

# North American Inclusion Month

# NAIM

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE JEWISH COMMUNITY

## My Friend Charlie

*Suggested ages: 4<sup>th</sup> grade+*

He is my friend: I am his friend  
I help him out: He helps me to learn  
I help him to learn: He helps me to grow  
I help him to grow: He teaches me to accept

His struggle: Is my struggle  
His vulnerability: Leads to my respect  
My respect: Leads him to trust  
His trust: Leads to my devotion

His availability: Feeds my desire to be needed  
I keep his secrets: He keeps mine  
We have an arrangement  
His lack of self-consciousness: Leads to my tolerance  
His constant need for stimulation: Leads to my patience  
His discomfort: Sharpens my sensitivity  
His unhappiness: Is my challenge  
His presence: Eases my isolation  
His loyalty: Leads to my loyalty  
Which leads to mutual appreciation

His brokenness: Makes me accept my own brokenness  
Which leads to healing  
His humanity: Leads to personal connection  
His steadfastness: Centers me

His smile: Is my reward  
His joy: Lifts my spirits  
His happiness: Gives me a sense of purpose  
His struggles: Expose my anxieties  
Which tests me  
Then strengthens me  
And in turn bolsters my faith



For more information contact:  
Yachad, The National Jewish Council for Disabilities



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In guiding: I am guided  
In helping: I am helped  
In teaching: I am taught

In his laughter: There is joy  
In that joy: There is energy  
In that energy: There is spirit  
In that spirit: There is grace

In his eyes: There is a glow  
In that glow: is his soul  
In his soul: There is God  
And in God: There is peace

Nate Hajdu  
Jubilee Association of Maryland  
Spoken at the Interfaith Disability PreSummit  
September 22, 2005

(Permission is given to reprint this by Nate Hajdu and the Jubilee Association, a Mennonite based organization in Maryland, as long as his name and the attribution above is used. Nate is one of the three direct support professionals who spoke at the Interfaith Disability PreSummit on September 22 at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Washington, DC on the ways that their faith is impacted by supporting and working with Charlie Swenson. If you reprint this, please send a copy to Nate Hajdu, Jubilee Association of Maryland, 10408 Montgomery Ave., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Kensington, Maryland 20895. His email is [nhajdu@jubileemd.org](mailto:nhajdu@jubileemd.org).)



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## Discussion Questions

- 1) What is author saying about his friend and their relationship?
- 2) What is your favorite stanza of this poem and why?
- 3) Pick a stanza and discuss what you think the author could mean in practical terms?
- 4) Do you think the author's friendship with his friend with a disability is a mutually beneficial relationship?
- 5) Do you think people who are different, or have a disability have less to offer in the ways of friendship?
- 6) Do you think someone with a disability needs friendship less, more or the same?
- 7) What makes someone a true friend? Do you ever think about that? Please discuss.
- 8) How does this piece relate to the message of NAIM: North American Inclusion Month

**Writing assignment:** Pick a relationship you have and discuss what it means to you and why it's meaningful.



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