



## Relationship Building

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## Support Circles

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## Networks of Support



## Books and DVDs

**A My Home My Choice  
Publication  
for Windsor and  
Essex County**



Resources to  
inspire and support people  
along their journey to an  
everyday life as a citizen.



*Cover images from Pixabay*

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### **A My Home My Choice Publication, Updated 2021**

My Home My Choice is about a whole life. It's about having relationships, and valued roles with family, work, recreation, leisure, as a volunteer, and in having a home of your own.

The My Home My Choice initiative in Windsor and Essex County started offering information and inspiration to people and families living with disabilities and others in the year 2010.



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# Support Circles - Networks of Support

## Support Circles, Networks of Support: What are they?

Support Circles, often called Networks of Support, are about the presence of friends, family and others in our lives. They are made up of the important relationships we have - those who care about our well-being, happiness, and the quality of our lives. Support Circles are intentionally developed, and are a safeguard in the lives of people with disabilities.

### Did you know?

Support Circles, that are intentionally nurtured, are a good way to ensure a safe and secure future for people living with a disability. Financial supports, plans, and paid supporters are important for the future – but most important are the trusted relationships in our lives.



### What does that mean for your family member?

For people with disabilities a Support Circle is often a lifeline - often the reason people are able to live and participate in a rich way in their neighbourhoods and community. A Support Circle can be made up of family and/or friends, but is always the people we trust and people we invite into our lives. It is never too early to start nurturing relationships. This is good preparation for when the time may be right to create a Support Circle.

### You may already have a 'network'

A number of people with disabilities and families in Windsor and Essex County may have relationships/rich networks in their lives naturally. Others are looking for assistance to get more connected and build relationships. And yet others may be looking for some help to be intentional and deliberate about including their relationships in their future planning. Many people and families find that having an independent facilitator to assist is important.

### How to explore these ideas

For more information, about this topic, contact: Windsor Essex Brokerage for Personal Supports and/or Windsor-Essex Family Network. Books, DVD's, information documents and articles about Support Circles/Networks of Support are available at either of these locations. Contact information is on page two of this document. Also, check out the book ideas and/or chapter summaries on pages four through nine.

*Note: Windsor Essex Brokerage for Personal Supports and Windsor-Essex Family Network first developed this document in 2008, in partnership with the Modeling Community Change and Innovation Project in Windsor-Essex. It was revised and updated with support from the Person-Directed Planning Innovation initiative/funds with the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) and the 'Families Helping Families in Partnership' strategy with the United Way/Centraide Windsor-Essex County in 2011.*

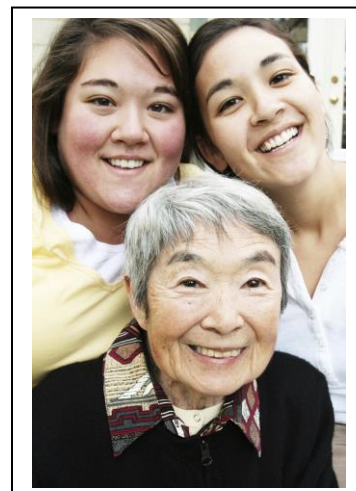
*It has since been revised and developed with one-time funding for the My Home My Choice initiative from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. In kind support was provided as well.*

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## Your Family, Friends and Others (Your Network of Support)

Your family, friends and others you trust, can be a very important part of planning for your future. You may already have people in your life who care about you and are part of your network. Or, you may not know many people and/or you are shy about asking for help.

There are lots of people out there who want to help other people. They are just waiting to be asked. If you don't have family, friends or others you trust to help you plan, then the first step in your planning process may be to have a facilitator help you think of who you could invite to a meeting.



When people are invited in, they may decide to become part of a Support Circle. 'Circles' come in many different shapes and sizes. They are a group of people who know you, have come to care about you or may want to get to know you further. Support Circle members:

- help you think of ideas
- share information so you can make decisions about your life
- celebrate with you
- be there during the difficult times
- make sure you are safe and secure
- help you with things that are private and not the business of the government or service providers. (One example of this would be will and estate planning.)

Support Circles make a difference because they are based on caring which is freely given.

Family members and friends may be members of your Support Circle. Often friendships may have developed with former staff that joins your 'circle' because they want to keep that contact with you. Other people who have certain types of expertise may be called upon



from time to time to help out. You decide who you want to invite to be part of your network.

Your 'circle' is very important because people can give ideas about day-to-day things, as well as private things for your future, and they can stand beside you over time.

From time to time your Support Circle will change. This happens as your interests change and other people's lives change as well.

*The information on this page has been reprinted with permission from a document called **Tools for Living Your Life in Windsor and Essex County** by Windsor Essex Brokerage for Personal Supports*

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## Natural 'Non-Paid' Supports

Family, friends and other natural supports are an important gift to your life. Their role is very important. Individualized funding and paid supports (like support workers or paid staff) are helpful, but they cannot replace the importance of family and friends.

### Friends and Family

Friends are what keep us safe, sane and happy. We come to our friends for different kinds of advice and support than we what we look for paid people to provide. Friends and family give meaning to our lives.

### Natural Supports

Natural supports are the people in the community who help out just by being there. They are not necessarily friends but they sure make life easier.



Some examples of natural supports are:

- people at church who get to know you by seeing you every week
- woman at your craft class who can give you a ride to the potluck supper at the community centre
- the neighbour who shows up with his snow blower to do your driveway after a snowfall
- a fellow worker who helps you out at your volunteer job
- the receptionist at the doctor's office who greets you with a smile
- a neighbour who helps you with your cooking
- people at your drumming group



There may be times when you need the services of a paid person on a regular basis. Friends or natural supports in the community cannot usually provide this for you.

When you need the services of someone with a certain expertise and have to pay for those services you could apply for funding, like Passport or other types of individualized/direct funding. 'Brokerage' (Windsor Essex Brokerage for Personal Supports) can help you with information about this.

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## Book Summaries

### 101 Ways to Facilitate Making Friends:

*How to Engage and Deepen Support Networks for People with Disabilities*

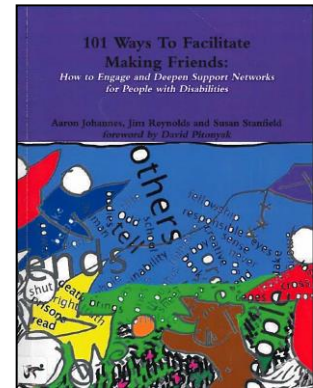
*By Aaron Johannes, Jim Reynolds and Susan Stanfield; Spectrum Press*

#### What this book is about:

A compendium of ideas generated by folks with disabilities, their families and those who support them, this is a tool book for those interested in how to support folks to develop real, lasting relationships.

#### What you can learn from this book:

- Dozens of ways that you can be out in your community and making contacts
- How having daily or weekly routines can create an opportunity for connections we did not expect for new friends
- Concrete strategies to be a friend and make a contribution to your community



### 101 Ways to Facilitate Making Friends:

*Ideas and conversation starters for people with disabilities and their supporters*

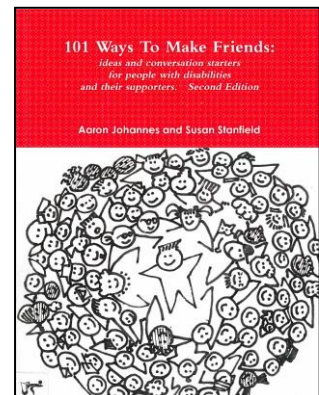
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## About Myself

*Portrait of Andrew who has Autism*

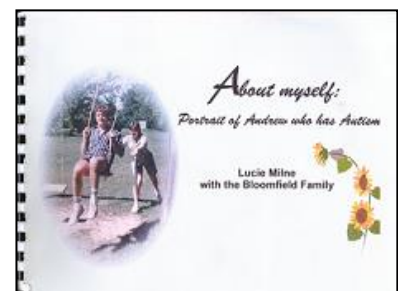
*By Lucie Milne with the Bloomfield Family; Guelph Services for the Autistic, Guelph, Ontario*

#### What this book is about:

This is the true story of how one man moved to a new phase of his life encouraged and supported by his twin sister, his parents and good friends.

#### What you can learn from this book:

- How deep friendships and bonds enabled Andrew to explore the world and follow his dreams
- How important it is to have people believe in you
- How the bonds of family can be a huge influence on someone's future



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## Building Circles of Support and Friendship

### A Guidebook for Parents

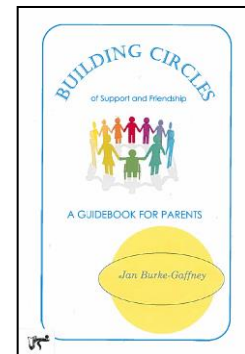
By Jan Burke-Gaffney; Hamilton Family Network

#### What this book is about:

This Guidebook offers ways to help parents create a Circle of Support and Friendship around their son or daughter with a disability. It will provide ways that will not leave parents on their own with only their own resources. It will offer information and provide strategies to help parents provide a type of safety net for their children. The Guidebook is based on the experiences of circles in Ontario, Canada.

#### What you can learn from this book:

- Why do we need a circle?
- Where do you find people and how to ask them?
- How to run a Circle meeting
- Tips on person-directed planning



## Collage

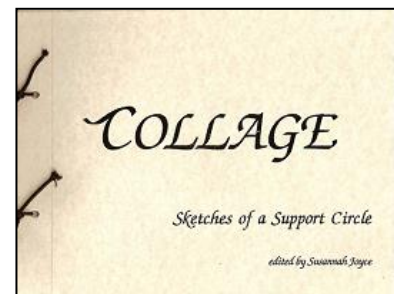
By Susannah Joyce; Realizations Training and Resources, London, Ontario

#### What this book is about:

This book is a series of impression and memories of Lisa; a woman, whose support circle has told their story of who Lisa is, and what they have gained through Lisa and her circle. This book is not a complete story with a beginning and end, but rather short experiences that this support circle has had with Lisa.

#### What you can learn from this book:

- How important having a support circle can be
- How strong a support circle is when it consists of people who truly care
- How to get your own support circle started



## Creating Circles of Friends

### A peer support and inclusion workbook

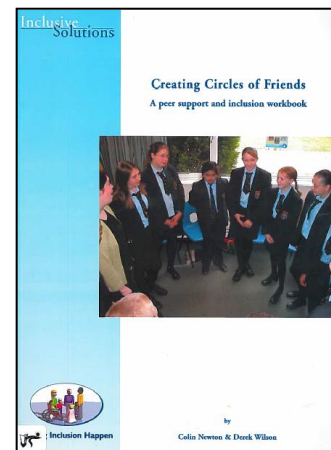
By Colin Newton and Derek Wilson; Inclusive Solutions UK Limited

#### What this book is about:

A great support approach to enhancing the inclusion of any child where social and emotional factors may lead to rejection or isolation.

#### What you can learn from this book:

- Inspire and encourage interest in creative approaches to the involvement of children in the inclusion of vulnerable and challenging peers
- Provide a tool that can reverse pressures to exclude and segregate an individual from their school community
- Strengthen the processes which help create and maintain school communities of acceptance to which children truly belong



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## Friends & Inclusion

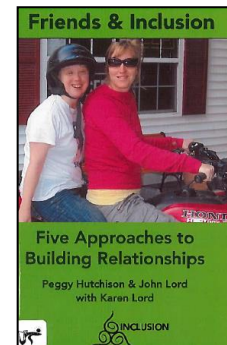
*By Peggy Hutchison and John Lord with Karen Lord; Inclusion Press*

### What this book is about:

It takes work to build and sustain friendships. If you happen to experience disability, building relationships must be even more intentional. A family's journey to create a full life for their daughter as an engaged, participating and contributing citizen so that she would not be an isolated bystander.

### What you can learn from this book:

- One to One relationships
- Social networks
- Circles
- Bridging
- Leisure identities



## Friends In/deed!

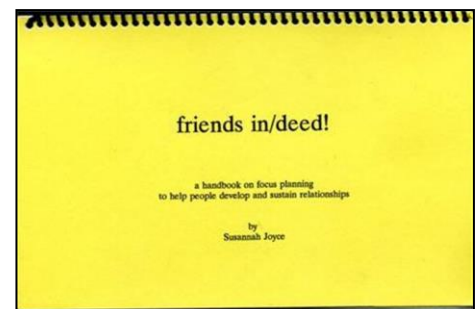
*By Susannah Joyce; Realizations Training and Resources, London, Ontario*

### What this book is about:

This book is about guiding people to develop and sustain friendships by focus planning and developing the skills necessary to assist people to welcome friends into their lives. This book offers suggestions for you to use to help people make friends.

### What you can learn from this book:

- How to guide people in developing and sustaining friendships using small steps
- How important friendship is in the lives of people who have disabilities
- How to create a friendship focus planning map and action map



## From Behind the Piano\

### What's really Worth Doing and How to Do it

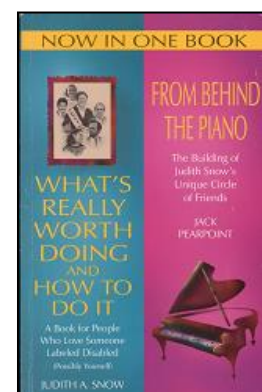
*By Jack Pearpoint and Judith. A. Snow; Inclusion Press*

### What this book is about:

This book is about the building of a circle of friends for a disabled woman, Judith Snow, as her life transitions from life in an institution to living in a community. This book is an inspiration for people labeled disabled, others vulnerable to rejection, and those who love them.

### What you can learn from these books:

- How a circle of friends can change the lives of everyone involved
- How a support circle was built for a person with a disability
- How to design a support that works to sustain participation in the community



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## Good Life (A) . . . for You and Your Relative with Disability

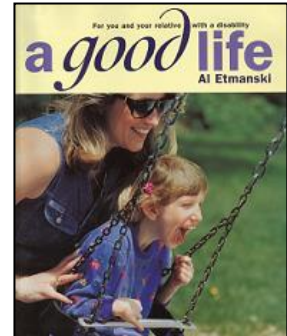
By Al Etmanski; Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN)

### What this book is about:

This book is about planning for the future and provides a different, step-by-step approach on how to do it instead of using traditional supports and services. In planning for the future, we are planning for a good life for ourselves and our loved ones – this book can help you get there.

### What you can learn from this book:

- How to create a “Personal Future Plan” for your loved one with a disability
- How to plan for the future
- Examples of legal, financial and technical solutions available to you
- Examples of personal stories of people who have gone through similar situations
- Examples of worksheets to help you with planning



## Her Shoes are Brown (and other stories)

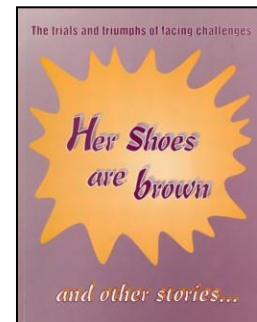
By Barbara Leavitt, Chris Hicks & Diane Peacock  
A Project of the Community Involvement Council

### What this book is about:

This book is a collection of personal stories from people and towns across Ontario. These stories are based on people who believe in themselves and people who believe in others.

### What you can learn from this book:

- How circles of family and friends are a necessity in life
- How talking is not the only form of communication and truly listening is more important
- How contributing to one's community is possible if you just believe



## Intentional Teaming

### Shifting Organizational Culture

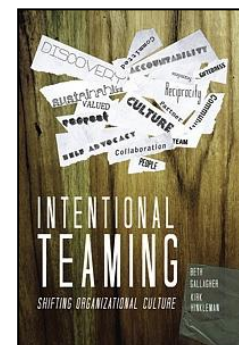
By Beth Gallagher and Kirk Hinkleman; Inclusion Press

### What this book is about:

Intentional Teaming represents a much-needed paradigm shift in the ways we work with and care for each other. It unmask the power of genuine connectedness for people who support individuals with disabilities to build natural and sustained relationships.

### What you can learn from this book:

- How circles of family and friends are a necessity in life
- How talking is not the only form of communication and truly listening is more important
- How contributing to one's community is possible if you just believe



\*Only available at Brokerage.

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## It's Never Too Early, It's Never Too Late

### A Booklet about Personal Futures Planning

*By Beth Mount and Kay Zwernik; Printed by the Minnesota Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities*

#### What this book is about:

This book describes the tool called Personal Futures Planning which helps foster new ways of thinking about people with developmental disabilities. It is written for family members and advocates.

#### What you can learn from this book:

- How to focus on opportunities for people with disabilities
- How to support people to develop personal relationships, have positive roles in community life and increase their control
- An ongoing problem-solving process using techniques such as brainstorming and strategizing



## Jumping the Gap

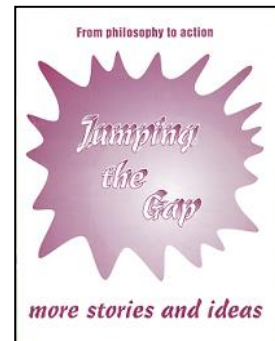
*Written by Barbara Leavitt, Chris Hicks & Diane Peacock  
A Project of the Community Involvement Council*

#### What this book is about:

This book is filled with stories that demonstrate how people who have a disability can lead a fulfilling life. It also shares inspirational stories of how services, business and other groups can cooperate to achieve a better community.

#### What you can learn from this book:

- The importance of having a circle of friends to assist people who have a disability to have a fulfilling life.
- Suggestions and information that will inspire people who have a disability, their families, supporters and other professionals to seek new paths
- Stories that demonstrate strategies to achieve cooperation



## Little Book about Person Centered Planning (A)

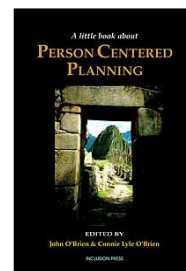
*By John O'Brien and Connie Lyle O'Brien; Inclusion Press*

#### What this book is about:

This book is about learning to listen, thinking before you plan, what to do after you plan and revisiting choices. The book also includes information on a variety of planning methods, training programs in planning methods, and sources of ongoing training and support for facilitators.

#### What you can learn from this book:

- How to listen, plan and participate
- How to facilitate planning
- What to do after you plan
- Examples of person-centered planning's limitations and conditions for its success



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## Our Presence Has Roots

### The Ongoing Story of Deohaeko Support Network

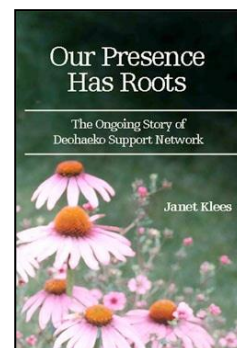
*Written by Janet Klees; Resources Supporting Family and Community Legacies Inc.*

#### What this book is about:

A true story of families in Pickering Ontario determined to make sure that the presence and gifts of their family members are nurtured within the community.

#### What can you learn from this book:

- How support networks have guided the process for people to be participants in their community
- Detailed strategies on how to build a support network
- How relationships in community safeguard the lives of people who have a disability over time
- How to nourish relationships in a person's life



## Pathways to Inclusion

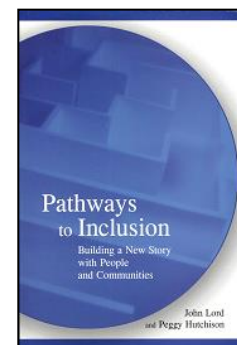
*Written by John Lord and Peggy Hutchison; Cactus Press*

#### What this book is about:

This is a story that shares the personal experiences of the authors as parents of a child who has an intellectual disability specifically focusing on how to build and sustain social networks

#### What you can learn from this book:

- How beliefs create barriers to relationship-building
- How beliefs support the building and strengthening of social networks
- Characteristics of a Pathway to Inclusion



## Reaching Out

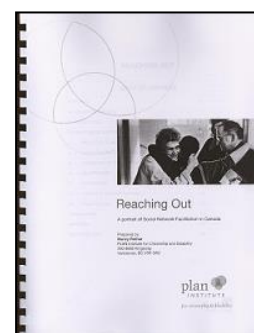
*By Nancy Rother; Plan Institute*

#### What this book is about:

This book is about creating and sustaining social networks for people who are vulnerable using seven necessary elements: hospitality, listening, contribution, reciprocity, letting go, collaboration and facilitation. This book includes practical tips to overcome challenges that come with creating a social network.

#### What you can learn from this book:

- How to facilitate a network of relationships for someone who is vulnerable
- How a social network can transform the loneliness of a person into a creative energy
- How to support people are invited into the social network



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## Safe and Secure

### *Six Steps to Creating a Good Life for People with Disabilities (Ontario Edition)*

*By Al Etmanski with Jack Collins and Vickie Cammack*

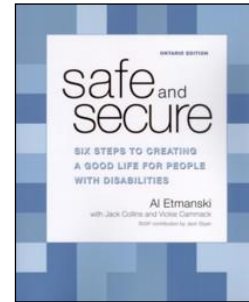
*Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN)*

#### **What this book is about:**

This book is for families who are interested in establishing a safe and secure future for their family member. Worksheets are provided to assist the reader as they move through the book.

#### **What you can learn from this book:**

- Six steps to create a personal future plan including:
  - Clarifying vision
  - Nurturing friendships
  - Creating a home
  - Making sound decisions
  - Achieving financial security
  - Achieving your plan



## Seeing the Charade

### *What We Need to Do and Undo to Make Friendships Happen*

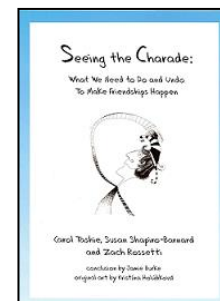
*By Carol Tashie, Susan Shapiro-Barnard and Zach Rosetti; Inclusive Solutions*

#### **What this book is about:**

This easy to read book discusses the struggles that students with disabilities can encounter when attempting to make and maintain friendships. It also discusses what kind of barriers there are in schools and communities that prevent friendships from happening. This book teaches readers how such barriers can be broken down so that meaningful friendships can be made.

#### **What you can learn from this book:**

- The barriers that exist in our communities.
- How to make friendships a reality for students.
- What parents and teachers can do together to help students make friendships.



## Waddie Welcome and the Beloved Community

*By Tom Kohler & Susan Earl; Inclusion Press*

#### **What this book is about:**

This book details a personal story of a remarkable man Waddie Welcome who was living in a nursing home. The book demonstrates how strong support networks can support people moving to a place of their own and how they make their community stronger.

#### **What you can learn from this book:**

- The role of Citizen Advocacy
- How a support network can work together to make tremendous change in the life of a person who has a disability
- Life lessons in community building



## **We Come Bearing Gifts**

### **The Story of Deohaeko Support Network**

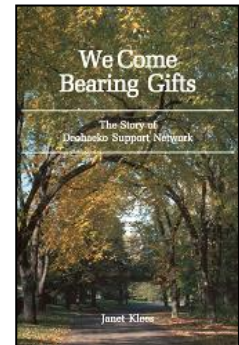
*By Janet Klees; Copywell*

#### **What this book is about:**

This book is a story of an ongoing journey taken by twelve families in Durham Region in Ontario to create a large cooperative housing community.

#### **What you can learn from this book:**

- How support networks can guide and shape developments in the community
- How empowering it is for a person who has a disability to be part of a community housing option.
- How the families overcame the challenges and struggles along their journey



## **What Matters**

### **Reflections on Disability, Community and Love**

*By Janice Fialka; Inclusion Press*

#### **What this book is about:**

This story draws on the reflections from family and friends - and walks us through the journey to a remarkable current reality. But the story begins as a disability story except that this family said no. They decided that Micah would be fully included and have a full life. And does he ever. Remarkably, Janice, Rich, Micah and Emma do not hold back. They have the courage to tell the story warts and all... which is why it is a must read for every family, every teacher - every person who cares about another person.

#### **What you can learn from this book:**

- The brilliance of asking for help.
- How to keep improving relationships.
- What it means to be a human being

