



Sea of Stories Book Talks Episode 1, Books on Autism

Transcript:

00;00;05;01 - 00;00;24;20

Voiceover 1

[VOICEOVER 1] Hello and welcome to the Sea of Stories, a podcast for children and their caregivers by the Ocean County Library. In celebration of the upcoming OCL Autism Resources Fair, today's book talk will feature books on the topic of autism. Enjoy!

00;00;24;22 - 00;00;26;18

Dan

[DAN] Wendi, thank you for joining me today.

00;00;26;19 - 00;00;28;13

Wendi

[WENDI] Oh, thank you for having me, Dan.

00;00;28;15 - 00;00;34;16

Dan

[DAN] Of course. Before we get into our book talk, can you briefly explain what the Autism Resources Fair is?

00;00;34;19 - 00;02;02;11

Wendi

[WENDI] Sure. So this is an event that began back in 2017, and the purpose of the fair is to give autistic individuals and their caregivers a way to discover the many services out there that are available to assist them. Tables are staffed by medical professionals, schools, therapists, special education attorneys, state and local organizations, and other agencies. So this year, the first fair will be held at our Toms River branch on Saturday, April 5th from 10 to 2. And we're doing something a little bit different. We are dividing the fairs up by age group. So this fair on April 5th will focus on services for children. At 2:00, we're going to have a keynote address on guardianship and special needs planning that will be presented by Christine Mattis of the Mattis Law Group. And then on Saturday, November 8th, from 10 to 2, we will hold our second fair of the year. And that one will be at our Lacey Branch. And that one will

focus on services for teens and adults. So this is the first year that we're dividing the fairs up by age group.

00;02;02;11 - 00;02;05;20

Dan

[DAN] And we've had this multiple years in a row at this point now.

00;02;05;20 - 00;02;19;05

Wendi

[WENDI] Yes, yes we have. Yes. Last year was the first year that we actually offered two fairs. We had one in our Little Egg Harbor Branch in addition to the one earlier in the year in Toms River.

00;02;19;06 - 00;02;22;03

Dan

[DAN] Yeah, all the more chances to get the resources out there.

00;02;22;03 - 00;02;23;07

Wendi

[WENDI] Exactly.

00;02;23;09 - 00;02;25;07

Dan

[DAN] Awesome. Well, we're looking forward to it.

00;02;25;10 - 00;02;26;12

Wendi

[WENDI] Thank you. Thank you.

00;02;26;13 - 00;02;35;04

Dan

[DAN] Yeah, and then for our book talk today, I chose books geared towards children. And then Wendi, you chose books, geared toward caregivers.

00;02;35;05 - 00;02;35;24

Wendi

[WENDI] That's right.

00;02;36;02 - 00;03;30;00

Dan

[DAN] So the first book that I chose is called My Life with Autism by Maria Schuh and Isabel Munoz, and it's actually a nonfiction book about a young child. His name is Zen, and he's autistic. And I chose this one first because I think it's just a very good overview of what autism is for, maybe children that aren't familiar with it. So it gives kind of a general overview of some of the symptoms and then some details from Zen's life as well, some of the symptoms he experienced. So, for example, he said when he was

younger, he would walk on his toes and would make sounds, and a therapist assisted him with that. So I think it's just a very good kind of like, living example of, like a profile of somebody with autism and has like some good info for people that may not be familiar with it.

00;03;30;02 - 00;03;41;19

Wendi

[WENDI] Right, right. Absolutely. And it also gives children, who have autism an opportunity to see a character who's like them.

00;03;41;22 - 00;03;47;03

Dan

[DAN] Yep. Yep. Yeah. A lot of these books that I chose have that as well. Would you like to talk about your first book?

00;03;47;03 - 00;04;45;10

Wendi

[WENDI] Sure. So, the first book, that I selected is called The Parent's Guide to Autism Diagnosis: What to Expect and How to Support Your Child. And that was by Doctor Sophia Mooncey and Adelle Devine. It's actually written by a pediatrician who works for Britain's National Health Service and a teacher at a school for autistic students. And, as many of us know, the process of getting an autism diagnosis, for your child can be extremely stressful and overwhelming for parents. This particular book discusses the signs that your child may have autism and then walks you through the diagnosis and the steps to take once you have that diagnosis.

00;04;45;13 - 00;04;49;26

Dan

[DAN] So this one's all about like the very beginning process, like finding the diagnosis and what to do.

00;04;50;04 - 00;05;01;04

Wendi

[WENDI] Right. That's right. And even before the diagnosis, you know, once parents become aware that their child may not be developing as other children do.

00;05;01;05 - 00;05;02;11

Dan

[DAN] Yeah.

00;05;02;13 - 00;05;17;16

Wendi

[WENDI] And the book, what's great about this book is it also encourages you to see past the diagnosis, to see your child as a whole and their strengths, as well as their challenges, and not just the diagnosis.

00;05;17;16 - 00;05;18;22

Dan

[DAN] Not just focusing on that.

00;05;18;22 - 00;05;20;13

Wendi

[WENDI] That's right.

00;05;20;15 - 00;05;33;14

Dan

[DAN] Yeah, awesome. The next book that I chose is called Flap Your Hands: A Celebration of Stimming by Steve Asbell. So how would you describe stimming? It's like a calming behavior, right?

00;05;33;16 - 00;06;10;26

Wendi

[WENDI] That's right. So, stimming can be anything from hand flapping to nervous laughter to walking on toes and many, many other different kinds of behaviors. And basically what enables the child to do - I shouldn't just say child - the individual with autism. What it enables that person to do is to regulate themselves and soothe themselves.

00;06;10;29 - 00;06;43;00

Dan

[DAN] Yeah. This book kind of explains like it introduces it. So it says like if you're feeling overwhelmed, you're too stimulated, if there's a lot of loud noises, here's some things you could do. So it explains what it is and how it can be useful. And I like at the end it reminds the reader, like, "No feelings too huge to handle. No noise is too jarring to bear." And I really like the, the artwork in particular. It's like super colorful, like, every single page is like, filled with different colors.

00;06;43;00 - 00;06;45;07

Wendi

[WENDI] It's bright and engaging.

00;06;45;07 - 00;06;48;11

Dan

[DAN] Engaging, exactly. That's exactly what I thought, too.

00;06;48;14 - 00;08;09;03

Wendi

[WENDI] The next book that I chose, is actually called Helping Your Child with Sensory Regulation Skills to Manage the Emotional and Behavioral Components of Your Child Sensory Processing Challenges. And that was written by Doctor Suzanne Mouton-Odum and Ruth Goldfinger Golomb, who are a national, licensed psychologist and co-director of the training program at the Behavior Therapy Center of Greater Washington. So sensory processing is a condition that also often occurs with autism. People affected by S.P.D. might be sensitive to certain noises, bright lights, certain materials such as tags and clothing, and odors and exposure to these things can often result in sensory meltdowns, which are often mistaken for

temper tantrums. This book actually contains, variety of different techniques to help you help your child learn to self-regulate.

00;08;09;05 - 00;08;24;04

Dan

[DAN] Okay. Very cool. Yeah. It sounds like it kind of introduces the world of, like how someone with autism may - how the senses work, kind of how they might be different than someone who doesn't have autism.

00;08;24;05 - 00;08;51;14

Wendi

[WENDI] Things can be super, super intense. And so when that child - or that individual - is exposed to those types of things that can result in them having behavior like tantrums, although they're not tantrums, they're sensory meltdowns. It's that individual's way of reacting to this explosion of noises that's going on in their head.

00;08;51;15 - 00;08;53;27

Dan

[DAN] Yeah, yeah, it can feel overwhelming, I'm sure.

00;08;53;28 - 00;08;55;12

Wendi

[WENDI] Absolutely.

00;08;55;14 - 00;09;58;28

Dan

[DAN] Great. Good pick. So the next book I chose is called A Day with No Words by Tiffany Hammond and Kate Cosgrove. This book shows the nonverbal experience from a first person point of view. So the author of this book is actually autistic herself and the mother of two sons with autism. I really like the artwork in this one, because it visually demonstrates what certain sensory experiences or mental states can be like. This page here, where it looks like he's on like a city street, and there's people around him and there's lots of, like, loud noises and confusion. One page where, there's a portrait of the main character, the child, and there's, like, a thunderstorm going on in his head. And it says, "Some people have big voices that feel like storms in my head." And then the next one is an image of him, like on an ice cream sundae. And it says, "Others have voices that are soft and smooth, like fresh whipped cream." So it just does a good job of kind of like visually demonstrating what they might be experiencing.

00;09;58;29 - 00;10;01;14

Wendi

[WENDI] Absolutely. I love the language there.

00;10;01;14 - 00;10;19;01

Dan

[DAN] Yeah, yeah. It's fun. And then it also demonstrates like supportive parenting. So later on in the book, the mother character, it shows how she communicates with her nonverbal son using a tablet. So she's using technology to kind of, like bridge the gap.

00;10;19;03 - 00;10;27;00

Wendi

[WENDI] That's right. And again, that is something that is so common and that many people will relate to.

00;10;27;01 - 00;10;29;17

Dan

[DAN] Yeah, for sure.

00;10;29;20 - 00;11;39;26

Wendi

[WENDI] The next book that I chose was The Parent's Guide to Managing Anxiety in Children with Autism by Raelene Dundon. She is a registered psychologist and the mother of three children, two of whom have autism. So, like sensory processing disorder, anxiety is very common in autistic people. And so this book talks about what anxiety is, how to determine if your child's behavior may be caused by anxiety and why anxiety is so common in autistic individuals. She also goes into describing different types of anxiety such as separation anxiety, social anxiety and phobias. The author does talk about, how to manage your loved ones anxiety and the meltdowns that also, often occur as a result of that anxiety.

00;11;39;27 - 00;11;46;26

Dan

[DAN] Yeah. Yeah. That's fascinating. I'm sure anyone could benefit from that too, because everyone experiences anxiety.

00;11;46;28 - 00;11;48;21

Wendi

[WENDI] Yes, absolutely.

00;11;48;23 - 00;13;20;24

Dan

[DAN] My next pick is, there's actually two books by this author that I'm going to talk about a little bit. The author is Holly Robinson Peete, and the books are Charlie Makes a Splash and My Brother Charlie. So My Brother Charlie is the first of the two books, I believe. And it shows what a strong system of support looks like for an autistic individual. So it's about a young boy named Charlie and his twin sister Callie. And Callie she lets Charlie be who he wants to be. She understands that he's different, and she helps him and the reader understand that. That's totally fine. It shows them playing, and it shows Charlie at the piano, and it references some other some traits that autistic people might have, like Charlie has a dislike of loud noises, avoids eye contact, has difficulty making friends, and it shows him with his special interest. His family nicknamed him the "Fish Fact Kid" because he knows all the scientific names for parts of the fish. So I thought that was really cool to see. And then in Charlie Makes a Splash, it shows

him finding freedom in things related to water. So he loves to swim. He loves - I think it shows him fishing, playing in water, washing his hands. He loves all things related to water. So I think you kind of get, like, a good sense of, like, what this character is like and how they experience autism and how his sister, helps him and helps him feel normal.

00;13;20;24 - 00;14;30;15

Wendi

[WENDI] Is very supportive, and... That's great. The next book that I have is called Autistic Logistics: A Parent's Guide to Tackling Bedtime Toilet Training, Meltdowns, Hitting and Other Everyday Challenges by Kate Wilde. She is the Director of Global Outreach at the Autism Treatment Center of America. And as parents know, raising any child presents its fair share of challenges. But having an autistic child often means coping with issues in a different way because their brain works differently. So for example, setting and enforcing a specific bedtime for an autistic child might be challenging. Not because the child is stubborn and wants to stay up, but because the child is physically and mentally having a difficult time winding down. So this book the author talks about how to go through those daily activities, how to tackle them.

00;14;30;17 - 00;14;34;05

Dan

[DAN] Right. Maybe how to get a routine for certain things.

00;14;34;07 - 00;14;43;19

Wendi

[WENDI] Yes, how to cope with bedtime and toilet training and sensory meltdowns and behaviors such as hitting and biting.

00;14;43;21 - 00;14;50;07

Dan

[DAN] Yeah, that seems like it could be very useful for parents trying to, get more of a sense of structure in their, their routines.

00;14;50;10 - 00;14;52;10

Wendi

[WENDI] Absolutely, yes.

00;14;52;13 - 00;15;50;03

Dan

[DAN] Awesome. The next book that I chose is actually a higher level chapter book. So the ones I spoke about so far were more picture books. This one's more for like middle grade readers, and it's called Maya Plays the Part by Calyssa Erb. The author, she is autistic herself. This book, it shows autistic representation for chapter books. So the main character, her name is Maya, and she's a girl who loves musical theater. She is set on getting the lead part in a summer musical production of The Drowsy Chaperone. However, Maya's best friends move, her parents' busy jobs render this more difficult than anticipated. And on top of it all, Maya was recently diagnosed with autism and is also figuring out how

to play her part of Maya in public. So at the same time, she's trying to figure out her role in the play. She's also figuring out her role in real life.

00;15;50;06 - 00;16;22;02

Wendi

[WENDI] And that's an incredible story. And I love to see autistic people represent it in different, age brackets. You know, when the author writes about them in middle school, in high school, elementary school, and then as adults. I think that's something that society needs. We need to see that representation at different stages. That's what helps develop understanding and acceptance.

00;16;22;02 - 00;16;30;15

Dan

[DAN] Yeah. And some people are even diagnosed at different stages too. So some people might be adults and have never known.

00;16;30;18 - 00;17;58;00

Wendi

[WENDI] Yes. The last book that I selected is called Parenting Bright Kids with Autism: Helping Twice-Exceptional Children with Asperger's and High-Functioning Autism by Clare Hughes-Lynch. And she's a professor of elementary and special education at the College of Coastal Georgia. So we know that autism is a spectrum. Some autistic people are nonverbal and need assistance with tasks throughout their lives, while others are more high functioning and able to live independently. And many are somewhere in between. So this book is different because it focuses on parenting very smart children who also happen to have high functioning autism. So as the title states, they are twice exceptional. The author, talks about topics such as receiving the autism diagnosis, getting support, obtaining therapy, helping, your child discover their talents and their interests, and preparing for college and adulthood. So it's a great book that takes things from another perspective.

00;17;58;02 - 00;18;08;12

Dan

[DAN] That's awesome. I think it's really cool that like as you said we know autism is a spectrum. So people are writing things that are specific to one group's needs because that might be different than a different group.

00;18;08;13 - 00;18;09;27

Wendi

[WENDI] Absolutely.

00;18;10;00 - 00;19;40;21

Dan

[DAN] Cool. And then I just have two more here that are kind of tied together and there's a media tie-in also with Sesame Street. So in 2017, Sesame Street introduced a character, Julia. And Julia is an autistic character. We have two books in our collection. One is Julia by Andrea Posner-Sanchez, and the other one's called My Friend Julia: A Sesame Street Book About Autism by Jennifer Cook. So the book Julia

introduces the character and the book My Friend Julia, I felt, was more informational. One of the things that I really liked about that book was that, it included some ways to be a friend toward autistic individuals in the book. So some of the things that it included would be like inviting someone new to play with you, showing someone how to play games, remembering that all kids play a little differently, taking turns and being patient and just showing that you care. I like that it included that in that book. And then you can see Julia's first appearance, her appearance on Sesame Street. It's actually on YouTube on their official YouTube channel. So it shows her being introduced to the group. Shows how she does things a little differently. How she plays differently, gets to know people differently. And, Big Bird is the one that they're introducing her to. So you can kind of see his character, like, understand as it's explained to him what Julia is like.

00;19;40;23 - 00;19;45;22

Wendi

[WENDI] I love that Sesame Street incorporated this character into their world.

00;19;45;22 - 00;19;46;15

Dan

[DAN] Yeah. It's cool.

00;19;46;19 - 00;19;58;22

Wendi

[WENDI] Who didn't grow up with Sesame Street? And when you start educating children from a young age, then that stays with them throughout their lives.

00;19;58;24 - 00;20;00;16

Dan

[DAN] Yeah. Yeah. Who doesn't love Sesame Street?

00;20;00;17 - 00;20;01;20

Wendi

[WENDI] That's right.

00;20;01;23 - 00;20;06;02

Dan

[DAN] Yeah. All right I think that's all I got. Is there anything you want to say, Wendi?

00;20;06;05 - 00;20;13;13

Wendi

[WENDI] That is all that I have also. Thank you. Thank you for having me today.

00;20;13;15 - 00;20;31;10

Voiceover 1

[VOICEOVER 1] All titles mentioned in today's episode can be found in our catalog and borrowed for free with your Ocean County Library card. We hope to see you next time. Until then, happy reading!

00;20;31;13 - 00;20;58;26

Voiceover 2

[VOICEOVER 2] Hello adventurers! If you enjoyed this content, please take a look at the Ocean County Library's new podcast called Forge Your Imagination: A Guide to Immersive World Building. This new podcast is dedicated to helping creative individuals design their own expertly crafted worlds for books, games, Dungeons and Dragons, and more. Tune in on the first Wednesday morning of every month to learn more.

00;20;58;28 - 00;21;01;21

Voiceover 2

Thanks for listening and safe travels, adventures.