

# My Name is Annabel

## Discussion Guide

### OUR GOAL

**To make a film *with* an individual who has Down syndrome, *not about* an individual with Down syndrome.**

This short film is an experiment in how the documentary genre can better, and more authentically, represent individuals who have intellectual disabilities as well as the diversity and vibrancy of a community that is often overlooked or pigeon-holed. These stories are best told through the lens of the individual's experience, providing a full spectrum that includes, but is not solely focused on, a disability alone. We prioritized Annabel's agency and leadership in determining the direction of the film as she shares her story her way and asks her friends and family the questions she's most curious about - *How do you feel about adults with Down syndrome? How do you feel about me having Down syndrome?* Through filmmaker / participant collaboration we explore Annabel's creativity and potential, co-writing a cinematic finale scene, that better reflects who she is and how she sees herself - a dynamic performer who loves music and a member of a vibrant and diverse community.

*My Name is Annabel* is a portrait of one woman's day-in-the-life experience living with Down syndrome and is in no way the experience of every individual with Down syndrome. We recognize that Annabel is part of a community where many individuals are systemically segregated and unable to find employment, afford day programs, or be active participants in their community. In sharing Annabel's story and setting a model for giving people with disabilities agency over the telling of their stories, we hope to spur further dialogue, education and empowerment.

**Ahead are some general guidelines and recommendations for organizing events and community discussions around the film to enhance its impact and engage your audience.**

# My Name is Annabel

---

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- \* This film's goal was to give Annabel the power to share her story from her perspective and creativity. How did you feel about Annabel's story, what she chose to share and her perspective? Did you have strong reactions to any particular moments in the film? Which ones and why?
- \* How does Annabel's perspective of Down syndrome compare to your perspective of, or assumptions about, Down syndrome?
- \* Throughout the film we see Annabel and her friends interview each other. Why do you think the filmmakers chose to do that instead of interviewing each participant directly? Did those interview moments teach you anything new or challenge your perception about intellectual disability in any way.
- \* **Intersectionality** means we are all many things and they all impact us. Individuals with an intellectual disability also come from a specific experience of race, class, sexuality, age, religious background, geographical location, immigration status and more. Depending on context, we all have areas where we experience privilege, as well as areas of oppression. Annabel is more than just a person with Down syndrome, she identifies as female, she has Mexican heritage, she is Catholic, she lives in a middle class area of Wichita, KS, and she is part of a theater community.

How do you think Annabel's intersectionality has shaped her experiences and perspective as portrayed in this film? How might that differ from the experience and perspective of other individuals with an intellectual disability that live either in her community or in other communities across the US?

- \* What is your knowledge or awareness of the inclusion and accessibility efforts in your community, work, school, place of worship, etc.?

## PREFERRED LANGUAGE

Different people have different preferences when it comes to how they identify and how their disabilities are described. Generally, the preferred language is to use Person First language. Example: "Annabel is a performer with Down syndrome." as opposed to "Annabel is a Down syndrome performer"

**What we DON'T say:** When speaking of an individual with an intellectual disability we do not use words such as "suffers from", "afflicted by" or "confined by".

**For more information on preferred language visit: <https://ndss.org/preferred-language>**

# My Name is Annabel

---

## EVENT ACCESSIBILITY

### ***What will make your event accessible and who is it accessible to?***

So many things determine who shows up for an event, and who isn't able to. Below are some general guidelines to help organizers think through ways to include a spectrum of people (with and without disabilities) in your public event. Plan ahead. The longer in advance we consider these issues, the more likely that we can address them. It's not about perfection. Improving access is a work in progress and we all have to start where we are.

**Designate an accessibility coordinator / point person** and make sure attendees can easily identify who that designated person is.

**Include access information on promotional material.** State what access needs have been addressed (i.e. ASL interpretation, wheelchair access, etc) and ask people to email or call to inquire about specific accessibility concerns.

**Wheelchair and other mobility-related access** - Is there a working elevator? Are there things like steps, steep slopes, carpet, etc that would impede a person's ability to access the event? Are there any exterior hindrances such as cobblestone streets or sidewalk tripping hazards?

**Bathrooms** - Make sure your event space has bathrooms that are accessible for individuals with mobility impairments.

**Seating** - Are there spaces for people in scooters or wheelchairs to sit? Will these spaces allow chair users to sit with their friends and attendants?

**Microphones** - Plan to have a microphone so that people who are hard of hearing are able to follow what's happening. Remind people to wait to speak until the microphone is in front of them and speak directly into it.

**Written Material** - For visual accessibility, use plain sans serif fonts (like Arial or Helvetica), at least 14 point font, black ink on matte off-white paper. Create large-font (16 point or larger) and Braille versions of programs or handouts that can be available upon request.

**Image Description** - Text reader software is unable to read images, so make sure to create image descriptions for all photos, drawings, or graphics in online communication.

**ASL and CART** - Arrange for ASL interpretation and/or CART (live captioning), and include that information in all promotional materials.