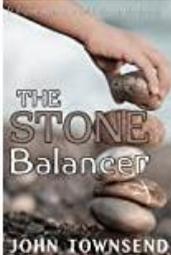


Disabilities and Mental Health Issues – books to build empathy

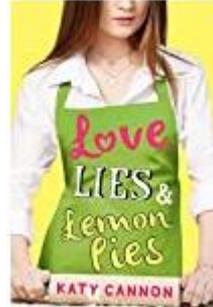
Hearing loss

<p><u>The Stone Balancer</u> by John Townsend</p> <p>Fin is about to be 14. A bit of a loner and a chap who likes to build towers of stone on the local beach, he is also profoundly deaf. He doesn't admit this to us in his own words until three-quarters of the way through the novel, but there are plenty of signs along the way. A first-class read, full of adventure and ultimate hope - a real page-turner!</p>	 <p>More details</p>
<p><u>El Deafo</u> by Cece Bell and David Lasky</p> <p>A brilliant graphic novel full of colour, it is the autobiography of Cece Bell, the author, and what an adventure her growing up has been. We learn all about her normal childhood up to the age of four when she develops meningitis and has to be rushed to hospital. There is lots of detail about the time she is there, but she begins to realise that all is not well. Why are the other children getting ice cream when she isn't? And why is everything so quiet? It is only when she gets home that she and her family know that she has become deaf due to her illness.</p> <p>This is a book that everyone will enjoy and which will help hearing children understand why and how kids with a hearing disability are just like everyone else.</p>	 <p>More details</p>
<p><u>Waiting for a Sign</u> by Etsy Schachter</p> <p>This is a strong novel with excellent characterisation. The style is teenage-friendly without becoming too idiomatic, and Ian's explanations of how it feels to be deaf in a hearing society are very real indeed. The author is a clinical social worker who worked for some time in the Massachusetts State Association of the Deaf in Boston, and she clearly understands whereof she speaks. This is a moving and beautifully written story about a family in crisis who comes through it with renewed strength and love. Highly recommended!</p>	 <p>More details</p>

Mental health issues

Love, Lies and Lemon Pies by Katy Cannon

Lottie's father has died, and after this happened, she closed down. Friends became less important and her school work was affected. She and her father had been very close; he had taught her to bake, and they shared a love of it. But the other problem in Lottie's life is that her mother has become depressed and her depression comes out weirdly in collecting what Lottie calls Stuff - always with a capital letter!



[More details](#)

Night Shift: An insight into depression that words often struggle to reach by Debi Gliori

The author and illustrator suffers from spells of severe depression herself, and while this book is aimed at teenagers and adults, it could also be used with pre-teenagers if necessary because the pictures are so tremendous and evocative. The feelings of depression are depicted in beautiful but sombre black and white pictures.



[More details](#)

White Feather by Catherine and David MacPhail

Not a long novel (87 pages), but the level of writing and the emotional strength is superb. Even the use of short sentences adds to the drama. One of the excellent Barrington Stoke productions, the book is printed on creamy paper with large-ish print and so is particularly good for young people who find reading a challenge. However, this is a book that will appeal to all, particularly boys, and conveys a remarkable sense of history.

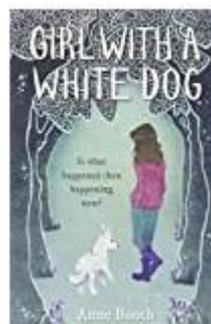


[More details](#)

Wheelchair users

Girl with a White Dog by Anne Booth

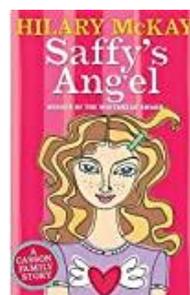
Coincidences are wonderful and can be quite life-affirming, as is the remarkable one at the end of this super novel. Jessie, in year 9 at school, has a cousin Fran with whom she has been close. However, at the beginning of the story, Fran has become distanced from Jessie as she wants to be part of the 'cool crowd' at school. Kate, Jessie's best friend and a feisty wheelchair user, also goes to the same school, and she is very good at standing up for what is right. The story revolves around Jessie's Gran, who is showing signs of dementia, one of which is that she has suddenly adopted a white German Shepherd puppy.



[More details](#)

Saffy's Angel by Hilary McKay

Every character is important in this book; every one is vividly alive. All the untidy, original, arty qualities of the family add up to a wistful whole, full of humour and a good deal of truth in an unlikely way. It is the other three children who finally find Saffy's angel, and in doing so, make her realise they really are her family. Excellent!



[More details](#)

Wheels by Catherine MacPhail

Although this is a thriller, the main character in the story is James, wheelchair bound because of a car accident in which his dad died. James' bitterness and difficult behaviour is all too understandable, and his mum has tried too hard and been over-protective. He is told that the young driver who caused the accident was killed as well, but when he sees a man in the hospital, he recognises him as the one who was behind the wheel in the other car.



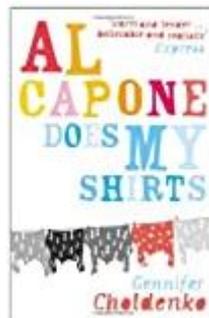
[More details](#)

Autism

Al Capone Does my Shirts by Jennifer Choldenko

A truly unusual, superb novel, set on the prison island of Alcatraz near San Francisco in 1935 - a time when Al Capone was its best known inmate. Moose Flanagan, 13, his mum and dad and his 16 year old autistic sister, Natalie, live on the island, his dad having been made a warden there.

This is a powerful story, full of fascinating detail about life on 'the rock' and with characters that step off the pages. An excellent choice for young people living with an autistic sibling. A sequel is also available: Al Capone shines my shoes (ISBN: 9781408801550).



[More details](#)

Scarlet Ibis by Gill Lewis

This serious and beautifully written novel has a central theme of nurturing - the nurturing of children and of birds. Scarlet Ibis Mackenzie has a strong sense of family. Throughout her twelve years, family has meant everything to her, even though her mother has serious mental health issues, and her brother, Red, is somewhere on the autistic spectrum and needs special care. It is Scarlet who keeps the family going and who has developed a very special relationship with her eight year old brother and his obsession with birds.

This is a page-turner, sensitive and real, and Scarlet is a heroine to love and admire.

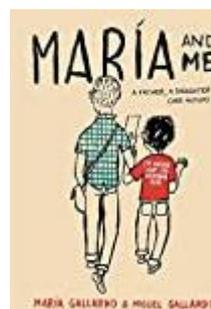


[More details](#)

Maria and Me: A father, a daughter (and Autism) by Miguel Gallardo and Maria Gallardo

This unique, comic-style book by an award-winning Spanish illustrator and his autistic daughter will be of most use to families with autistic siblings. They will recognise the problems dad faces when travelling with his 12 year old daughter and enjoy the often funny situations.

A beautifully produced hardback, this book will give lots of pleasure to families coping with the sometime difficulties of living with autism. Not just for children, but for adults too!



[More details](#)