



Velvet Pumpkin Books

April 2026 Newsletter

AUTISM AWARENESS & NEURODIVERSITY

For too long, "awareness" has meant teaching people that autism exists. But awareness without acceptance is incomplete—like knowing someone's name without ever learning their story.

This April, we're moving beyond awareness. We're celebrating neurodiversity—the beautiful truth that human minds work in different ways, and that those differences are not deficits to be fixed but variations to be understood, supported, and valued.

At Velvet Pumpkin Books, we believe every child deserves to see themselves reflected in stories—not as problems to be solved, but as protagonists of their own adventures.

April's Focus: Understanding, Acceptance & Celebration

April is home to:

- Autism Awareness Month (increasingly called Autism Acceptance Month)
- Neurodiversity Celebration Week
- World Autism Day (April 2)

The language around autism is evolving, and that evolution matters. Many autistic self-advocates prefer "acceptance" over "awareness" and emphasize identity-first language ("autistic person" rather than "person with autism"). As always, the most important thing is listening to individuals about how they want to be described.

This month, we encourage you to seek out autistic voices—not just stories about autism, but stories *by* autistic authors and advocates. Their perspectives are the ones that matter most.

Different minds make the world more interesting—and more complete.

April Reading Circle: Stories of Different Minds

This month's reading selections feature neurodiverse characters and perspectives—including own-voices works by autistic authors.

Children's Pick

All My Stripes: A Story for Children with Autism

by Shaina Rudolph and Danielle Royer, illustrated by Jennifer Zivoin

Zane the zebra worries that his autism stripe is all anyone can see. With his mother's help, he learns to recognize all his stripes—his creativity stripe, his kindness stripe, his honesty stripe. A gentle, affirming story that helps neurodiverse children see their many strengths, and helps all children understand that everyone has their own unique stripes.

Young Adult Pick

A Kind of Spark

by Elle McNicoll

Eleven-year-old Addie is autistic, and she's determined to memorialize the women who were accused of witchcraft in her Scottish town centuries ago—women she suspects may have been neurodivergent like her. As she campaigns for a memorial, she confronts the ways her town (and her school) misunderstand her. Written by an autistic author, this powerful novel connects historical injustice to present-day advocacy. Winner of multiple awards, including the Blue Peter Book Award.

Adult Pick

The Reason I Jump

by Naoki Higashida, translated by KA Yoshida and David Mitchell

Written when the author was just thirteen years old, this extraordinary book offers unprecedented insight into the mind of a nonverbal autistic person. Higashida answers questions that neurotypical people often wonder about—Why do you repeat certain actions? book that dismantles assumptions and opens doors to understanding.

Velvet Pumpkin Spotlight: The Beautiful Witch

The Beautiful Witch is one of Velvet Pumpkin's most personal projects—a story about a young girl who sees the world differently and learns to embrace her unique gifts.

Like the women accused of witchcraft in *A Kind of Spark*, our protagonist is misunderstood by those around her. But this isn't a story about learning to fit in—it's a story about learning to belong exactly as you are.

At Velvet Pumpkin, neurodiverse representation isn't an afterthought—it's central to our mission:

- Characters whose differences are portrayed as strengths, not problems to overcome
- Stories that validate the experiences of neurodivergent readers
- Books that help neurotypical readers understand and empathize
- Narratives that reject the idea that there's only one "right" way to think, learn, or be

She wasn't broken. She was just built to see what others missed.

Community Connection — Utah Highlights

Here in Utah, April offers meaningful ways to engage with autism acceptance and neurodiversity:

Utah Autism Coalition

A statewide organization offering resources, support, and advocacy for autistic individuals and their families. They host events throughout April and year-round.

Sensory-Friendly Library Programs

Several Utah library systems offer sensory-friendly story times and programming designed for children with autism and sensory processing differences. Check with your local branch for schedules.

Neurodiversity-Affirming Therapists & Centers

If you're seeking support, look for providers who use neurodiversity-affirming approaches—those that focus on supporting autistic individuals rather than trying to make them appear neurotypical. The Utah Autism Coalition can help connect families with affirming resources.

Check your local library, community center, or city calendar for events near you.

A Question to Carry With You This Month

"How can we create more spaces where every mind is welcome?"

This might look like advocating for sensory-friendly hours at your favorite store. Asking a teacher how they're supporting neurodiverse learners. Making space in conversations for people who communicate differently. Reading books by autistic authors. Small shifts create big change—and acceptance starts with each of us.

Looking Ahead

In May, we'll explore:

- Mental Health Awareness Month
- Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month
- Stories that normalize emotions and honor healing
- Books that celebrate AAPI voices and experiences

Until then, may your April be filled with understanding, curiosity, and the kind of acceptance that says: *You belong here, exactly as you are.*

With gratitude,
Velvet Pumpkin Books

Stories for the thoughtful, the curious, and the kind.