

move me



DISCUSSION GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTERS FROM THE FILMMAKERS **3**

ABOUT THE FILM **5**

Film Synopsis

How to Watch the Film

Screening Objectives

DISCUSSING THE FILM **6**

Framing the Conversation

TOPICS AND THEMES **7**

Understanding Ableism **8**

Adaptation: Defining and Redefining Ourselves **9**

Art as Healing **10**

The Experience of Caregivers **11**

Disability and Intersectionality **11**

Disability and Sexuality **12**

Grief, Acceptance, and Hope **14**

TIPS FOR HOSTING ACCESSIBLE EVENTS **15**

CREDITS **16**



LETTERS FROM THE FILMMAKERS

I am a first-time filmmaker relishing in an experience that has been one of the most rewarding, evolutionary, and eye-opening of my life. The decision to make this film became the catalyst for my return to ... myself, quite honestly. I rediscovered my artistry and how to not just survive, but thrive with a disability. This filmmaking process has taught me about the power of vulnerability and storytelling to create change, to heal, and to connect people.

Adapting my skills as a dancer to fit into filmmaking has been rewarding and fun, and also really hard. But I have felt the dancer in me come out through becoming a filmmaker—my connections to intimacy, rhythm, timing, music, and grace have all been assets for me to lean on and translate within this process.

I've had to face my fears over and over again—fear of failure, fear of judgment, fear of criticism. But I have learned so much about the power of vulnerability in personal growth as well as in making an impactful piece of art. And to me, that is success. I've had to put myself out on a limb to make this possible, and I wouldn't trade the experience for the world.

It has taught me that hope and acceptance can, and for me, have to live within the same hand. I will always want my body back—and I'll never stop searching for curative therapies—but I feel that because of this experience and the ride on which it has taken me, I love my body and my life again, and I can live a fulfilled and beautiful life as a woman with a disability.

As I watch my artistry unfold in this newer physical form I live in, I hope to serve as a bridge between disabled and able-bodied worlds. I look forward to using art and storytelling to break down stigmas and stereotypes and to broaden the narrative, showing the world who we are as people with disabilities—the changes we deserve and the depth of our value and humanity.

—Kelsey Peterson, Director/Producer, *Move Me*



Becoming a co-director with Kelsey was a path of friendship and evolution. After a mutual friend introduced us, I slowly started helping Kelsey with her film until I found that I was fully involved. I didn't intend to make a movie about spinal cord injury, I just fell into it, and the more involved I got, the more I realized its importance to me.

My uncle was a paraplegic, but since his passing, there has been no one in my life with a disability. As Kelsey shared some of her experiences of being othered, I knew that I had personally engaged in that same behavior. Having Kelsey's honest and vulnerable friendship was enlightening in that regard. It was a heart- and mind-expanding experience.

Along with learning about her challenges, I've learned about the wisdom and growth that can come from a traumatic event—when someone is unafraid to face the pain, the awkwardness, the long journey of recovery in both body and spirit.

I feel like my role as co-director was to help Kelsey tell her story and to help the audience have the same experience that I had: to love Kelsey, to see the depth of strength in disability, and to look into our own lives to accept and fight the challenges we face.

I also want to note that we made this film during the pandemic, and it was a lifeline. It not only gave me something to work toward during this hard time, but it also gave me this shining example of how we can be when sh*t is hard—we can't be perfect, but we can be present. And, of course, when we couldn't be together, I got to develop and expand friendships online, directing with Kelsey, editing with Nico, and collaborating with an amazing team spread across the country.

—Daniel Klein, Co-Director/Producer, *Move Me*

ABOUT THE FILM

Film Synopsis

Beneath the waters of Lake Superior, off the shore of Wisconsin, Kelsey Peterson underwent a transformation. On the eve of Independence Day 2012, she dove in and hit the lake bottom headfirst, suffering a life-altering spinal cord injury that takes away both function and sensation from the chest down, essentially robbing Kelsey of her self-identities as an athlete and dancer. Alongside peers and allies in the spinal cord injury community, she seeks to answer the question “Who am I now?” As she grapples with the ebb and flow of hope and acceptance, Kelsey talks to researchers and meets with people who belong to this community and who help give her the strength and the will to return to dance. When a cutting-edge clinical trial surfaces, it tests her expectations and her faith in the possibility of a cure, forcing her to evaluate the limits of her recovery—in body and spirit.

How to Watch the Film

INDIE LENS POP-UP SCREENINGS:

October 8–November 21, 2022

INDEPENDENT LENS PREMIERE

(**CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS** OR STREAM ONLINE AT [VIDEO.PBS.ORG](https://www.pbs.org/video)):

November 7, 2022

Screening Objectives

According to the Centers for Disease Control, 26 percent—one in four—of all adults in the United States live with a disability, with 13.7 percent having a mobility disability. Disability especially affects women (one in four), non-Hispanic American Indians and Alaskan Natives (two in five), and adults aged 65 and older (two in five).¹

Move Me can expand the prism through which we understand disability and ableism. With this objective in mind, we hope your screening event will result in the following:

- Reflection on a person’s adaptation to becoming disabled as a result of a spinal cord injury
- Meaningful conversations about human connection and creative expression
- Viewers experiencing the power of storytelling to provide an outlet for healing and personal empowerment

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html>



DISCUSSING THE FILM

Framing the Conversation

Audience members will come to the screening with different experiences and may have strong emotions and/or opinions in response to the film. Here are some suggestions for creating a screening experience that provides a supportive environment for any of those reactions, for personal reflection, and for dialogue with and learning from one another.

Pay attention to language. Hurtful assumptions and ideas about disability can be present in the language we use. Planning your event in partnership with people with disabilities will help you learn about the language they prefer. Many people with disabilities that affect mobility prefer person-first language, in which the human being is placed before their disability—the language allows for people to be defined by more than their disability. “Person with a spinal cord injury” or “person who uses a wheelchair” are examples of person-first framing. Other people, including many disability advocates, embrace identity-first language like “disabled person” or “autistic person.” Planning your event in partnership with people who have disabilities will help you learn about the language they prefer.

Alongside learning about the language, be mindful of what you ask of potential panelists, guest speakers, and supporting organizational leaders. Mitigating harm through every possible measure is critical for your event to be welcoming and inclusive and all participants can feel a sense of belonging.

Here are a few basic tips to share with your group to facilitate the conversation:

- Understand that people in the room will have different life experiences, so listen to another with the intention of understanding, rather than of convincing another of a certain point of view.
- To ensure that everyone has an opportunity to share, pay attention to who is speaking and step in or step back when appropriate.
- Speak for yourself and your own point of view by making “I” statements, as in “I think ...” and “I feel ...” rather than generalizations like “everyone knows ...”
- If someone becomes emotional, validate their experience with words like “I can see this really resonates with you” or “Your emotion makes a lot of sense given what you’ve shared” and thank them for their openness. Where possible, provide an outside quiet space for audience members to reflect if they wish.
- Audience members may have their own ideas about group agreements with which they have experience that have been useful for them.



TOPICS AND THEMES

Move Me is a story of vulnerability and strength. It is a story that distills what it means to be human, to live through grief, and to balance acceptance and hope. Using this guide alongside Kelsey's story offers audiences a range of touchpoints to discuss inclusion and disability, including challenging the privilege of ingrained ableism in our society and freely exploring the lived experiences of people who have a disability, including sexuality and its connection to movement and sensuality.

The film focuses on the following themes:

- **Understanding ableism**
- **Adaptation and defining and redefining ourselves**
- **Art as healing**
- **Navigating sexuality and disability**
- **Feeling grief, acceptance, and hope—all at the same time**

Each section topic includes:

- **Overview:** Framing language and helpful insights to introduce the topic
- **Background information and links:** Organizations to reach out to and/or research in preparation for your event
- **Potential partners and links:** Suggestions for outreach and community building and for building additional knowledge to moderate conversations
- **Engagement activities:** Ideas for promoting active participation in the film topics and discussion questions that will support in-depth conversations as well as personal reflections
- **Discussion questions:** Suggested questions to help you get the conversation going!



Understanding Ableism

Ableism and the profound inaccessibility of so much of the world is one of the main themes that emerge in *Move Me*. Consider and share the following information adapted from [Accessliving.org](https://www.accessliving.org):

“Ableism is the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require ‘fixing’ and defines people by their disability.”

Ableism can take many forms:

“**Internalized ableism**” may affect how a culture rooted in ableism can affect how individuals with disabilities see their disability and themselves. For example, because of how they are treated, institutional barriers, and the things they have to do differently, individuals who become disabled can feel like they are “less” than they were before their injury or illness.

“**Interpersonal ableism**” describes personal interactions between people who are able-bodied and people with disabilities. This may take the form of hurtful remarks or thoughtless day-to-day interactions.

“**Institutional ableism**” refers to the way that physical structures, laws, policies, and practices of organizations, institutions, and governments exclude or devalue people with disabilities. For example, if a city lacks accessible transportation, a person with a disability will not be able to travel to their school or job, or even to vote.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What examples of internal, interpersonal, and institutional ableism did you see in *Move Me*?
- How does a particular scene or moment in the film resonate with your experience of disability and/or ability? Did it change or challenge the way you think about it? If so, how?
- In what ways do different types of ableism challenge Kelsey as she adapts to her injury?
- What did you see in the film that promoted Kelsey’s ability to adapt to this new chapter in her life?

RESOURCES

- [ADA.gov](https://www.ada.gov): Details the rights and protections put in place by the Americans with Disabilities Act
- [American Association of People with Disabilities](https://www.aadp.org): Advocates for rights and protections of people with disabilities
- [Independence Now](https://www.independence-now.org): Advocates for people with disabilities
- [“Is the Beauty Industry Glossing Over Disability?” by Xian Horn](https://www.fox.com/story/entertainment/2021/05/12/is-the-beauty-industry-glossing-over-disability-1741177): Explores how the beauty industry and media has excluded disability from the public positive discourse around desirability

Adaptation: Defining and Redefining Ourselves

“I wasn’t even able to say ‘I have a disability—I’m a person with a disability’ and not see it as a bad thing for a long time.”

—Kelsey

Kelsey’s spinal cord injury profoundly changed her life. Those changes pervade many aspects of her life and identity, including her understanding of herself as a dancer, a woman, a sexual being, and a daughter. Her injury also changed how other people perceive her. Since her injury, Kelsey has had to adapt, over and over again, to a world that is often inaccessible to people with disabilities, to ableist thoughts and ideas about people with disabilities, and to her own new body and to her new life. As she adapts and grows, she finds herself reflecting on who she is and the meaning of her life.

Though Kelsey’s injury necessarily brings these questions to the surface during the filming of *Move Me*, the challenges of adapting to life’s changes, figuring out how to define ourselves, and trying to understand the meaning of our lives are not unique to Kelsey or to people with disabilities. Her story offers the opportunity for all of us to reflect on how we define ourselves in relation to our bodies, our friends, our families, our communities, and the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Ask audience members to reflect on the following questions, then to write down their reflections and share with a person sitting next to them or with the large group if comfortable with that:

- How do the ways Kelsey defines herself change and evolve throughout the film?
- How do I define myself?
- What are ways other people define me?
- Is there a moment in my life when how I saw myself or how others saw me changed? What happened? What lessons and challenges emerged from that experience?
- How has the way I define myself changed over time?

RESOURCES

- **[American Association for People with Disabilities:](#)** A national advocacy organization working to increase the economic and political power of people with disabilities.
- **[Disability Visibility Project:](#)** An online community dedicated to amplifying the creative expressions of people with disabilities.
- **[Rooted in Rights:](#)** A program of Disability Rights Washington, Rooted in Rights uses storytelling to advance the dignity, equality, and self-determination of people with disabilities.
- **[National Disability Organizations and Resources:](#)** A list of national organizations fostering a community for people with disabilities organized by identity affinity groups (for example, race, gender, sexual identity), by disability, and by focus areas (academia, advocacy, etc.).
- **[Demystifying Disability: What to Know, What to Say, and How to Be an Ally, by Emily Ladau:](#)** An approachable guide to being a thoughtful, informed ally to disabled people, with actionable steps for what to say and do (and what not to say or do) and for how you can help make the world a more inclusive place.

Art as Healing

As Kelsey embarks on the creation of “[A Cripple’s Dance](#)” with her friend Gabe, her sense of self begins to change. She says, “I lived 27 years of my life in a completely different reality. I feared that I would never feel like myself again. That carefree person, that risk taker—I felt really far from her for a long time. And that’s changing for me now.”

Art is an essential part of being human, and research shows that both looking at and creating art promotes healing.² Art therapist Girija Kaimal shares, “Humans evolved artistic expression as an imaginative tool for adapting to changing conditions and solving problems. Other scholars and I have asserted that art making is an integral part of human functioning and that it helps humans survive.”³

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does “healing” mean to you? What are different ways that healing can occur?
- How did dance play a part in Kelsey’s journey?
- What did you think or feel as you watched the parts of “The Cripple’s Dance,” portrayed in the film?
- What role do art and artistic expression play in your life?

POTENTIAL PARTNERS AND/OR SPEAKERS

Invite organizations and individual dancers, artists, musicians, and other creative people with disabilities to participate in your screening event, including:

- Arts organizations working with people who are disabled and non-disabled
- Arts educators
- Artists with disabilities
- Filmmakers with disabilities
- People with lived experience of disability or spinal cord injury

In addition to participating as panelists, they can showcase their work, share their creative process, and/or lead an activity with the audience.

ENGAGEMENT IDEAS

Art for Healing and Connection

Ask audience members to think back to a particular work of art, including visual art, dance, film, writing, and other artistic expressions, that has particular meaning for them and reflect on the following questions:

- Describe the work of art that came up for you and why it resonates with you.
- How is experiencing that connection through art different from other methods of learning?
- How does art connect us to one another?

Creating Art

Provide paper, pens, colored pencils, and other tools for audience members to express their responses to the film creatively, through a poem, a drawing, or other creative expression rather than dialogue. Ask those who are comfortable with it to share what they created and answer the following questions:

- How did it feel to respond creatively to the film?
- Did any emotions or ideas emerge for you from this exercise that were new?
- What is the role of art in your life?

RESOURCES

- [Art History Teaching Resources: Disability in Art History:](#) Includes a historical overview of the representation of disability in visual arts as well as teaching resources, including recommended books and reading
- [Black Disabled Creatives:](#) Promotes employment for people of color who are disabled; provides a list of organizations across the country that connect people with disabilities to the arts
- [Tate: Disability and Art:](#) A permanent thematic exhibit that explores how the world might be different if it were designed for many kinds of bodies and abilities

² <https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2014/12/121776/art-healing>

³ <https://www.americanscientist.org/article/how-art-can-heal>

The Experience of Caregivers

In *Move Me*, we see many types of caregivers around Kelsey, including her doctors and medical team and hired caregivers who help her perform her daily activities, who provide meals, and who take care of her home. We also see the love and care of friends and family members.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What moments of caregiving stood out to you in the film?
- What kind of support do caregivers need in order to do their jobs well?

RESOURCES

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Disability and Health Information for Family Caregivers](#)

Disability and Intersectionality

In *Move Me*, we see many ways in which the world is inaccessible to Kelsey, big ways and little ways. Having a disability exposes people to discrimination and ableism. The term *intersectionality*, coined by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw,⁴ describes how different oppressed identities intersect. For example, the lived experiences of a person with a disability might change if the person were also Black or a lesbian, or if they carried all of those marginalized identities at the same time.

In the United States, people of color, people with fewer years of education, people who fall into a lower income category, and people who live in rural areas are more likely to have disabilities.⁵ Kelsey says that her injury helped her see her privilege. She said, “Even making this film I felt my privilege. I was able to raise money from my community, [and] I have an education that gives me lots of access and enables me to write grants. There are so many layers.”⁶

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In your own words, how would you define intersectionality?
- In the film, Kelsey says, “Becoming disabled required this whole new understanding of life—at least, I had never felt like I had been put in a position where I would be made to feel like this world isn’t made for me.” What do you think she means when she says that? How do you imagine her perspective might have been different if she’d been born with a more marginalized identity?
- Why do you think it’s important to use an intersectional lens when learning about ableism and other forms of oppression?

RESOURCES

- [Financial Instability: Race, Disability, and Poverty in America](#): A publication of the National Disability Institute
- [Intersections Between Racism and Ableism](#): A webinar and a resource library from the Disability & Philanthropy Forum
- [Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Movement Is Our People](#): A disability justice primer from Sins Invalid

⁴ <https://daily.jstor.org/kimberle-crenshaws-intersectional-feminism/#:~:text=Legal%20scholar%20Kimberl%C3%A9%20Crenshaw%20coined,people%20with%20multiple%20identity%20categories>.

⁵ [https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/05/15/disability-rates-among-working-age-adults-are-shaped-by-race-place-and-education/#:~:text=At%20the%20national%20level%2C%20Native,and%20Asians%20\(4%20percent\)](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/05/15/disability-rates-among-working-age-adults-are-shaped-by-race-place-and-education/#:~:text=At%20the%20national%20level%2C%20Native,and%20Asians%20(4%20percent)).

⁶ In conversation with Blueshift Education, July 15, 2022.



Disability and Sexuality

“I still feel my sex drive the exact same way I did before. I can even feel it internally, but like I can’t feel touch. There’s a deep loneliness that comes with not feeling. You know, you miss what touch brings you. And what movement brings you too, ya know? We’re here really to feel and move.”

–Kelsey

Sexuality is a central theme of *Move Me*. Throughout the documentary, Kelsey is navigating a new reality for her body with the same sexual desires. According to the World Health Organization, healthy sexuality is central to human development and a critical part of overall human health and well-being.⁷

Yet for many people with disabilities, achieving sexual health is challenging because of social taboos around talking about sex and healthy sexuality, and because of ableist ideas that people with disabilities don’t have sexual desires. Additional barriers also include access to health care; accessible equipment or products (opening condoms/lube bottles/birth control). What often is not talked about is, depending on the level of disability, the need for the involvement of caregivers, physical therapists, or occupational therapists. A lack of conversation, understanding, and education around sexuality and disability may also lead to people with disabilities feeling unable to ask for help fulfilling their desires or to think creatively about their own sexual fulfillment. Finally, people with disabilities, especially women and girls, are more likely than able-bodied people to experience sexual abuse.⁸

⁷ <https://www.who.int/teams/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-research/key-areas-of-work/sexual-health/defining-sexual-health>

⁸ <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2017.00046/full>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Discuss how ableist ideas relate to the idea that people with disabilities lack sexual desires.
- What are the barriers to talking about sexual health? What makes it easier?

POTENTIAL PARTNERS AND/OR SPEAKERS

- Local disability and sexuality advocates, educators, and activists
- Disability and sexuality scholars
- Disability rights advocates and activists

ENGAGEMENT IDEAS

Mindfulness Meditation—Embodiment

In *Move Me*, it becomes apparent that sexuality is much more than just the act of intercourse. For Kelsey, in different moments, it is about connection, feeling human, and movement and sensuality.

Ask the audience to reflect on their own experiences of their body and connection with others.

Have them write reflectively or share a mindfulness exercise such as this [body awareness guided meditation](#) (4 minutes) from the University of Texas's MD Anderson Cancer Center.

A Thoughtful Discussion on Healthy Sexuality

The following are the Key Conceptual Elements of Sexual Health, directly quoted from the World Health Organization:

- “Sexual health is about well-being, not merely the absence of [a condition].
 - Sexual health involves respect, safety, and freedom from discrimination and violence.
 - Sexual health depends on the fulfillment of certain human rights [including establishing more access and services for marginalized groups and trauma survivors].
 - Sexual health is relevant throughout the individual's lifespan, not only to those in the reproductive years, but also to both the young and the elderly.
 - Sexual health is expressed through diverse sexualities and forms of sexual expression.
 - Sexual health is critically influenced by gender norms, roles, expectations, and power dynamics.”⁹
- Ask the following questions after sharing WHO's Key Conceptual Elements of Sexual Health:
- Are any of the concepts on this list new or surprising to you? Explain.
 - How do you think these concepts are related to the experiences of people with disabilities?

RESOURCES

- TEDx Talks from disability and sexuality activists
 - [Dr. Danielle Sheypuk: Every Body Glamour, Dateability, Sexuality, & Disability](#)
 - [Gaelynn Lea: Sexuality and Disability: Forging Identity in a World that Leaves You Out](#)
- Podcast
 - [Disability After Dark](#): Andrew Gurza's podcast on disability and sexuality stories and experiences
- Sexuality after spinal cord injury
 - Craig Rehabilitation Hospital:
 - [Sexual Function for Women after Spinal Cord Injury](#)
 - [Male Sexuality after Spinal Cord Injury](#)
- Sex education for people with disabilities
 - [Comprehensive Sex Education for Youth with Disabilities: A Call to Action](#)
 - [Mad Hatter Wellness: Sex Education for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities](#)

⁹ <https://www.who.int/teams/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-research/key-areas-of-work/sexual-health/defining-sexual-health>

Grief, Acceptance, and Hope

“Is there like a healthy level of hope, ya know? Like how do you...how do you ride that line of not driving yourself crazy but still reaching for something?”

—Kelsey

Grief, acceptance, and hope are three emotions out of many that emerge in different ways and at different moments throughout *Move Me*. Kelsey moves between all three at any given time throughout the documentary. Grieving the loss of her life as an able-bodied dancer and the life she once lived with family, friends, and lovers, eventually Kelsey rediscovers her love of movement, dancing again; openly explores her sexuality as a disabled woman; and delves into the possibility of participating in a clinical trial.

With this evolution in mind, grief, acceptance, and hope can be considered “characters” of sorts, framing scenes, informing conversations, and offering the aspiration of possibility. Each of these three emotions is a process, ebbing and flowing as time passes and as opportunities peak and wane. And everyone experiences these emotions in their life and can connect with them.

Creating and holding the space for all three at any given time in our lives can be an invaluable point of conversation and a unique opportunity to connect to *this* story, to feel the range of emotions, consider the viewpoints shared, and, if able-bodied, increase awareness and empathy toward individuals living with disabilities through active listening, compassion, and understanding.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Has your understanding of acceptance, grief, and hope changed as a result of watching *Move Me*? If so, how?
- What other emotions did you see or feel in the documentary?

POTENTIAL PARTNERS AND/OR SPEAKERS

- Local nonprofit working with individuals with spinal cord injuries and their families
- Local organizations supporting grief counseling
- Disability rights organizations
- Arts organizations working with people who are disabled and nondisabled

RESOURCES

- **Becoming disabled and mental health**
 - Facingdisability.com is a network specifically created to connect people and their families who are coping with new injuries with others who have had a similar experience.
 - [Restoring Hope: Preparing for Rehabilitation After Spinal Cord Injury](#) is a booklet designed by the Shepherd Center and the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation to help people learn about spinal cord injuries, organize information, chart a path, and choose their loved one’s road to rehabilitation.
- **Spinal cord injury organizations**
 - [Unite 2 Fight Paralysis](#) exists to unite and empower the international spinal cord injury community to cure paralysis through advocacy, education, and support for research.
 - The [Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation](#) (formerly the American Paralysis Association) promotes the health and well-being of people living with spinal cord injury, mobility impairment, and paralysis by providing comprehensive information, resources, and referral services.
 - [The North American Spinal Cord Injury Consortium](#) (NASCI) works to bring about unified achievements in research, care, cure, and policy by supporting collaborative efforts across the spinal cord injury community.
 - [United Spinal Association](#) is dedicated to empowering people with spinal cord injuries and disorders, including veterans, to live successful and fulfilling lives.
- **Spinal cord clinical trials**
 - [Mayo Clinic: Spinal Cord Injury Trials](#)
 - ClinicalTrials.gov: The U.S. National Institutes of Health, through its National Library of Medicine, has developed ClinicalTrials.gov to provide patients, their family members, and members of the public with current information about clinical research studies.
- **Dance and other arts-related organizations**
 - [A Cripple’s Dance](#)
 - [AXIS Dance Company](#)
 - [Kinetic Light](#)
 - [I Dance Because I Can, by Alice Sheppard](#)
 - [Infinity Dance Theater](#)
 - [ON DISPLAY, by Heidi Latsky](#)

TIPS FOR HOSTING ACCESSIBLE EVENTS

The film reveals the profound inaccessibility of much of the world and so offers an opportunity for anyone hosting a screening to think about the accessibility of screening events. “Accessibility” requires many considerations for many kinds of needs, including individuals with sight, hearing, and mobility challenges.

The following tips and considerations are drawn from multiple sources, including [Rooted in Rights](#) and the [ADA National Network](#). The [#AccessIsLove Disability Visibility Project](#) also publishes a curated and updated list of resources for [Accessibility and Event Planning](#) for specific types of disabilities, including sight, hearing, mobility, neurodivergence, and others.

Assume people with disabilities are present and announce all the accommodations you have available. Doing so relieves the near-constant pressure on people with disabilities to have to go out of their way to ask for what they need. Furthermore, it acknowledges that many disabilities are not visible, and people with disabilities should not be required to share. Throughout your event offer accessibility check-ins to ensure that needs are being met at various points.

Disability Inclusion

- Include people with disabilities in the planning and leadership of your event and invite attendees to alert the planners of any specific needs they have.
- Assume disabled people are in the room, even if they aren’t immediately apparent.
- Be ready to receive feedback from attendees on how to improve your inclusion and access policies.
- Use person-first and sensitive language.
- Compensate people with disabilities whom you consult to help plan the event or who present at the event.
- Include all accessibility plans in the promotional materials for the event (see [here](#) for an example).

Facility Planning

- Visit the screening facility to confirm accessibility of the space: elevators, adequate and comfortable seating, unobstructed views, wheelchair ramps, accessible restrooms, entryways wide enough for wheelchairs, reconfigurable seating, bright, even lighting, and a space for quiet time for people who need it.
- Provide sign language interpreters and consider [Communication Access Realtime Translation](#) for participants who have hearing loss, but do not sign. Make sure anyone who speaks, including audience members, uses a microphone.
- Use open or closed captions for the screening and, where appropriate and necessary, audio image descriptions.
- Designate service animal relief areas.
- Ask presenters and audience members to remain scent-free.
- Train volunteers on inclusive language and behavior and on the accessibility services available.
- Publicize all available accommodations in your promotional materials, at your event registration, and in your welcome to the event.

Digital Accessibility

- Use high contrast for text and offer a magnifier tool.
- Don’t use flashing animation (or post a warning if this is unavoidable).
- Add a warning for any loud sounds that may be present in the film.
- Make sure any infographics, images, and videos include captions and/or text descriptions.
- Use descriptive link text, for example, “Animal pictures here” rather than “Click here,” so users of screen readers can understand where the links will take them.
- Include your organization’s accessibility policy and information about event accessibility on the website.
- [WebAIM.org](#) offers tools and tutorials for making websites accessible.

Credits

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Member, ReelAbilities Film Festival Selection and Advisory Committee

INDEPENDENT LENS

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 p.m. ET. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, Acton Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens.

Join the conversation with #MoveMePBS on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram at @IndependentLens.

ITVS

ITVS is a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that has, for over 25 years, funded and partnered with a diverse range of documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning films and then airs them for free on PBS via our weekly series, *Independent Lens*, as well as on other PBS series, and through our digital platform, OVEE. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Humanities: American Rescue Plan, Acton Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and Wyncote Foundation. For more information, visit itvs.org.

CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

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