

How to Use "Aaron the Different"

Aaron the Different can be used by parents, caregivers, educators, and counselors to reinforce and explore the concepts of social cognition, social skills, inclusion, acceptance, and anti-bullying. This book can be integrated into the social cognition and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging curriculum. It can also support a science or literacy program.

Facilitator Recommendations for Discussion Sessions

The topics of differences, inclusion, acceptance, and respect are sensitive topics. These topics can be complex and need to be skillfully messaged and processed. The nature of the story and the elements of differences and acceptance are powerful and can trigger all kinds of responses.

For this topic, we need to create a validating, safe, and non-judgmental space. Depending on the needs of the individual or group, and if you think topics will trigger emotional responses that need to be professionally dealt with, please partner with a healthcare professional. Of course, you can always choose safer or more general questions like those listed in the book.

Emotions and safety

Please only go in as deep as you can process—make sure you can handle the emerging issues and emotions and have the skill set and proper amount of time to process the responses.

The group's developmental and maturity level as well as their needs will determine if you will require additional mental health support and time to discuss the sensitive areas. You may need a series of sessions, with each session not lasting longer than 60 minutes. Remember, less is more! For younger children, no longer than 30 minutes is recommended.



We are part of multiple systems that can influence how we feel. Do we feel good? Bad? Valued?

Appropriate tools, training, and resources are critical to help others process and deal with difference-related sensitive topics. Please ensure you have the support, guidance, and resources you need to facilitate the discussions.

Some types of people “click” with us more than others, but when dealing with children, each child should feel that they are accepted and appreciated.

The more we are aware of our preferences, attitudes, and feelings, the more we can keep them in check while interacting with others.

We must be aware of the lens we use to view the world. And the more we can focus on our behavior, the more we can appropriately deal with all challenging situations.

It is not only *what* we do—but also *how* we do it that influences and impacts how the receiver will take in the message you send. Therefore, getting the *what* and *how* aligned yields positive results!

Below are ideas for topics and discussion to select from depending on the session’s goals and the developmental abilities of the child/children.

A great way to introduce teamwork and increase discussion is to have the participants break into groups, discuss the concept, and report back to the larger group. Depending on the participants’ abilities, facilitators may be needed in each smaller breakout group.

