

# People First Yachad



Blessing G-d for creating us according to His will reminds us that each and every person has been created in the image of G-d, and therefore should be treated with the same amount of kindness and welcomed into the community. For individuals who live with disabilities, feeling excluded or invisible to those around them can be a common occurrence. While we may not do so intentionally, sometimes those who are different feel like they are being left out.

What can we do about this?

It begins with awareness and seeing those who may not always feel seen. We invite you to take part in the following three inclusion and gratitude tasks which we hope will transform the world into a place where all individuals, regardless of abilities or disabilities, feel seen and cared for.

We are grateful to our  
partner Yachad for  
preparing these activities.



YACHAD



#gratitudedays

Days of  
Gratitude

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## Task 1: Use Person-First Language

Language is a powerful tool. Beyond a word or phrase's literal definition, the way people use language can often include all sorts of stereotypes and subtle messages. This is why it's important for a person to be aware of their language and recognize how it might affect others.

Person-first language is the idea that society should focus on the essence of an individual — the fact that s/he is a person — and not more distant factors, like a person's cognitive or physical abilities. A person with Down syndrome versus a Down syndrome person perfectly encapsulates this point; why should this individual, who might be funny, smart, creative, ambitious, and/or athletic, be limited to one simple aspect of their identity? Recognizing that a person is a person, first and foremost, allows society to focus on the many things that that individual can contribute to those around them — the fact that s/he might have Down syndrome is just one part of it! By using person-first language, we acknowledge and appreciate the strengths every individual brings to this world.

For more on the power of person-first language, [watch this Ted Talk!](#)

### Takeaway Task:

Incorporating person-first language into your repertoire can not only change the lives of others, it can change your life as well. Give it a try!

**Join us and pledge to use person-first language [here](#).**

## Task 2: Read the poem “Like Me”

It is possible that a person with a disability might look different, but that's about where the difference ends. Both those with and without disabilities want to feel appreciated, a sense of belonging, and support.

In the poem entitled “[Like Me](#),” a young child learns that he's not so different from his friend with disabilities.

### Takeaway Task:

**Read “Like Me” and reflect on the following questions:**

- Do you believe you are similar to everyone in your life? In what ways does being similar to those around us help? In what ways does being similar to those around us make things more difficult?
- Why do we choose to focus on the physical differences between those with and without disabilities? How can we teach people to focus on commonalities?



### Task 3: Watch “Things People with Disabilities Wish You Knew”

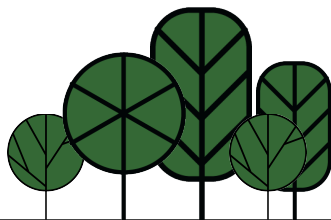
The general population has all sorts of ideas — and oftentimes, misconceptions — about those with disabilities.

[Check out this video](#) about what people with disabilities wish you knew.

#### Takeaway Task:

**Consider these questions after watching the video:**

- Did this video change the way you thought about people with disabilities? If so, how?
- Some of the people in the video mention that they don't like when people call them an inspiration. Have you heard others sometimes refer to people with disabilities as “inspirational”? Why might that be offensive?
- What are some ways to kindly ask questions about a person's disability?



Inclusion is not a program or service. It's a mindset and attitude that affects the way we interact with those around us and the world at large. When we adopt this mindset, we hope that as we open our eyes each morning, we do so knowing we are looking out at the world, seeing and appreciating all the individuals G-d has created.

We hope that participating in our inclusion-oriented tasks this week inspires you to adopt these practices for many weeks to come. Thank you for participating.