughts and feelings.

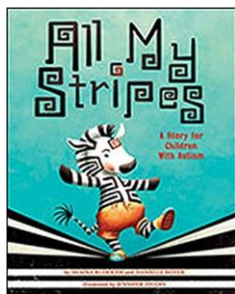


## Read about it!



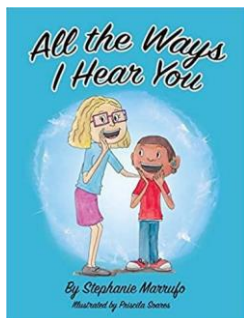
### **“My Brother Charlie” By Holly Robinson Peete.**

"Charlie has autism. His brain works in a special way. It's harder for him to make friends. Or show his true feelings. Or stay safe." But as his big sister tells us, for everything that Charlie can't do well, there are plenty more things that he's good at. He knows the names of all the American presidents. He knows stuff about airplanes. And he can even play the piano better than anyone he knows. Actress and national autism spokesperson Holly Robinson Peete collaborates with her daughter on this book based on Holly's 10-year-old son, who has autism.



### **“All My Stripes” (A Story For Children With Autism) By**

**Shaina Rudolph.** Zane the zebra feels different from the rest of his classmates. He worries that all they notice about him is his "autism stripe." With the help of his Mama, Zane comes to appreciate all his stripes — the unique strengths that make him who he is!



### **“All the Ways I Hear You” By Stephanie Marrufo.**

"All the Ways I Hear You" first introduces our young hard-of-hearing narrator, Sy, and his neat hearing aids. From there, Sy goes on to introduce his diverse group of friends who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or deafblind and their own hearing technology and communication styles, like cochlear implants, bone anchored hearing systems, communication boards/tablets, and sign language.

Do you have ideas for an issue of Diversity Spotlight? Email Courtney Stout:

[courtneystout2012@gmail.com](mailto:courtneystout2012@gmail.com)

Below we've include a sheet for caregivers to print out and discuss with their children.

## HOW TO BE A FRIEND TO SOMEONE WITH AUTISM

**Take the Initiative to Include Him or Her**

Your friend may desperately want to be included and may not know how to ask. Be specific about what you want him to do.

**Find Common Interests**

It will be much easier to talk about or share something you both like to do (movies, sports, music, books, TV shows, etc.).

**Be Persistent and Patient**

Remember that your friend with autism may take more time to respond than other people. It doesn't necessarily mean he or she isn't interested.

**Communicate Clearly**

Speak at a reasonable speed and volume.

**Stand Up For Him or Her**

If you see someone teasing or bullying a friend with autism, take a stand and tell the person that it's not cool.

**Give Feedback**

If your friend with autism is doing something inappropriate, it's OK to tell him nicely. Just be sure to also tell him what the right thing to do is because he may not know.

**Remember Sensory Sensitivity**

Your friend may be very uncomfortable in certain situations or places (crowds, noisy areas, etc.). Ask if he or she is OK.

**Don't Be Afraid**

Your friend is just a kid like you who needs a little help. Accept his or her differences and respect strengths just as you would for any friend.

**Autism-Products.com**  
SURVIVING LIFE TO SOLVE THE PUZZLE