



## Feathered Friends Teach About Inclusion



Collective noun: a noun such as “team” or “flock” that refers to a group of people or thing

- A drumming of woodpeckers
- A regatta of swans
- A waddle of penguins
- A happiness of larks
- A flamboyance of flamingos

*“Feathered friends are flustered when flamingos move into the neighborhood... This story is a welcome springboard for age-appropriate discussions of assumptions, stereotypes, and inclusion. Engaging wordplay makes a serious point about inclusion.”* —Kirkus Reviews

*They're So Flamboyant* by Michael Genhart, PhD, is a story about inclusion, exclusion, and the stereotypes, fears, and assumptions that can lead to discrimination.

Indirectly, *They're So Flamboyant* also refers to the word “flamboyant”—a word traditionally used in a derogatory sense to refer to someone who is gay. This story playfully reclaims the word and shows the flamboyant flamingos as gracious and neighborly, modeling positive and welcoming behavior for the other birds.

Conversations with children about the assumptions and stereotypes that can lead to excluding behavior are vitally important if we are to live in a world that is more inclusive, fair and welcoming. Here are some tips to help you talk with kids about inclusion and discrimination.

Conversations about diversity should be straightforward, open, and honest.

As children notice the world around them and ask questions, adults can have age-appropriate conversations with kids about age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, body type, disability, income-level, or religion.

Since stress associated with discrimination can affect self-esteem, talking with children about diversity as well as modeling inclusivity can help kids learn to appreciate people from all backgrounds.

While, in the story, the flamingos model welcoming behavior, it's important to let kids know that it is not the responsibility of those being discriminated against to make others feel comfortable.

### **This Article's Author**

Michael Genhart, PhD, is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in San Francisco. He is the acclaimed author of many picture books, including *Love is Love, I See You*, *Ouch! Moments*, *So Many Smarts!*, *Cake & I Scream!*, *Mac & Geeez!*, *Peanut Butter & Jellyous*, among other titles. He lives with his rainbow family in Marin County, California.