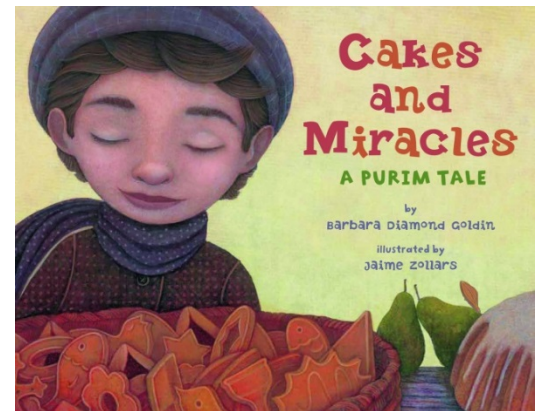


Cakes and Miracles

By Barbara Diamond Goldin



Program Focus

Age group: Ages 3-10
 Program length: 30-90 minutes
 Central value: Each human being has unique abilities and challenges (*Adam Yihidi Nivrah*), Being created in the image of God (*B'tzelem Elohim*)

Synopsis

Hershel's blindness doesn't keep him from living life. He helps his mother by doing chores, but wishes he could do even more for her. When an angel appears in Hershel's dream and encourages him to make what he sees when he closes his eyes, the boy sneaks into the kitchen, and transforms his mother's cookie dough into beautiful hamantaschen (three-cornered fruit-filled cookies) that can be sold to raise money for the family at Purim. Hershel persevered and used his unique abilities to create his own Purim masterpieces. Hershel's blindness is something to be blessed, not pitied or ignored. His blindness doesn't keep him from living life. Hershel adapts to his sensory challenge and develops unique ways in which to help his mother and ultimately educate others.

Goals

- Help families develop an acceptance of and respect for differences and unique abilities
- Engage in Purim learning that is accessible to all learners
- Provide follow-up activities and resources for accepting differences and unique abilities

Program designed by



Read the Story

Introduction

Blessed are You, Holy One our God, Majesty of the universe, who makes people different.

This blessing is recited when meeting someone with a disability. What a beautiful message to bless G-d for making people different. In this story, *Cakes and Miracles*, you are going to meet Hershel, a little boy who is blind. This may be different from you in many ways, but you are going to learn that being different can be wonderful! See if you can identify ways in which Hershel uses his differences in unique ways.

Transition to Follow Up Activities

When participating in the activities below, children of all abilities can engage in learning. Take the time to consider highlighting the unique abilities of Hershel and yourselves. Recognizing and acknowledging differences as uniqueness, leads to a more inclusive society in which people are accepted for who they are, and acknowledged for the unique abilities that they have to offer. Isn't that what Hershel wanted?

Discuss the Story

Preschool – Kindergarten Questions

We are all good at some things and not so good at others.

- What is something that Hershel is good at?
- Share some of your own unique abilities



Hershel's mom continually tells him "no."

- How do you think it makes Hershel feel?
- How do you feel when someone doesn't encourage you for something that you want to try?
- Is Hershel's vision or his mother's lack of encouragement a greater challenge?
- What do you think about Hershel's acting against his mom's wishes?
- Do you think that is brave or disrespectful to go against his mom and what would you do?

Hershel's family is poor. Hershel wants to help his mom by making hamantashen to sell at the market. Hershel's mom says that while he cannot make cookies, he helps her in many other ways.

- What are some of the things Hershel does to help his mom?
- How do you help others in your family?
- Have you ever been told that you cannot do something when you want to help?

Hershel dreams about making his Purim cookies. He does not use his eyes to see, but is able to "see" in his dreams. This is a unique of Hershel. He uses the images from his dreams and imagination to create his cookies.

- What do you dream about?
- What have you created using your imagination?
- Hershel is unable to use his vision to create his cookies. What sense does Hershel use to create his cookies?

Elementary Age Questions

In addition to the Preschool – Kindergarten questions.

Hershel does not see himself as someone with a disability. A disability is defined by Merriam Webster dictionary as "the condition of being unable to do things in the normal way."

- What is Hershel unable to do in a "normal" way?
- Do you think that Hershel's blindness should be considered a disability?

Hershel is good at overcoming his personal challenges.

- What are some of Hershel's challenges?
- How does he overcome these challenges?
- Share something that is a challenge for you and how you can overcome it.

While Hershel didn't make traditional hamantashen, his creations were considered to be even better – unique, and unexpected. Through the creation of his Purim cakes, Hershel taught others the value of recognizing his unique skill.

- Why would we consider Hershel's skill unique?
- What unique skills do you have?
- How would you share them with others?
- Does different mean wrong?

Create Beautiful Cookies

Advanced Planning

This cooking activity is an ideal time to integrate children of all different abilities. The step-by-step directions below can support all children. You may want to match children with special needs with typical learners.



Another way to make this cooking activity special is to make it an intergenerational activity in which children work with senior citizens.

Goals

1. Work as a small group to make a sugar cookie dough, with everyone taking turns and playing an important role
2. Create cookies out of their favorite shapes
3. Share cookies with people in need or people who might need some cheer

Materials Needed

Kitchen Tools for Each Small Group

- 2 large bowls
- A small bowl
- 1 measuring cup
- 1 teaspoon
- Plastic knife
- Rolling pin
- Cookie sheet
- Large spoon
- Paper Towels
- Cookie Cutters in different shapes and sizes (include animals, shapes, Jewish shapes, etc)

Ingredients

- 4 c. flour
- 2 t. baking powder
- 1 ½ c. sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 ½ sticks butter (softened)
- 2 t. vanilla

Step-by-Step Directions

1. Adults can preheat oven to 350 degrees F
2. Set up stations so that small groups of children (3-5) can work together.
3. Share the recipe with the children and talk through each step.
4. Wash hands!
5. One child will scoop a cup of flour, level it off with a knife and dump it into a large bowl.
6. Repeat three more times with other children taking a turn.
7. Measure 2 t. baking powder, level off with a knife and dump in the bowl with a flour.
8. Each child can take a turn mixing the flour and baking powder. When one child mixes, another one can hold the bowl and then they can trade jobs.
9. Unwrap butter sticks and pour into another bowl.
10. Measure 1 c. sugar, level off with a knife and dump into the bowl with the butter.
11. Another child can measure $\frac{1}{2}$ sugar, level off with a knife and dump into the bowl.
12. Whoever didn't get to do the butter or sugar can take a large spoon and cream the butter and sugar together.
13. This job takes a lot of strength, so everyone can take a turn!
14. Someone else can measure 2 t. vanilla and add to the butter/sugar.
15. Cracking eggs is a special job! Here is a link to a video clip that shows an easy way for children to crack eggs. Crack the eggs in a small bowl. Be sure to check each egg for blood before adding to the butter-sugar mixture.
16. Everyone can stir the dough together. When one child mixes, another one can hold the bowl and then they can trade jobs.
17. Very slowly, pour in $\frac{1}{3}$ of the flour into the butter mixture. Let everyone take a turn to stir.
18. Repeat with remaining flour.
19. Stack up the dirty dishes and spoons and remove from work area.
20. Wipe down the work area with wet paper towels.
21. Dry the work area.
22. Each child can sprinkle flour in front of his/her work space.
23. Give each child a section of the cookie dough to roll out with a rolling pin.
24. Show the variety of cookie cutters to the children. Remind them of Hershel and his beautiful cookies. Invite them to choose a shape that he/she finds to be beautiful.
25. Cut out the dough with cookie cutters.
26. Place the dough on lightly greased or non-stick cookies sheets.
27. An adult can bake the cookies in the oven for 10 minutes.
28. When they cool, children can make cards and pack cookies in small bags to give as presents.
29. Of course, you will want everyone to taste beautiful cookies, inspired by Hershel!
30. Recite Blessings

Blessings

Baruch atah A-donai, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam borei minei mezonot.

Blessed are you L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who creates various kinds of sustenance.

Baruch atah A-donai, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam mishneh et habriyot.

Blessed are You, Holy One our God, Majesty of the universe, who makes people different.

Bake Beautiful Cookies with Children with Sensory Challenges

Introduction

Sensory processing disorder is a condition in which the brain has difficulty receiving and responding to information that comes in through the senses. Some people with sensory processing disorder are oversensitive to things in their environment, such as the way things feel on their skin. With this in mind, an alternative activity has been provided to the baking activity above. This activity can be used alongside the baking activity for kids who are not comfortable participating due to sensory processing disorders or food allergy concerns.

Materials Needed

- Large heavy duty Ziploc bags
- Construction paper circles (brown) about the size of a drinking cup
- Cotton balls or tissue paper
- Markers or crayons
- Stapler
- Baking sheet

Sensory Sensitive Dough Making Accommodations

1. Have all ingredients pre-measured in bowls so the child does not have to touch the ingredients
2. Put all ingredients into a large heavy duty Ziploc bag
3. Allow kids to “mix the ingredients in the bag

Mock Hamentashen Assembly Directions

When it's time to actually make the dough into hamentashen, this can be used as an alternative activity for kids to participate if they are uncomfortable touching the dough and filling:

1. Give children a paper circle
2. They can decorate their circle with markers/crayons
3. Have children place cotton balls or tissue in the middle of the circle
4. Assist children in forming the 3 corners to make a hamentashen
5. Staple the 3 corners
6. Place hamentashen on a baking sheet to resemble those of their peers that will be bake

No Bake Hamentashen Recipe

Ingredients:

- Bread**

- Chocolate**

- Circle**
Cookie Cutter

- Spoon**


1 Cut a circle out of a piece of bread.



2 Put chocolate filling in the center of the bread.



3 Pinch two corners together.



4 Pinch the bottom corners together.



matan 

Visual Recipe and Alternative Activity

Matan offers additional visual supports to the above activities -

<http://www.matankids.org/2014/02/10/visual-supports-for-cakes-and-miracles-purim-family-program/>

Purim Activities and Disability Awareness

Goals

- Experience what it may feel like to be blind
- Discover that a task can be accomplished in many different ways
- Realize that just because a person who is blind may do something a different way does not mean they cannot complete the task



Materials

- Plain masks with elastic/bands so they will fit around students' heads
- Crayons, markers, stickers to decorate the masks
- Paper cut in the shape of a triangle with string glued around the edges for each student (so the students can feel the edges)
- Glue, string, sand, sequins, beads, feathers and other tactile materials to decorate the triangles
- Plates or bowls to put materials in
- Play dough, clay or cookie dough

Introduction (5 minutes)

Ask children to raise their hands if they hear the word “no” at least once a day. Ask them to raise their hands if parents/teachers tell them “no” at least twice a day. Ask them to raise their hands if they hear “no” more than twice a day. Ask them to raise their hands and share how it makes them feel to hear “no” so many times.

Tell them they probably understand how Hershel feels in the book, *Cakes and Miracles*, since his mother tells him “no” a lot.

Making a Mask (15 minutes)

During Purim, we dress up in costumes and wear masks. Tell the students that we are going to make our own masks for Purim, but when you finish, we are going to do something special. We are going to cover the eyes of our masks to try and see what it feels like to be like Hershel.

Hand out masks to each child and give them 10 minutes to decorate them. When they are finished, cover the eyes with construction paper or masking tape.

When the children have finished, tell them that they are now going to try and do a Purim craft like Hershel would. His mother told him that she didn't think he could do it, but he knows that he can, and we think that you can, too. (You can choose to do either Activity 1 or 2 or both)

Creating Art Hamentashen Like Hershel (20-25 minutes)

Have the children put on their masks. Pass out a triangle to each child and tell them that they will all be creating hamentashen using the materials on the table (place the tactile materials and glue on the table - each in a separate bowl/plate). You may choose to explain that they can feel where the edges of the triangle are by using their fingers and feeling the string around the shape. Give them 10-15 minutes to decorate.

When they have finished, have them remove their masks and hold up their artwork. Ask them to share how they were able to create their project without being able to see. Display the artwork and share photos with your community about how your students created hamentashen a different way.

Creating Play Dough Hamentashen Like Hershel (10-15 minutes)

Have the children put on their masks. Tell them that Hershel created hamentashen using shapes that he thought of in his mind. Tell the children to see if they can also make their own Purim creations like Hershel. Give each child a generous amount of play dough/clay/cookie dough and let them create their own Purim cookies.

When they are finished, have them remove their masks and share their creations. Ask them why they choose the shapes they made. Ask them if they are good Purim cookies, even if they don't look like typical hamentashen. Share photos with your community about how your students created hamentashen a different way.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

Ask the children how it made them feel to accomplish the tasks with blindfolds on. Ask them how they think Hershel and others who can't see feel about finding different ways to do everything. Ask them if they think Hershel's mom should always tell him no. Instead, what could she do? What could we do to help people who are blind?

Extend the Learning for Elementary Age Children

Goals

- Discover that a task can be accomplished in many different ways
- Realize communication happens in many ways using oral, pictorial, written, kinesthetic skills
- Help participants develop an acceptance of and respect for differences and unique abilities

Materials

- Variety of art materials (i.e. crayons, markers, various craft items, tangrams, Legos, paint)
- Bread, peanut butter, jelly, knife, plate, napkin, toothbrush, toothpaste

Introduction (5 minutes)

Hershel did not give up on his wishes to create Purim cookies and help his mom. He sticks with his intentions and finds a different way that works for him. It is important to remember that we don't always need to be the same as everyone else or do things the same way to achieve our goals. Below are problem solving activities, emphasizing the ability for each of us to solve things differently.

Creating a Model (15-20 minutes)

Ask children to create an artistic representation of the same thing (a flower, ball, building, house, etc.) Encourage the use of different art mediums (crayons, markers, various craft items, tangrams, Legos, paint). Provide children with time to create their images individually and then take a "tour" of each other's creation. Point out how the images were created differently, with different shapes and colors, but still represent the same thing. Have children then work in pairs to create a new item, sharing their different ideas with each other. Discuss/compare the similarities, differences, appeal, and uniqueness of the works of art. Emphasize that there is no right or wrong answer.

Tell Me How (15-20 minutes)

Pick a task to describe – some examples are making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, getting dressed, tying shoes, or brushing their teeth. Have the child write down all the steps necessary to perform this task with which they are familiar. If they are not yet writers, you may prefer to have them tell you or draw each step. Now have someone carry out the task just as it was presented, as literally as possible, allowing your child to observe you. Do not carry out any steps which have not been listed, no matter how obvious. You might encourage your child to comment on your performance.

- Discuss the process with your child and how you may or may not have gotten to the same end goal that they intended.
- Discuss how you may have done it differently.
- Did this task need to be completed in a specific order to get to the same end goal?

Getting the Message (5-10 minutes)

It is the end of the school day and you have been trying to get a message to your friend all day. You look out of the window and see your friend just about to walk out of the school gates. You would like to get a message to your friend but the window won't open, the playground is far too noisy and your friend is too far away. Suddenly, your friend turns and sees you. Make up some "sign language" to get the following message to your friend. *Meet me tonight, outside the train station, at about 8 o'clock.*

Resources for Further Learning

Books about Individual Differences

The Special Needs Acceptance Book, Wendy Sabin

Lucy's Picture, Nicola Moon

Disability Awareness – Do It Right!, The Ragged Edge Online Community and Mary Johnson

Sneetches, Dr. Seuss

The Crayon Box That Talked, Shane Derolf

Don't Laugh At Me, Steve Seskin

Gabriel's Ark, Sandra R. Curtis

Hooway for Wodney Wat, Helen Lester

It's Okay To Be Different, Todd Parr

In Jesse's Shoes, Beverly Lewis

Junkyard Wonders, Patricia Polacco

Knots on a Counting Rope, Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault

[*Nathan Blows Out the Hanukkah Candles*](#), Tami Lehman-Wilzig and Nicole Katzman

The Ugly Duckling, Hans Christian Andersen

Videos

[*Braille*](#) - Big bird discovers a different way to read a book

[*Itzak Perlman*](#) talks about easy and hard

[*Make Friends with Autism*](#)

[*I'm Tyler*](#)

[*Shaya Hits a Homerun*](#)

Organizations

[Gateways: Access to Jewish Education](#)

[Jewish Learning Venture: Whole Community Inclusion](#)

[MATAN](#)

[Macks Center for Jewish Education](#)

[MetroWest ABLE](#)