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**Tips For Building Disability**

**Inclusion Together**

**Talking Points: Why Increase Disability Awareness, Acceptance, and Inclusion in Your Faith Community?**

* Nearly 20% of the population live with a disability and/or a mental health condition. People with disabilities want to be accepted, respected, and regarded as full participants in all the things your community provides – just like anyone else.
* Belonging is universal. A sense of belonging is at the heart of inclusion.
* Nothing About Us Without Us. People with disabilities belong at the table, not just for disability-related conversations, but for all conversations.
* Disability inclusion and belonging is woven into all aspects of faith community life.

**Getting Started**

* Develop a mission statement or purpose for your initiative.

For example: The mission of Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance, and Inclusion Month is to unite Jewish communities worldwide to raise awareness and champion the rights of all Jews to be accepted and included in all aspects of Jewish and community life like anyone else. This directly connects to RespectAbility’s mission statement: To fight stigmas and advance opportunities so people with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of community.

* Decide what your initiative looks like.
	+ Designate a month, week, or weekend for disability awareness.
	+ What aspects of your faith community do you want to focus on?
		- Youth groups
		- Worship
		- Congregations
		- Theologians
		- Religious School
		- Bible/Scripture Study
		- Lay Leadership
		- Staff Development
		- Etc.

**Planning Tips**

* Establish a planning group.
* Nothing About Us Without Us: always include people with disabilities in the planning process.
* Set SMARTIE (Strategic, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable)goals.
* Include accommodation statements and a contact for accommodation requests in all communications.
* Consider what your community needs most.
* Consider all the various populations and identities within your faith community.
* Ensure your in-person and hybrid events are fully accessible.
* Ensure your website is accessible. To start, refer to RespectAbility’s [Basics of Online Accessibility](https://www.respectability.org/basics-of-accessibility/).
* For more in-depth information, see RespectAbility’s [Inclusive Congregations Guide](https://www.respectability.org/faith-inclusion/inclusive-congregations/).

**Event and Program Ideas**

* Invite a speaker with lived experience with disabilities.
	+ Not everyone with disabilities wants to educate others on these issues. Make sure you’re inviting someone who can address inclusion and belonging and is passionate about this work.
	+ For speaker ideas, contact [Jake Stimell](https://www.respectability.org/2017/12/jake-stimell-staff/) (Disability Training and Consulting Bureau Associate at RespectAbility) at JakeS@RespectAbility.org.
* Invite panelists with disabilities and allies for a community conversation.
* Host a movie night and/or book group.
	+ Potential Books for Children:
		- [The Everybody Club,](https://www.nancyloewen.net/everybodyclub.html) by Nancy Loewen and Linda Hayen
		- [A Day With No Words,](https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/A-Day-With-No-Words/Tiffany-Hammond/9781736949795) by Tiffany Hammond
		- [What Happened to You?,](https://blackwells.co.uk/bookshop/product/What-Happened-to-You-by-James-Catchpole-Karen-George-artist/9780571358311?a_aid=TheCatchpoles&utm_source=Blackwells&utm_medium=blog&utm_campaign=What+Happened+to+You%3F) By James Catchpole
	+ Potential Books for Young Adults:
		- [Rolling Warrior,](https://judithheumann.com/rollingwarrior/) by [Judith Heumann](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/2205281/judith-heumann) and Kristen Joiner
		- [Finding Audrey](https://www.sophiekinsella.co.uk/book/finding-audrey/), by Sophie Kinsella
	+ Potential Books for Adults:
		- [Being Heumann: The Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist,](https://judithheumann.com/being-heumann/) By Judy Heumann
		- [Loving Our Own Bones: Disability Wisdom and the Spiritual Subversiveness off Knowing Ourselves Whole,](https://www.juliawattsbelser.com/loving-our-own-bones) by Julia Watts Belzer
		- [The Disabled God Revisited: Trinity Christology and Liberation,](https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/disabled-god-revisited-9780567694355/) by Lisa D. Powell
	+ [ReelAbilities](https://reelabilities.org/) is a great resource for selecting films about disability made by creators with disabilities!
* Create a Disability Awareness focus for Sabbath or Jum’ah events.
* Weave disability awareness into regular programming, e.g. religious education, adult education, committee meetings, Bible study, etc.
* Study religious texts that have a disability or mental health component.

**Promoting Your Initiative**

* Be careful to not promote activities based on stereotypes of or pity for people with disabilities.
* Logos
	+ Logos help with recognition and building awareness of your organization. Create a logo to use in all of your events, promotional materials, and resources.
	+ Be sure your design incorporates high color contrast and sans serif fonts!
* Social Media
	+ When you post about upcoming events on social media, use hashtags such as: #disability, #JDAIM, #neurodiverse. This helps people find your posts!
	+ Keep your posts engaging and accessible.
	+ Use the social media platforms that your audience is using.
* Newsletters and Blogs
	+ Creating regular newsletters and/or blogs are a great way to keep people connected to your initiative. They also allow you to build up a library of resources. The [Faith Inclusion and Belonging Newsletter](https://www.respectability.org/tag/faith-inclusion-newsletter/) is a great example!

**Collaboration**

Overwhelmed and not sure where to begin? Collaboration with another organization can be a great way to get started! For more guidance tailored to you and your community, RespectAbility’s [Disability Training and Consulting Bureau](https://www.respectability.org/training-consulting/?cmedexpertise%5B%5D=education) is an excellent resource!