



# SEND Parent Forum

## Talking to your child about their special needs

March 2021

# Should you talk?



- Whatever your child's need, educationalists and psychologists generally agree, you **should** definitely talk about it
- It is likely your child has noticed something about themselves being different already
- Conversations about similarities and differences begin in nursery settings
- You will also need to consider revisiting their understanding frequently as their understanding will change

# Should you talk?



- Children who go through school without discussing their special need or disability might think they are stupid or unlikeable
- Ignoring a difficulty does children a disservice
- For example a child who isn't told he has autism may not understand why he struggles with peer relationships. He may make incorrect assumptions about himself and grow to believe he's unlikable and can't make friends.

# Benefits



- Your child will be less likely to feel ashamed or embarrassed about his disability if you talk openly
- They will also be better equipped to explain their disability to others
- You may find your child already knows

# How to begin...



- The first conversation can be hard – access support if needed
- Acknowledge the difficulty
- Share the different terms e.g. Autism, Austistic Spectrum Condition or disorder
- Be matter of fact and share the science
- Keep information age appropriate

# How to begin...



- Explain that everyone is different in some way
- Every brain is different – neuro diversity
- Share your difficulties
- Books can be a useful starting point or famous people

# Continuing the conversation



- If you express lots of emotion when you talk about their difficulty this is likely to influence how your child feels about their needs
- Be honest
- Give simple answers
- If a child wants more information they will ask
- Acknowledge the discomfort “I know it can be hard to talk about these things and I want to support you.”



# Continuing the conversation



- Explain there are others with the same difficulty
- Focus on strengths (but don't overdo it – children can spot this a mile off)
- Listen to your child's concerns
- Don't try to fix it – listen, acknowledge, validate and problem solve together

“I've heard that you feel worried about not being able to read, that's ok and very normal. (Pause) Let's talk together about what might help.”



# Continuing the conversation



- What your child says will give you insight into their thinking and what they are feeling
- Try not to assume they will be worried
- Listen to what **THEY** say and act on that
- Focus on who is helping them

# Questions



- Invite questions – it is difficult to think as a child
- Be careful of your response – if your child thinks it may upset you they may shy away from asking you
- Make it clear you will answer any questions at any time
- You can always say I need to think about the answer and come back to them
- Are there trusted adults who could help or add e.g. a doctor or teacher

# As they grow...



- As your child gets older they will have a different understanding and perhaps new questions
- It is important to revisit their understanding and give them a chance to talk any new concerns through

# What else can you offer?



- Connection with others who have similar needs can be comforting and empowering
- By talking to other children with similar needs they will find connection and understand some children are similar - this will give strength
- Open honesty
- Help them access more information or do research together

# What else can you offer?



- Talk about what and how they might choose to share with others
- Perhaps role play the conversation
- This information can stop bullies in their tracks

“I have autism that is why I flap my arms.”

# Key Points

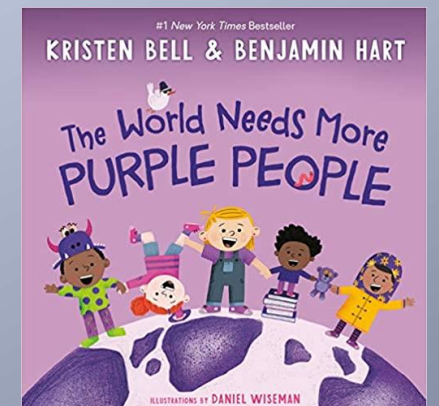
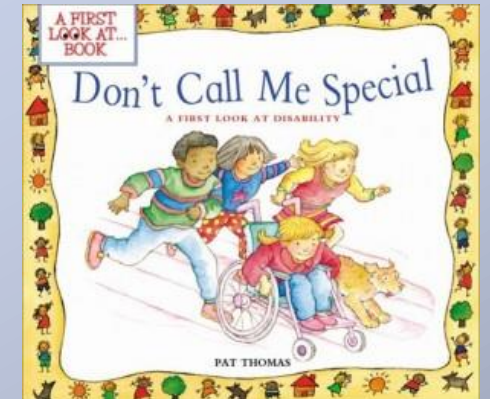
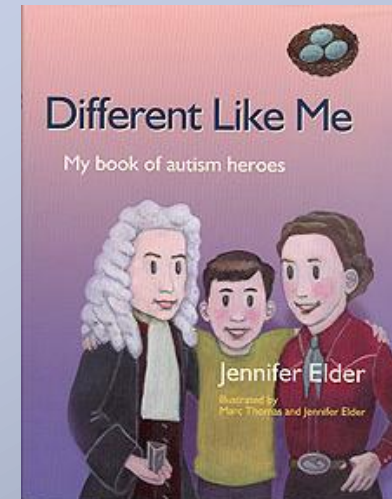
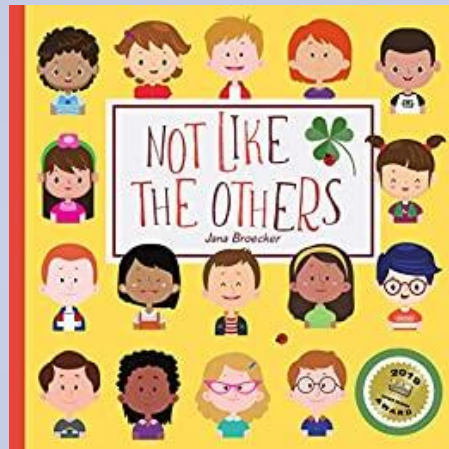
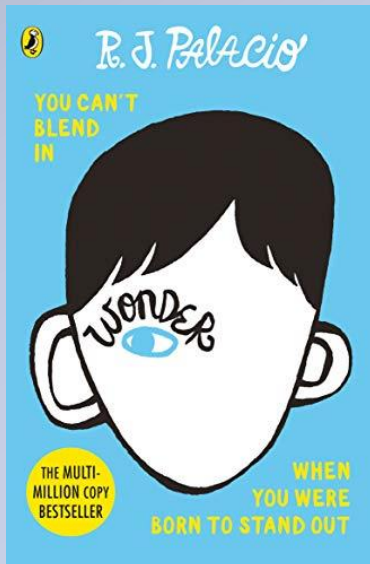


- Be specific and sincere about your child's strengths
- Tell your child about people they admire — friends, relatives, and even famous people — who learn and think differently, too.
- Remind your child it's OK to talk about what's scary, and that you're there to listen.



# Using resources

- Books and films can be particularly helpful
- These can be used with siblings too







Any Questions?