



RUDERMAN SYNAGOGUE INCLUSION PROJECT



REFLECTIONS ON INCLUSION

By Tom Fields-Meyer

Our shuls are full of people who might seem different from us in their ability to see or hear, or who have physical challenges or neurological challenges and get around a little differently

We share our communities with people who have their own unique ways of negotiating social encounters, and who sometimes have a really hard time containing their enthusiasm.

Being inclusive means being the kind of community where we don't just say, "We have a program for you." (Although programs are nice.) It means saying, even without words, "We have a *community* for you. You're part of us, we are part of you. We value you, and we embrace you, with all of your uniqueness. We need your enthusiasm and your passion and whatever you have to offer — whether it's reading to kids or singing or something else that only you can bring.

Because the only way to create beautiful harmonies in our communities is for all of us to raise our voices together.

Tom Fields-Meyer is the author of Following Ezra: What One Father Learned About Gumby, Otters, Autism, and Love From His Extraordinary Son.