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An Exploration of the Experience of Adults with Learning Disabilities Through Art

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AN EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCE OF ADULTS WITH LEARNING
DISABILITIES THROUGH ART

A DISSERTATION

Submitted by

ADI GREENBOIM-ZIMCHONI

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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2

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I hereby accept the recommendation of the Dissertation Committee and its Chairperson.

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Abstract

This study employed arts-based research with phenomenological, qualitative inquiry to understand and explore the perspectives of adults with learning disabilities and their sense of self and support in inclusive and special education classrooms in Israel during their school years. In this study, the researcher attempted to take Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) one step further by examining the participants' feelings and relationships with the people in their daily lives during childhood. The researcher met with 12 participants ages 18-31 diagnosed with learning disabilities between third and eleventh grade. Participants created drawings illustrating how they felt about teachers, parents, friends and themselves, allowing the researcher to understand the participants' experiences and surroundings during their school years.

Outcomes pointed to the need to be heard, and the potential for art assessment throughout the school year to allow students to convey issues they are facing in and out of school. Other outcomes suggest that participants from the inclusive education group have a better school experience socially, while students from special education classrooms struggle socially. Multiple participants from both special education and inclusive education spoke about feeling alone, sad, proud, ambitious or like a failure. By asking adults to reflect on their childhood experiences as a student with LD, the goal of this research was to elevate the LD experience by advocating for the feelings that individuals with LD share.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This study employed arts-based research with phenomenological, qualitative inquiry in order to understand the participants' experiences of growing up with learning disabilities in inclusive and special education classrooms. Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) described the various factors that influence a child's development as a series of concentric circles, ranging from the child's immediate environment, to the wider influence of culture and historical timespan. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the systems closest to the nucleus have the greatest developmental impact on the child. These microsystems, are the child's parents, friends, and teachers, each of which is equally influential on the individual.

In order to gain a better understanding of the participants' experiences from the lens of Ecological Systems Theory, each participant in this study made four drawings that provided information in order to answer the main research question. The research question addresses how adults with learning disabilities (LD) who attended inclusive classrooms and adults with LD who were enrolled in special education classrooms process their childhood experiences towards parents, friends, teachers, and themselves through art making. The drawings attempted to elucidate and illuminate the adult participants' childhood experiences in these settings.

Khalpey (2016) discussed that creating art has the potential to increase awareness of one's self and others. In addition, Ball (2002) asserted that depictions through art can assist in visually organizing thoughts, observing behaviors through the artwork, and then verbally expressing one's self. This gained awareness can bring about authentic change in the individual's life (Malchiodi, 2003). People with LD may have a difficult time expressing themselves verbally.

Therefore, art can be a tool for gaining understanding of childhood experiences regarding inclusion or special education classroom.

Cultural differences

There are four categories of schools in Israel: public-secular (*Mamlachti*), public-religious (*Mamlachti dati*), private, and Arab. Due to the differences in the Israeli and Palestinian special education school systems such as the lack of diagnostic tools and shortage of professionally trained teachers and therapists in Palestinian schools, (Gumpel & Awartani, 1999) this research did not extend into the Palestinian school system.

The research focused exclusively on adults that grew up religious as Modern Orthodox or Ultra-Orthodox Israeli Jews who attended public- religious or private schools. As a Modern Orthodox researcher, it is important to be aware of the distinctions between Jewish religious and non-religious sects in Israel. Comparisons between these sects have been minimally researched within the realm of LD and each sect may have different views on LD. In Israel, religious denomination represents far more than just religion; it influences everything, such as political viewpoints, mode of dress, career options, outlook on gender roles, and leisure activities (Cohen & Susser, 2000). The need to differentiate between sub-categories of Israeli Jews stems from differences in world view that can affect attitudes toward disabilities. Moreover, since this research focused on the use of art with adults with LD in Israel, it is vital to understand the various sub-cultures in relation to their attitude toward receiving therapy as well as their different outlooks toward creation of art in general.

Katchergin (2012) observes the division of Jewish people through the lens of migration to Israel from the late 1800s until today. This division is geographical in nature. The Aliyot migrations to Zion are divided between Eastern (Sephardi) and Western (Ashkenazi) Jews. The

Sephardi Jews hail from the Middle East while the Ashkenazi Jews emigrated from Europe and later North America.

The European Jews view themselves as enlightened and sophisticated in contrast to those from the Middle East and North Africa (Katchergin, 2012). According to Katchergin (2012), the superiority viewpoint can be understood through their belief that those culturally different from them were in some way primitive and deprived. This viewpoint extends toward a conceptualization of disability in general and toward LD specifically. When Ashkenazi Jewish children are diagnosed with LD, it is seen as neurologically based. In contrast, Sephardi children who display learning difficulties are often perceived as children who did not receive enough stimulation during early developmental stages.

Purpose of the Study

From my experience as an art therapist in the Israeli education system I see differences in children in an inclusive classroom compared with those in a special education classroom. Throughout my eight years as a therapist I detected several layers in which these differences appeared: Children with LD have difficulties interacting with their peers and with their teachers, they struggle with their studies, and may have affected their relationship with their parents both positively and negatively. My raised awareness to these difficulties led me to think about other areas in which these children are affected. No studies were found with regard to learning disabilities that focused exclusively on the Ultra-Orthodox and Modern Orthodox population, therefore this study is significant and will contribute to the body of research that focuses on an understudied population.

The purpose of this study, as stated above, is to look at adults with LD who attended inclusive classrooms and adults with LD who were enrolled in special education classrooms in

order to process their childhood experiences towards parents, friends, teachers, and themselves through art making. It is believed that by working with adults, who can be reflective and introspective, insights could be gained toward understanding how children feel during their childhood experiences in relation to being in an inclusive or special education classroom. The pilot study (Greenboim-Zimchoni, 2017) revealed that children with LD can provide certain insights into the child's world through art expression, yet there appeared to be a greater depth of articulation with the adult that was interviewed. Therefore, it was decided that working exclusively with adults who were diagnosed with LD as children could offer greater depth of understanding, clarity, and transparency toward understanding what a child with LD experiences. The pilot study pointed out that students with LD have heightened difficulty processing and articulating clearly how they feel towards their surroundings.

The pilot study suggested that their experiences of being in a special education or inclusive classroom might be different. In Israel there are two ways to integrate a child with LD. The first way is to place the child in an inclusive classroom; the child, sometimes accompanied by an aide, attends to a mainstream class and in addition, is given *Shiluv*, additional supplementary services during class time. The second is to place the child in a special education class, which consists of up to 14 special needs students, that create other opportunities to interact as a group and with each other.

In Israel there is an emphasis on integrating children with special needs into inclusion classes based on the philosophical view that sees individuals with disabilities as an integral part of society (Israeli Ministry of Education, 2009). Therefore, two complementary models have emerged: the behavioral model, which advocates the principle of normalization, and focuses on observable actions and how to modify behaviors, as opposed to the humanistic-educational

model which focuses on a more holistic approach and examines the student's overall abilities (Israeli Ministry of Education, 2009). According to the results of the pilot study (Greenboim-Zimchoni, 2017) the teacher may understand and listen to a student's needs and difficulties and will help them explain themselves clearly, but they may have a harder time making friends. From this pilot study it was hypothesized that it is harder for children with LD to be in an inclusion class, even just for one class a week. The results of the pilot study suggest that when in the general education class, a student with LD feels self-conscious about their academic and social skills, as opposed to in a special education class, where they feel more comfortable. I also learned that many of the children who learn in the special education classroom experienced difficulties when integrated in the inclusive classroom for a few hours per week.

The Israeli Ministry of Education legislation (2009) stated that students studying in inclusive educational frameworks are entitled to three hours per week of paramedical treatment from the following specialists: psychologist, speech therapist, social worker, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, and/or expressive arts therapist. Children in inclusive classes must leave the classroom to receive their paramedical services. From my experience in the education system some children feel inadequate or self-conscious in the classroom environment when asked to leave the peer group and work alone. However, this time away from the class is necessary as it provides them time to work on their school work at their own pace.

In the United States, the size of special education classrooms is determined by each state (Rosen, 2014). In Massachusetts, for example, the classes will not exceed eight students to a teacher that is certified in special education or 12 students to a special education teacher and an aide (Massachusetts department of elementary and secondary education, 2014). In New York, the ratio ranges from six to 15 students to a teacher, depending on the severity of the students'

needs (United Federation for Teachers, 2017). In Ontario, Canada, the maximum can be up to 12 children in elementary school and 16 children in middle school (Law document English view, 2015). In Israel, children with LD that are placed in special education classes are in a classroom with a maximum of 14 students with various learning, emotional, and behavioral difficulties (Israeli Ministry of Education, 2009). From the pilot study it was discovered that a child in one of these classes is not able to choose from a variety of friends, because the students are placed together due to disability, therefore their social life may suffer (Greenboim-Zimchoni, 2017). As shown in the pilot study, internally, the children may be coping with difficulties. All three children who participated mentioned that feeling rejected by their teacher when getting reprimanded or ignored in mainstream classes was more difficult for them than getting reprimanded in the special education classroom. In addition, they did not mention their relationships with their friends.

From the pilot (Greenboim-Zimchoni, 2017) it was learned that in a special education classroom, students with LD might rely more on their teachers and aides around them, rather than trying to figure out social cues. Furthermore, parents may not need to intervene and advocate as compared to parents of children in the general education classroom because they might feel that everything is taken care of. From my eight years of professional experience in the education system, teachers in special education classrooms initiate multiple meetings with the parents throughout the year in addition to those required by law. By contrast, in an inclusive classroom, parents must initiate communication with teachers and have less mandated scheduled meetings during the school year due to the higher number of students in the classroom. The data from the pilot suggested that parents often serve as a source of strength for children with LD from specific educational setting.

The pilot taught me that adults can reflect on their past experiences and can express clearly and give a vivid image of their childhood experiences. As a student with LD myself, I felt that my parents were the only ones who believed that I could succeed. I experienced this while reflecting on my personal experiences as a student with LD, which helped me empathize and relate to the stories of my child participants. I also interviewed a young adult named Becky. It seems that the process of creating art allowed her to express her inner world beyond how she normally would using verbal language exclusively. In response to every experience that I asked her to draw, she had an image in her head of exactly what she wanted to portray and express. She was very connected to her feelings. Becky had a healthy balance of positive and negative experiences to make herself whole. Becky depicted experiences with LD that were different from the children's experiences in special education in the pilot study. Each child expressed a sense of trust for his or her special education teachers, as opposed to Becky who relied on her friends for emotional and educational support. My work with Becky showed me that some people have an easier time expressing themselves through art than through language.

The goal of the proposed dissertation research was to more deeply explore the perspectives of adults with LD regarding their sense of self and sense of support when as children they were placed in a special education classroom or in an inclusive classroom. It is believed that this research study will provide teachers, parents, paramedical professionals and clinicians in Israel with guidelines for establishing supportive classroom environments and experiences informed and collaboratively designed by individuals with LD.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

According to *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.; DSM–5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013), a learning disability manifests itself in a number of areas including language skills, math skills, and overall ability to academically succeed. In terms of language skills, difficulties include slow reading, difficulty with reading comprehension, consistent spelling errors, and poor writing skills. In regard to mathematical reasoning, a child with LD will struggle to complete tasks from numerical processing to basic problem solving. Generally, the issues are identified during school years, where approximately one out of five children and adolescents are estimated as having a disability (NJCLD,2018). The literature discussed below highlights various challenges that children with LD may have which include difficulty with social interaction, anxiety, depression, poor self-concept and self-esteem, and stigma (Argyle, 2008; Baumeister, 1999; Coopersmith, 1967; Shifrer ,2013). Lastly, recent research on arts therapies and its utility with individuals with LD will be discussed.

Background on Learning Disabilities

A child with LD struggles to reach the academic performance expected of their age group (NJCLD, 2018). Due to his or her inability to meet academic requirements, the child may be aware of his or her inadequacies. This comparison leads to feelings of frustration, failure, and overall inferiority among peers (Abrams, 1986). Abrams (1986) discussed the idea of comorbidity of learning disabilities and emotional difficulties and affirmed the importance of addressing the emotional components associated with children diagnosed with learning disabilities. Although there is a strong relationship between LD and emotional difficulties, the nature of the relationship between the two is not always discernable (Abrams, 1986). Achenbach

and McConaughy (1987) suggested that a possible link between these two constructs exist, postulating that children with LD lose their motivation to learn and quickly lose interest in their studies. This feeling of demotivation was found to adversely affect a child's social activities as low self-esteem yields a loss of interest in social engagement

Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

Self-Concept is defined as the beliefs a person has about oneself (Baumeister, 1999). This differs from self-esteem which includes an evaluation of oneself with either positive or negative feeling (Baumeister, 1999). According to Baumeister (1999), the development of a sense of self-concept is twofold: The Existential Self and the Categorical Self. The Existential Self is aware of the self as separate from others and as existing within the time- space continuum. The Categorical Self realizes the self is an object amongst other objects in the world. Baumeister (1990) believes that as an object, the self has properties of its own as well as properties that can be different or similar to other objects in the world. According to Baumeister (1990), when a child is young the properties that comprise the Categorical Self are simple, such as age, hair color, etc. Lewis (1990) states that as the "self" grows older these properties expand to include psychological and cognitive traits as well as comparative evaluation against other people. Self-esteem, on the other hand, is the value which one places on oneself. It includes judgment of self and the judgment of others (Lewis, 1990). According to Argyle (2008), the evaluation generally results in a positive or negative view of oneself. Argyle (2008) wrote that factors that contribute to one's self esteem can be broken down into four factors in viewing oneself. The first factor is the reaction of others. The second factor is one's comparison against others. The third factor is social roles and their significance in society. Finally, the fourth factor is the identification with the position or role one plays within a group. All four contribute to the shaping of one's

personality.

Kloomok and Cosden (1994) studied the influence of positive self-concept with children who have LD. The researchers focused on self-concept, behavior, appearance and athletics while receiving social support within their class. The results showed differences in academic abilities between the three groups in appearance, social, and parent support. One of the main findings is the primary importance of affecting positive change in attitude of a child with LD is the social support received, which is directly linked with an improved self-concept (Kloomok & Cosden, 1994). Generally, the significant sense of support a child receives is through a feeling that family, specifically parents, are rooting for their success (Chethik, 2000).

Students with LD are more prone to develop negative self-esteem as a result of negative reactions of others, comparison with other's success and finding oneself lacking, filling social roles that are viewed as less prestigious, as well as identifying as the weakest link within social groups (Argyle, 2008). A negative feedback loop seems to exist in which students with LD experience failure that plays into their negative self-esteem. Then negative self-esteem affects their ability to succeed, sparking another failure that reinforces negative self-image (Coopersmith, 1967). Conversely, it is important to note that positive reactions of others can significantly improve self-esteem, especially when coming from a parent (Chandler, 1994). Students with LD tend to equate academic failure with overall failure (Heyman, 1990), therefore, it is important for a parent to show a child that academic achievement or lack thereof is not a reflection of the child as a whole (Chandler, 1994). Positive emotional states can steer performance on an upward path of success as well as positively influence social interactions and relationships (Gorman, 2001).

Mason, Timms, Hayburn, and Watters (2013) discussed that having low self-esteem as a child can affect their social interactions as adults. These researchers concluded that children who are unable to succeed in school, sports, or other aspects of social interaction often have poor self-esteem as an adult. Therefore, adults with LD will most likely have a harder time in his or her surroundings (Mason et al., 2013).

Self-Identity

O'Farrell (2017) discussed self-identity while using art therapy with adults with LD to empower them. In O'Farrell's research the therapist gave feedback to the client that changed the way they thought about themselves. O'Farrell (2017) states that we define ourselves through how our environment sees and reacts to us. The author further explains the relationship dynamics of people with LD, and the fact that they do not have as many friends. According to O'Farrell, individuals with LD are more dependent on others than people without LD. Coles, Caird and Smyly (as cited in O'Farrell, 2017) explain that people with LD are viewed as needing to be taken care of and do not have the opportunity to be heard regarding their strengths and other positive qualities. According to O'Farrell (2017), people with LD search for a sense of belonging but when labeled by society they have trouble finding it. They may have a harder time processing or understanding their surroundings and experiences and may also have trouble communicating.

Stigma

Shifrer (2013) researched how stigma can influence teachers and parents, as well as its effects on adolescents with LD in a school setting. Shrifrer (2013) believed that the stigma of LD influences academic performance. In this study, data were gathered from 16,373 tenth graders in 750 schools in the United States over two years. Descriptive statistics showed the differences

between students with LD and students without LD. Students with LD scored lower on the measures of positive behaviors, positive learning, math, and English. In addition, the teachers and parents had lower expectations of children with LD. According to the research, stigma can potentially have a negative effect on teachers and parents, and therefore give the parents and teachers lower motivation to help the children. Results from Shifrer's (2013) study indicated that stigma is dependent on various factors. These factors include a lack of awareness towards the needs of students with LD, and more awareness would be needed so that teachers do give them motivation to succeed.

A study by Zhao, Zhang, and Yu (2008) focused on how the stigma of having a disability, such as LD, can affect a high school student's decision to hide his or her disability from peers. The results showed that students with LD displayed a higher level of moderating appropriate learning thoughts rather than those in the control group. The researchers concluded that children with LD often hid their disability due to the fear of rejection from peers, teachers, and parent. (Zhao, Zhang & Yu, 2008).

Social Isolation

Roberts and Zubrick (1993) discussed social isolation as one facet of several social issues that accompany children with LD. Children with LD are often seen as disabled in more than just the academic sphere. For example, individuals with LD are viewed by their teachers as socially incompetent in comparison with their peers (Roberts & Zubrick, 1993). Additionally, children with LD struggle with effective conversation skills (Wojnilower & Gross, 1988). They tend to be less assertive and have an element of passivity in their interactions that can impede their ability to create healthy social relationships (Margalit & Raviv, 1984; Wong & Wong, 1980). Children with LD are aware of the social impact their disability causes and consistently rate themselves

lower than non-LD children on a social acceptance scale (Heath & Wiener, 1996). The negative social effects of LD are seen through higher reports of bullying and victimization in contrast to non-LD classmates. Social victimization or isolation may contribute to an overall sense of loneliness (Marglit & Levin-Alyagon, 1994; Sabornie, 1994). Reports of isolation and feelings of loneliness point to an awareness by the child of the struggles and social difficulties that they face. Unfortunately, the feelings of isolation experienced by children with LD cause some students to believe that they are destined to a life of loneliness (Tur-Kaspa, Weisel, & Segev, 1998).

Krull, Wilbert, and Hennemann (2014) conducted a study that explored social inclusion of first grade students with disabilities in the classroom setting. Krull et al. (2014) concluded that the students with social and emotional disabilities felt as though they were not as accepted socially in the classrooms in the same way as their peers with no identified disabilities. In this study, as contrasted with the studies noted above, the inclusive students with LD were not socially rejected but students with behavioral problems were more socially rejected than the LD students.

It is important to address the social aspects in general and more specifically, the element of isolation, as these factors play a major role in the shaping of self - concept and self- esteem.

Social Interaction with Adults

Mason et al. (2013) investigated the sense of friendship among adults who have LD and how their experiences are related. The ages of the participants in this study were between 24 and 62 years old and they were interviewed individually using a semi-structured qualitative design. The participants were involved in a group for self-advocacy for people with LD. The interviews were conducted to understand the participants' friendship experiences and expectations. One

major thematic result was the importance and effects of friendship. The results showed that for adults with LD, as opposed to those without LD, friendships played a key role, and the adults put effort into maintaining these relationships. More than half of the adults emphasized how it was necessary and significant to have a friend in their lives, although the researchers did not report the exact number of participants who expressed this feeling. Some participants noted one or two meaningful friendships. The participants described friends as supportive, reassuring, and generous. They compared friendships to other relationships, such as those toward staff in their advocacy program. While discussing negative experiences, they felt a great amount of stress, sadness, and vulnerability in their social lives. Some of the participants expressed their feeling of being vulnerable to their LD. Some of the participants mentioned that they are only friends with peers because of the mutual support group (Mason et al., 2013). This study highlights the difficulties adults with LD may experience in developing and maintaining healthy friendships and relationships.

Creative Art Therapy and Learning Disabilities

Dating back to the earliest of cultures, art was created on cave walls or ceilings in the form of painted drawings or stencils. Indonesian and Australian teams reported finding 40,000-year-old cave paintings in Eurasia. The paintings were made concurrently or possibly earlier than other European cave artwork previously thought to have been the first of its kind (France-Prese, 2014). Art has long been used as a form of communication, and as a primary means through which culture is transmitted from one generation to the next (Kester, 2014). Because of their potential for influencing human behavior, the arts have also been utilized within therapeutic contexts (Hogan, 2016). Applications of these treatment modalities will be reviewed within this section.

In addition to the standard therapies that are available to children with LD, there are also creative interventions drawn from the arts, mainly from drama, music, art, dance/movement, poetry, and play therapy, which have been used for over 70 years (Malchiodi, 2013). These therapies are referred to as “creative arts therapies” or “expressive therapies,” as they draw from theories of creativity and self-expression (Malchiodi, 2007). When expressive therapy includes a combination of several arts at once, it can be called “integrative” or “expressive arts” (Knill, Levine, Levine, 2005, Kossak, 2015, Malchiodi, 2007).

There has been a lack of studies investigating the use of creative or expressive arts therapies with children or adults with LD. Watson (2015) discussed music therapy specifically, and how it has no formal measures of evaluation for adults with LD but noted that they are still being developed. There are a few case studies about adults with LD that indicate these individuals have a more difficult time expressing themselves emotionally. In one study, therapist and client were able to build a therapeutic relationship and to contain the painful feelings that arose within the client (Watson, 2015). In this study, different types of musical instruments were used and audio recorded, after which the researcher and participant listened to it together. The client joined a group of six participants with LD when she felt she was ready to do so. The group consisted of creative expression and processing emotions. According to Watson (2015) music therapy can offer a diverse and new way of collaborating and listening to others through the music and instruments, yet further research is suggested.

Drama therapy was also used in one study with adults with LD. Pearson (1996) discussed in a theoretical way the idea of nonverbal experience. Pearson described drama therapy work with adults with LD and noted a significant effect of this treatment approach on enhancing self-awareness. She describes “the essence of theatre” as an “empty space” (p. 211) and its

importance as a place where anything is possible. In a new area, many possibilities might emerge and be created.

Art Therapy is an effective form of therapy for working with children (Gladding, 2005; Shechtman, 2009). Regev (2015) focused on art therapy within the inclusive school system. Research has shown that art therapy treatment within the framework of school is particularly effective in treating emotional issues (Gersch & Goncalves, 2006). Typically, treatment of emotional issues is part of the therapist's work with a child with LD. When the treatment of emotional difficulties is done in a school setting, it presents opportunities for the child to also focus on academic success, as well as their emotional, and social interactions (Isis, Bush, Siegel, & Ventura, 2010).

Freilich and Schectman (2010) studied the impact of art therapy on academic achievement and emotional adjustment in Israeli children, ages seven to 15 years, who were diagnosed through psychological testing to have a LD and were provided with art therapy and academic tutoring. When comparing academic achievement and adjustment scores, statistically and clinically, all children showed an increase in academic achievement, but the children who received art therapy showed improved adjustment of academic and social needs as the key to overall sense of success. These findings show that art therapy leads to improved adjustment, and the author suggests this is because it focuses on the children's emotions and self-awareness, and not solely on academic skills.

Summary

People with LD come from different backgrounds and have different needs. For a person with LD who tries and fails, the psychological symptoms affect self-esteem and self-image. As reflected in the literature, children with learning difficulties often feel distressed and may

develop low self-esteem. Repeated failure at school can negatively impact their academic motivation (Heyman, 1990). As a result, they may distance themselves from schoolwork and associated social activities. There are many aspects that can influence the child with LD, such as relationships with parents, friends, and teachers. Art therapy as an intervention for children with LD is limited, yet initial findings suggest that it can be a beneficial tool in further exploring these children's emotional well-being.

CHAPTER 3

Method

Research Questions

1. How do adults with LD who attended inclusive general education classrooms and adults with LD who were enrolled in special education classrooms in Israel process their childhood experiences towards parents, friends, teachers and themselves through art making?

2. How do adults with LD who attended inclusive general education classrooms and adults with LD who were enrolled in special education classrooms in Israel reflect on their sense of self and sense of support when they were children?

Research Method

The method of inquiry used in this study was Art-based research and phenomenology.

Arts-based research. Arts-based research stands as a unique form of inquiry, distinct from both qualitative and quantitative research models. Arts-based research is focused on the subjective experience of individuals in their artistic process (Kossak, 2012). The goal of arts-based research is to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' artistic expression, perception, and growth. Results are related to the larger subject area being studied, thus gaining a deeper understanding of the field itself (McNiff, 2008).

The idea behind arts-based research is that creative arts therapy cannot be solely portrayed using structured language (McNiff, 2008). Since art therapy is fairly new to the psychological field, expressive therapists need to apply a new way of thinking and investigating in order to make their work applicable and valid to colleagues as well as professionals from other fields.

As explained in McNiff (2007), art encapsulates everyday objects with a perspective on their atypical and amazing characteristics. The artist, therefore, might demonstrate heightened intuitive awareness. One's ability to know the art is the origination of meaning using artistic expression as the medium. Using arts-based inquiry, upon the completion of each research session I responded to the art with my own personal artistic reflections using a form of visual art. I also artistically responded to each participant's main themes and ideas that were found.

Phenomenology. A phenomenological study is based on the person's experience from a first person's point of view (Creswell, 2007). The emphasis of phenomenological analysis is what a person experiences regarding some phenomenon and how he or she interprets those experiences. A phenomenological inquiry is a study that attempts to understand a person's perception, viewpoint, and understanding of a certain situation (Gill, 2014). Phenomenologists focus on understanding the common themes within the experience (Creswell, 2007). Repeating one's story may assist the narrator to present a balanced point of view of their past events and on their influence with their current interactions (Wahler & Castlebury, 2002). In this model the researcher collects all of the data and develops a description for the common threads throughout the collective themes (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology in art therapy. "The word 'phenomenon' means 'to appear' that comes from Greek and can be perceived and observed with our senses and our minds" (Betensky, 2001, p. 121). Betensky (1977), a phenomenology theorist, wrote of the fact that in every art work one creates, one can observe and understand something about the work's internal structure according to the various elements that exist in it.

Guttman and Regev (2004) discussed phenomenology utilizing an artistic approach as the expression and treatment of viewing phenomena that appear from the creative product

created by an individual or group. According to Regev (2004) the process allows for self-discovery through artistic expression. In art therapy the phenomenological approach emphasizes the “here and now” (Guttmann & Regev, 2004, p. 158). Using this philosophical approach in art therapy process and research, the expressive work is in the “here and now.”

Participants

Twelve people participated (4 men, 8 women) in this study. Demographic information describing participant characteristics is presented in Table 1.

Inclusion/exclusion criteria. The participants consisted of 12 adults diagnosed in their childhood with learning disabilities as shown in Table 1. There were an equal number of participants who attended inclusive ($n=6$) and special education classroom ($n=6$). The participants were over 18 years old, and currently live in various regions of Israel, mostly the Jerusalem area. The Palestinian special education system is different than the Israeli school system (Gumpel & Awartani, 2003), and was therefore excluded in this research. Although small in size, the Israeli population is diverse. Israeli law provides for a similar educational framework for all of its citizens regardless of culture and religion. Given that only minimal research has been done with religious Modern Orthodox or Ultra-Orthodox Jewish- Israelis who have LD and to maintain a relatively small sample size for this study while creating two groups that were as culturally homogenous as possible, the current study focused exclusively on the experiences of religious Modern Orthodox or Ultra-Orthodox Jewish- Israelis. Future research should focus on whether the results of this study are similar in the Israeli-Arab population and secular population, given the similar educational structure yet vast cultural differences.

Background on the population. The Charedim, also known as Ultra-Orthodox, derive their name from the Hebrew word 'Hared' which translates to fear, implying an ever-present fear

of God. Shalhav (1991) explained that Charedim pride themselves on 'Havdallah', meaning separatism. One of the main characteristics of the Ultra-Orthodox community is their separation and seclusion from the general modern society. The motive for seclusion is the desire to avoid assimilation, cultural and social influences from the outside world to keep the spirit of the group. This group of religiously observant Jews reject involvement in the modern world (Baumel, 2006). The Haredi community in Israel has implemented an alternative educational system that limits secular studies to the study of basic mathematics. The rest of the day is spent learning Torah (religious texts, laws and other religious studies), as the study of Torah is seen as 'equivalent to all' commandments (Spiegel, 2011). Gender norms are strictly defined in the Haredi world. Males in the Ultra-Orthodox world are expected to spend their day analyzing Jewish texts, while women tend to juggle child-rearing and work. In an environment that places such importance on Torah study on the male population it is important to consider possible gender differences with regard to the effects of LD on Haredi children and youth. In a society where the men are seen as the people of the book, one would expect that a boy with LD would pose a problem within the school system while an adult man with LD would be marginalized.

Hakak (2003) presented an ethnographic study of the school system, known as yeshiva, while Spiegel (2011) focused on a cultural understanding of the Haredi school system. In Hakak's (2003) study, he relates to disabilities within the community. Statistically the Haredi community has a higher rate of children born with severe disabilities due to the women's refusal to go for genetic testing and a religious belief that abortion is prohibited at any point during pregnancy (Hakak, 2003). As such, the number of special education programs have grown (Spiegel, 2011). Still, there is an underlying fear of stigma and the affects it will have on sibling's marriage prospects (Spiegel, 2011). This applies to apparent physical and mental disabilities,

however, no research was found in a data base search that has been done on "invisible" disabilities, such as LD, that would be easy to hide and go unnoticed. As part of the Haredi community's overall rejection of the modern world is a rejection of modern psychology. The Haredi outlook toward the field of psychology is ambivalent at best (Hakak, 2003). Although in some cases it may be evident that someone needs professional help, the stigma and fear attached to getting mental health care, a stigma that is far stronger in the Haredi community than in the general population, prevents many from receiving the assistance they need (Hoffman & Rossman, 2014).

In contrast, the Modern-Orthodox Israeli community, also known as *Dati Leumi* – National Religious, are open to modern society while still adhering to Jewish law (Hermann, 2014). Their motto of *Torah v'Avoda*, (Torah and work) is a reflection of their willingness to engage with a secular lifestyle as long as it does not conflict with Jewish beliefs and laws (Zionist Movement, n.d). Children of Dati Leumi families attend religious schools with dual curriculum that adhere to the matriculation standards of the State. By being part of the State's Ministry of Education, students with LD receive hours of private tutoring and guidance that is covered by the Israeli Ministry of Education (Kol Zechot, 2018).

Although no recent studies were found on the effect of culture on LD among various segments of Modern Orthodox Jewish Israeli society, studies were found on how children with LD are perceived in Orthodox Jewish American communities. Research shows that families of children with LD believe that if their religious community finds out about the child's disability, it will harm their other children's *shidduch*, or marriage prospects (Pollak, 2006). One Rabbi even advised keeping a child's disability "in the closet" until all of his siblings are married (Pollak, 2006, p.63). In a culture where family name plays a significant role (Juni, 1980) protecting the

name from being tarnished due to a disability in the family is important. However, Pollak noted that some families viewed the child with LD in a positive light, since the child was seen as a "positive challenge from God" (Pollak, 2006, p.69).

Recruitment of participants. The participants were self-referred after hearing about the study either from me or from posts on social media, using virtual snowball sampling. Once the participants showed interest, the researcher called them to explain the study in detail. In addition to using snowball sampling, the researcher used networking to locate and contact people who are known to have been diagnosed with an LD and attended either an inclusion or special education classroom and asked them if they would be willing to participate.

Procedure

There were two groups of participants: adults with LD that were in special education classrooms and adults with LD that were in inclusive classrooms (see Table 1). The aim was to have an equal division between participants. Each participant was asked to participate in one individual research session with me, a certified art therapist in Israel. The research sessions took place at the participant's home or in an agreed upon appropriate location for approximately 90-120 minutes. The sessions were audio recorded using QuickTime Player.

Participants were asked to express experiences of their childhood relationships through four drawings on four separate pieces of paper that depicted their relationships at that time with their teachers, friends, family and themselves, using the Me and My Surroundings tool, which was created specifically for this research (See Appendix A). After each drawing, the participant discussed their image and the meanings and memories that image holds. Each participant completed a brief post-session demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B) and had an open-ended discussion about the drawings as a unit as opposed to individually. The purpose of the

discussion was to gain more understanding and information about the participants, their experiences making art, and their feelings toward their overall environment during childhood as it relates to being in an inclusive or special education classroom. The participants may have had additional comments or insights when discussing the drawings as a series rather than as individual drawings. In addition, I met with an art therapist and looked at various themes that arose from the drawings and the sessions. The art therapist's background is working with children with LD, is a supervisor of art therapists and is a member of the Board for Expressive Therapies in Israel (YAHAT), The art therapist has psychoanalytic, dynamic and phenomenology training and commented from these perspectives. She gave her interpretation of each drawing and discussed what she saw and felt.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants using Pseudonyms

Name	Age	Gender	Classroom	Religious Association	Material Status	Occupation
Shira	18	F	Special education	Modern Orthodox	Single	Student
Liat	18	F	Special education	Modern Orthodox	Single	Student
David	27	M	Special education	Don't like to categorize	Single	Security guard
Libi	21	F	Special education	Modern Orthodox	Single	Student and national service
Jenny	18	F	Special education	Modern Orthodox	Single	Student
Miriam	25	F	Special education	Modern Orthodox	Single	Clothing store clerk
Nof	27	F	Inclusive classroom	Modern Orthodox	Married	Special education teacher
Annie	30	F	Inclusive classroom	Modern Orthodox	Married	

						Student and parent supervisor
Benny	29	M	Inclusive classroom	Ultra-Orthodox	Married	Paramedic
Jacob	25	M	Inclusive classroom	Modern Orthodox	Married	Computer technician-helpdesk
Roei	27	M	Inclusive classroom	Modern Orthodox	Single	Student in visual communication
Rina	18	F	Inclusive classroom	Ultra-Orthodox	Married	Pre-school teacher

Data Analysis

Data consisted of each participant's four drawings as well as verbal responses regarding each drawing and the art-making process as well as my art responses. In addition, each participant completed a demographic questionnaire. All verbal data were analyzed by thematic analysis, which is a form of qualitative data analysis (Greg, 2012). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns and meanings (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail" (p. 79). Braun and Clarke (2006) also highlighted that the themes that the researcher has chosen can arise and emphasize, examine and pinpoint the data found in the research. These themes led to important phenomena that were related to the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2006) added that in a semantic sense "the themes are identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data, and the analyst is not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written" (p. 84). This approach was also applied to the analysis of artwork created by the participants by looking at shapes, colors, textures and overall design. Furthermore, "...the latent approach would seek to identify the features that gave it that particular form and meaning" (p. 84).

Once all of the sessions were completed, I transcribed and scanned all of the images of the discussions, demographic questionnaire, art work and art therapist response as well as arts-based response to a Microsoft Word document. To begin the analysis, I read the transcribed interviews several times. Reading the material a few times assisted in visualizing the setting of each participant's story and also helped me to comprehend the goal of the interview. Secondly, I simultaneously opened Excel and Word files where I could simultaneously read the interview while also writing down interesting points that were repeated. I looked for patterns in the text, where important points were made repeatedly. These patterns began to form the themes that I chose to further emphasize and expand upon. For the artwork that participants created, I placed all of the art on the wall and floor and started looking at various themes, repetitions, comparisons and differences that arose from the art. In responding to the participants' art, I chose a theme that was most central to each adult, and created my own art reflection according to that theme. I used various art supplies from the same list of materials that the participants used and listed below.

Member checking was employed to help improve the validity of the results. An art therapist reviewed all the artwork, including my art, and discussed themes and ideas with me. Data were kept confidential. Identifying information had been removed or altered. Only I as the researcher and the peer reviewer had access to the actual data.

Materials

The following materials were made available to the participants during the study: two pencils, 24 markers, 12 permanent markers, 24 colored pencils, 12 oil pastels, string, glue, scissors, colored paper, newspaper, 12 water colors, and 24 pastels. The participants could choose either A3 or A4 sized paper.

Ethics

The current research did not pose significant risk to participants. Any discomfort participants might have experienced in the process did not extend beyond normative day to day experiences. Participants signed an informed consent form, which delineated general information concerning the study. Furthermore, it was made clear that they could terminate their participation according to their own free will. A verbal and visual explanation of this information was issued as well, to ensure participants had a complete understanding prior to volunteering to participate for the research. All interventions were in line with the code of ethics of the Israeli Expressive Therapies Association (YAHAT), American Art Therapy Association and approved by the Lesley IRB.

CHAPTER 4

Results

The research study included 12 adults from Israel. They ranged in age from 18 to 31 years and consisted of four males and eight females diagnosed with learning disabilities during their childhood between third and eleventh grade. The research took place at their homes or coffee shops for one meeting. The participants were requested to express their feelings towards their friends, teachers, parents, and themselves when they were children in school, as well as aspects of these specific relationships, through four drawings on four separate pieces of paper. Participants also completed a verbal questionnaire (see Appendix B). Each person was then asked a series of verbal questions about their drawings and their answers have been summarized in each introductory descriptive paragraph below. Full verbatim responses and the participants drawings are cited in appendix C. Below are the thematic results that emerged from the data.

Thematic Results

From the data, various themes emerged (see Table 2). The perspectives of the adults from inclusive education settings were simpler to determine than those of the adults from special education settings since the former seemed to have already processed their thoughts. There were similarities and dissimilarities apparent among the participants, all of whom were raised as religious Jews; two from an Ultra-Orthodox upbringing, and the rest Modern Orthodox. All the participants were from Jerusalem and the surrounding area.

The participants felt various feelings towards themselves. Some mentioned never giving up and having ambition. There were some participants that mentioned feeling ashamed of their LD, as well as feeling different. Some participants were scared to draw. The following section summarize the participants' feelings in school, towards their teachers; their feeling socially

towards their peers in their class; their connection to their parents and siblings; and, their feelings towards themselves. Participants expressed feeling different, isolated, and sad, as well as feeling dependent on others. Their desire to explain to others and their fear of drawing was present throughout the study. The following 12 themes were found: (a) teachers eliciting positive feelings, (b) inclusive education teachers eliciting negative feelings (with subthemes of humiliation, getting taken out of classes, and physical abuse), (c) special education students struggled socially, (d) inclusive education students enjoyed being social, (e) inclusive education students felt frustrated with parents, (f) loved and admired by parents, (g) successful other siblings, (h) connection to a sibling, (i) positive feelings towards themselves (with subthemes of pride and ambition) (j) negative feelings towards themselves (with subthemes of failure, shame, feeling different, isolation, sadness, feeling dependent on others, wanting to feeling understood, dating (k) art making (with subthemes of being scared of drawing, coloring in notebooks, and paper size). (l) love to take care of animals.

Table 2

Thematic Results

Interview Prompt	Themes	Subthemes
Feeling at School	(a) teachers eliciting positive feelings (b) inclusive education teachers eliciting negative feelings	Humiliation Getting taken out of classes Physical abuse
Feelings Towards their Friends	(c) special education students struggled socially (d) inclusive education students enjoyed being social (e) inclusive education students felt frustrated with parents	
Feelings towards Parents and Siblings	(f) loved and admired by parents (g) successful other siblings (h) connection to a sibling	
Feelings towards Themselves	(i) positive feeling towards themselves (j) negative feelings towards themselves (k) art making (l) love to take care of animals	Pride Ambition Failure Shame Feeling different Isolation Sadness Feeling dependent on others Yearning to feel understood Scared of drawing Coloring in notebooks Paper size

Interview Prompt #1: Feeling at School

In response to their feelings in school towards their teachers there were positive and negative outlooks. Most of the special education students mentioned that their teachers gave them confidence, were a listening ear for them and helped them in various situations. Among the participants from the inclusive education settings, most had negative opinions of their teachers and gave examples of feeling humiliated during the school year. There was one participant, Miriam, who was in both special education and inclusive education settings. She gave positive feedback within the special education setting and discussed the hardships in the inclusive education setting. In addition, the participants expressed getting taken out of classes and how it felt when they got taken out.

Theme #1: Teachers giving positive feelings. All of the participants from special education and two from inclusive education mentioned that their teachers gave them confidence, an overall feeling that they deserve everything, and helped them get through school. Nof and Annie were two participants from inclusive classrooms who had positive things to say about their homeroom teachers. They both mentioned that they had teachers who listened and supported them, even when they struggled. Benny also thanked his principal, saying, “thanks to him I think I had fun. He was a good principal and made school a relatively bearable experience.” Shira, Liat, David, Miriam and Libi had all been placed in special education classrooms and expressed only positive feelings towards their teachers. Shira went further, explaining that they had fun together, which is uncommon. She explained that, “I spend more time with the teachers than with my classmates.” Liat, David, Miriam and Libi all described their teachers as helpful and supportive. Jenny expressed, “I felt towards my teachers that they loved me, gave me a feeling of success, and that I am smart” (see Figure 31). Libi explained, “My teachers supported me in everything I wanted to do. They knew what each student needed and geared it towards us as

individuals.” Miriam had been in both special education and inclusive classrooms and was thus able to present both points of view. She said, “I had an amazing teacher who always pushed, helped, and explained; she never let me give up on anything.”

Theme #2: Inclusive education teachers giving negative feelings. All of the inclusive participants had negative remarks to make, as opposed to the special education participants who all expressed the degree to which their teachers helped and pushed them through the year. As mentioned earlier, Miriam had been in both a special education classroom and an inclusive classroom. While she had positive feelings towards her special education teacher, she described the inclusive education teacher as “horrible.” Both Benny and Annie stated that their experience in school had been difficult due to the fact that their teachers were not helpful. Rina said that her teachers “ruined [her] life,” and multiple participants stated that their teachers did not listen, leaving them with a feeling they were ignored, misunderstood, and not accepted. Annie said that her teachers often made things humiliating.

Subtheme #1: Humiliation in school. Numerous people brought up the subject of experiencing humiliation by their teachers. Many told stories of being “kicked out” of the classroom or punished in embarrassing ways, including being locked in a room or enduring physical punishment. Rina explained how teachers would often embarrass students in front of their peers, referring to a particular incident in which her teacher put tissues in her mouth. Roei recalled stuttering when answering questions because he was afraid of giving the wrong answer or asking an irrelevant question. Miriam recalled a situation where the teacher told her to be quiet in front of the entire class. Benny recalled a situation where the teacher pulled him by the ears for no reason.

Subtheme #2: Getting taken out of classes. Roei and Miriam both explained feeling embarrassed to leave the classroom for tutoring because other people would know they needed extra help. Miriam shared that she missed out on fun activities in class and was embarrassed due to being pulled out. However, Jacob mentioned that his parents organized a private tutor and took him out of classes to help him. He said that it did not bother him and he felt that they worked together on reading and this way he was able to feel as though part of the class.

Subtheme #3: Physical abuse by teachers. There were two Ultra-Orthodox students that participated in the study and they both reported physical violence from their teachers. Benny mentioned “There is a teacher behind me who comes and pulls both of my ears and picks me up by my ears to punish me.” And Rina stated, “When I didn't behave they would put me in a room and tie my hands with a rope and my legs to the chair, and wrap my mouth with toilet paper.” Rina added “They didn't hit me but they grabbed me, and it hurt.”

Interview Prompt #2: Feelings Towards their Friends

Theme #3: Special education students struggled socially. The participants from the special education classes recalled struggling socially. The participants mentioned that they had trouble making friends and had only a few friends in total. David mentioned having only one friend in 8th grade, although he now realizes that even that friend was not a true friend. Shira mentioned having one friend, but even that friend did not always understand her. Liat mentioned that small classes made it hard to make friends. Miriam was in both special education and inclusive classes. She stated she had trouble making friends in her special education classes but was actually very popular in her inclusive classroom. She said she was the “queen of the class” and that all the girls thought she was cool. Jenny stated, “At the beginning it was hard for me to create friendships inside the special class because I felt that they weren't on my level.”

Theme #4: Inclusive education students enjoyed being social. All the inclusive education participants mentioned that they had friends, and that they enjoyed the social aspect of being in school. Although the schoolwork was hard, at least they had their friends. Jacob mentioned that "The schoolwork was awful and at least I had friends there with me; I tried to enjoy that part of school." Roei mentioned "I went to school for the social aspect, I really enjoyed it. Socially I had friends I wasn't the most popular, but I was definitely part of the group. I was normal, people liked me." Annie, Nof, and Jacob stated that they had a little group of friends would be together during and after school. Rina spoke about her friends giving her strength and support. The participants added that they had good friends and that they were close, and Nof and Benny mentioned that they did not feel as socially isolated and alone, as Nof added "I had good friends and wasn't socially isolated."

Interview Prompt #3: Feelings towards Parents

The participants associated feelings of love, frustration, and acceptance from their parents. The results showed that social support is critical to a person's wellbeing, particularly the family constellation that is integral to childhood and a child's well-being. Family dynamics provide the foundation for a child's first social experiences. Family dynamics also impact and influence a child's ability to socially interact for the first time.

Theme #5: Inclusive education students felt frustrated with parents. One of the themes that emerged from the data was frustration towards the participants' parents. All six people placed in inclusive classrooms as children stated that they experienced tension and pressure from their parents. As adults today, two participants reported still feeling the same anger towards their parents that they had as children. Annie reported "I feel anger towards my parents" for not noticing her and realizing that she has a difficulty. "My dad has ADHD and dyslexia,

how did you not assume at all that your own daughter has dyslexia, why did you only test me in 8th grade?”

Benny explained that he often felt that his parents were unable to grasp what he was going through, and Rina shared that she has since told her father that he did not accept her for who she was as a child. Participants discussed the importance of feeling someone believed in them, as well as the division of roles among parents. Nof stated “I’m still mad at my mom....My mom pushed me to learn biology, at the end of the day it was my biggest mistake that I did in high school.” Rina explained that “I was hit by my mother.” According to Jacob, “it was harder to be with my mom; she demanded a lot from me with regard to schoolwork.”

Conversely, many participants reported that their fathers were less involved, worked often and were away from home. Jacob stated “my father was always working late.” Rina said her father was always in America, and that it was at those times that her mother would hit her. Liat also mentioned that her father worked in America and she was alone with her mother in Israel. Nof stated that her father would teach her to ride her bike, rather than come to parent teacher conferences.

Theme #6: Loved and admired by parents. All of the participants placed in special education classrooms as children and one inclusive education reported feeling loved and connected to their parents. Shira mentioned feeling supported by her parents, stating “they give me so much.” David felt similarly about his mother and said “without my mother’s help I would have never been placed in a small classroom.” Libi reported “they support me and cheer me on; I love them; they are my parents.” Liat stated “my parents love me very much. They wanted my academic life to be of the utmost importance.” Miriam said she loves her mother; adding “she is smart and brilliant.” Roei added that “my mother always believed in me.”

Theme #7: Connection to a sibling. Annie mentioned that she has a favorite brother and that they connect since they both have ADHD. Rina discussed that she was connected to her brother and they would talk every night, she expressed that the day before he got married she said “I won’t have you here anymore to talk to every night. He was in the same situation as me. We each spoke about our difficulties and we strengthened each other.”

Theme #8: Successful other siblings. Benny, Annie, and Liat all mentioned that their siblings are “successful.” Benny stated that “in my family we got divided into the smart and the not smart ones. My oldest brother for sure has problems similar to mine, but he is way over 40. My sister has a catering company. I have a sister that is the head of a division in the Ministry of Education, another brother that is an electrical engineer, and a sister that is an interior designer.” Annie shared that her older brother, who has a degree in computer science, received a really big gift from her father. Her younger brother has a successful business and “doesn’t need anyone to pay anything. I need help from my parents.” Liat reported that all of her siblings are doctors.

Interview Prompt #4: Feelings towards Themselves

Theme #9: Positive feeling towards themselves.

Subtheme #1: Pride. Three of the inclusive classroom participants and one special education participant mentioned their feeling of being proud of themselves. Benny said that he won and that he had no idea he would succeed in this way. Nof explained “I felt like wonder woman, I was always very proud of myself.” And Roei said that he feels proud and strong with himself. Jenny stated “I’m really proud of myself in the way that I have accomplished during my life. I drew a path (see Figure 34) with flowers the flower symbolizes good, success and the rocks symbolize the hard difficult aspects most of the time.”

Subtheme #2: Ambition. Nof, Roei, Benny, and Rina from inclusive education all mentioned their ambition. Nof stated that she “had a lot of motivation,” and “never gave up.” Roei spoke about working hard and feeling good about himself. Benny mentioned his ambition; “I’m sure that I won. I had no idea that I would succeed in this way.” In his current endeavors, he is the head of a large volunteer organization. Rina mentioned how she is changing because she “has guts.”

Theme #10: Negative feeling towards themselves.

Subtheme #1: Failure. Other participants shared that they occasionally felt like failures, because living with their LD has made things difficult. Annie stated that her dyslexia had gotten in the way of the many dreams she had for herself. Miriam from special education felt like things were out of her grasp; she drew herself in pencil while the rest of the world was in color.

Subtheme #2: Shame. Multiple participants from inclusive education raised the issue of the shame they experienced as a result of their LD, with several of them keeping it secret because of the embarrassment resulting from people discovering their difficulty. The participants were quiet, reserved, and kept their secrets to themselves rather than being open about their learning disabilities. Annie said, “I tried to keep it secret. I was ashamed that I had a learning disability.” Roei mentioned his teachers, saying, “I wanted the ground to swallow me I was so ashamed.” Nof explained how she continues, even now, to keep her LD to herself, and has discussed it with only one friend, who coincidentally also has a learning disability. Miriam from special education discussed the shame she experiences when she goes on a date and cannot read the menu.

Subtheme #3: Feeling different. The theme of being different came up many times, in a variety of ways. Some participants reported feeling misunderstood because they were socially, or academically different. Nof did not want other people to know she had a learning disability for

fear of being viewed as unlike her peers. As an example, she explained, “if I took an oral test everyone would know that I’m different.” Some people mentioned feeling unlike their classmates, while others reported a sense of being “other” in comparison with their own family members. Rina stated that she and her siblings each “connected to a different parent or sibling.” within special education classes Shira said that while she was herself at home, “at school I am someone different.”

Jenny stated “I felt that the girls in the special education class were very different than me. I felt that they were all the same and I was different one. I felt that I did not really understand what I'm really supposed to be doing in the special education class and how I'm supposed to be part of this class.”

Subtheme #4: Isolation. Multiple participants spoke about the idea of either feeling alone or of the desire to be alone occasionally. Rina and Nof from inclusive education and Liat, Libi and Shira from special education all mentioned feeling isolated due to their LD. Rina stated “I was alone, against everyone.” Liat shared that she drew “that occasionally I feel alone,” and Libi stated she “always felt alone.” Nof reported “I always felt alone. In so far as the social aspect, I felt alone during breaks even though I had friends.” Liat and Shira both mentioned that sometimes they enjoy being alone. Liat stated “sometimes my mom and I are alone; I want to study by myself and ask to be left alone.” Shira stated she likes to be alone.

Dating. There were three participants that brought up the idea of dating. Benny spoke about his fear of being tested in order to date someone’s daughter. Miriam said that the LD is impacting her dating life, because she does not have a first degree and cannot read the menu when she goes out on a date with someone. Rina expressed that she dated only one boy and after

30 minutes she knew she was going to marry him. Benny explain that he dated his wife for two weeks. Roei also mentioned that he does not enjoy going on blind dates.

Subtheme #5: Sadness. There were a few participants that brought up feeling sad during the interviews. Benny spoke about the “sense of sadness.” Libi added that she didn't feel like she was a part of a group and it makes her sad to feel this way. Miriam added that she worries about her mother feeling sad for her and recognizes that when she was in school, she was not in a good place emotionally, which is upsetting to her. David adds a feeling of despair and sadness that he didn't know what to do with during his school years.

Subtheme #6: Feeling dependent on others. Some participants mentioned feeling dependent on others such as their spouses or their tutors. Miriam, Nof, Annie, Liat, Jacob, Roei and Benny all mentioned that they had tutors to help them understand the information that was given at school. Benny stated “When my tutor came I would be waiting for him and he would help me understand the material.” Nof said she had tutors and that her mother “tried as much as she could to help me catch up with private tutors.” Annie stated that her husband often helps her with school because “it is hard for me.” Rina also mentioned her husband, saying that “my husband is better than anything else that happened to me; he understands me and he has so much emotion.” Benny shared that when he finished a course his sister helped him write his speech that he had to give in front of the entire city.

Subtheme #7: Yearning to feel understood. The participants spoke about the feeling of being understood and explaining themselves. Five participants expressed that their teachers didn't understand them, either not feeling comfortable or wanting to even try to explain themselves. Nof described that she didn't want to explain her difficulty to her teachers. Rina

expressed that “the teachers didn't let me explain the situation.” Miriam said that her special education teachers “helped and explained” the information to her.

Some participants expressed that they needed the school material explained to them one on one or verbally. Jacob explained that he has a “difficulty explaining myself broadly, difficult to explain myself in words, and explaining where something is.”

Theme # 11: Art Making

Subtheme #1: Scared of drawing. Four participants mentioned they found drawing difficult or that they were not artistic. Libi and Annie both stated that they were not talented when it came to drawing. Jacob said “I don’t know how to draw it.” Miriam and Roei both came from artistic backgrounds, and Roei specifically said that he enjoys drawing.

Subtheme #2: Coloring in their notebooks. There were participants that coped with their schooling experience with coloring as a way to get away. Nof and Roei mentioned drawing as a way to escape the classroom. Nof explained “I would just stare at various places in the classroom. In order to show the teacher that I was listening, I would just color in my notebook, as if I were keeping up with the class.” Roei explained that he loved to draw but his teacher took his notebook and pencil case away, pointing out to the other students what he had done and telling them that this behavior was unacceptable.

Subtheme #3: Paper size. Jenny and Liat were the only two participants that used A3 paper as opposed to the rest that used A4 paper. Rina was the only one that tore her paper and also used her paper horizontally. No one used any three-dimensional materials or scissors or glue or paints.

Theme #12: Love to take care of animals. Multiple participants mentioned that they enjoy taking care of animals, perhaps because it gave them more confidence. Shira explained that she

really likes to take care of animals in general, and Benny said that he likes to ride horses and teach kids how to horseback ride. David mentioned that he attended to horses on his family's farm and that he was good at training dogs.

Responding to Participant's Art

In responding to the participants' art, I chose a theme that seemed most central to each participant and created something that could correspond to the theme. For some participants I used watercolors because I felt they would help me loosen up and flow, not judging my every move. In some art I used pencil to contain and control. I also used marker, oil pastels, colored pencils, newspaper and A3 and A4 papers. So many adults with LD carry their struggle of their school experience with them through adulthood. In the arts-based research I conducted, I noticed some have been able to overcome their share of difficulty, either appreciating the growth and being proud of their success or recognizing that it was a hardship for them. I could relate to all of their stories. Many resemble my experiences in some ways, and it made me wish that I had heard more about other people who deal with LDs when I was younger.

Miriam: Trying to get out

I felt that Miriam (see Figure 1) had such a strong experience, within both the special education and the inclusive education. With all of her difficulties, she is not able to let go of the hardships and get out of her maze. Because every time she tries to reach a turning point, there is a wall blocking her. Her difficulty is blocking her from continuing with her life, whether it's to get a degree or to even date, and to be independent. It seems like Miriam is feeling insecure and experiencing shame about the fact that she does not have a degree and is not as independent as

she would like to be. Miriam seems afraid of failure and rejection.



Figure 1. *Responding to Miriam's experience (Adi).*

Annie: Tied to the past in a bag

With Annie, (see Figure 2) I connected to dyslexia blocking her from what she wants to do in her life. I felt that it was a heavy bag that even feels “rock like” that she is carrying everywhere she goes and she cannot let go of this bag that is connecting her past to her present and future. Annie is still mad at her father for not truly noticing her, for having ADHD or possibly even seeing the differences between her situation and her brother's situation. These feelings are keeping Annie tied to her past instead of allowing her to move forward. Her dyslexia is not letting her become what she dreamt of.



Figure 2. *Responding to Annie's experience (Adi).*

Shira: Regular girl but still different

With Shira, (see Figure 3) I noticed that she mentioned how she would want to be part of the group and how she wants to be a regular girl like the rest of the class; she wants to hear from her parents and from her teachers that she is normal and part of the group. I created something that feels different and noticeable. Although she wants to feel the same (as the same shape of a circle), I think she realizes how much the surroundings feel that she doesn't really feel included or the same as the rest of them. She notices that she feels differently than them, but she still

wants to feel like them.



Figure 3. *Responding to Shira's experience (Adi).*

Nof: Pushing with no results

Nof seems to feel different from her peers and that she was always a few steps behind them even though she put in a lot of effort (see Figure 4). At times Nof felt like it was not fair that she was putting in so much effort but not seeing any results. She had a lot of motivation, yet she was still embarrassed of her LD and she did not want anyone to know. She works with students with LDs and told me that she does not disclose her experience to them. I think if she were to disclose her experience to them, it would make them feel less alone and give them a light at the end of the tunnel that she did not have.



Figure 4. *Responding to Nof's experience (Adi).*

Libi: Feeling okay in my own way

Libi kept saying that her life is “fine,” but when I asked her to explain what “fine” meant, she just told me that everything is okay (see Figure 5). Personally, I had a difficult time trying to get her true feelings out of her and it was hard to connect because she said that everything was okay and nothing was too special. Libi also mentioned feeling different than classmates, but then stated that she feels “okay” with herself. My life is okay and that I am dealing with it in the way that is easiest for me today. Continuing on with life without looking or noticing the good and the bad. Libi also became more confident when as she continued to use the art.



Figure 5. *Responding to Libi's experience (Adi).*

Rina: Wiping away the past

Rina (see Figure 6) is trying to correct the past by dealing with situations that are difficult and trying to not bring it into the future without her knowledge or awareness. She is trying to be as aware as she can about her future and to be in control of her life, as she wasn't until now. She tried to do the right things in life but no one ever believed her or believed in her. I drew many layers for her, and then used water drops to represent her tears to get through the different layers of struggle. Nothing is erased completely and things are still there under the surface, but they are not as strong and vivid. Her tears and the water drops will clean and work out her past to assist her in a new future. She is trying to be in a new place and build a new family with her husband. Today she says that everything is good, could it be true?



Figure 6. *Responding to Rina's experience (Adi).*

Liat: Overflowing words

Liat (see Figure 7) is trying to get on her own new path, without her parents supporting her and telling her what to do with her future. There are things that she wants to try but isn't able to stop hearing her parent's voices. Her drawings are full of words, and I felt that the need to fill up big pages of words is difficult for a person when their difficulty is with words. I worked my way from left to right, and felt that the end of the page needed air, because it was so condensed and full. Could the words fill a void of not feeling the dyslexia or proving that words are all that matters? This piece of art looks like a crossword puzzle, where all the words have been found. I think Liat's brain is very busy and full, which is why I chose to fill this page. I almost picture her

brain as a balloon that is going to pop because no one has ever helped her express all of her thoughts and words that are overflowing.

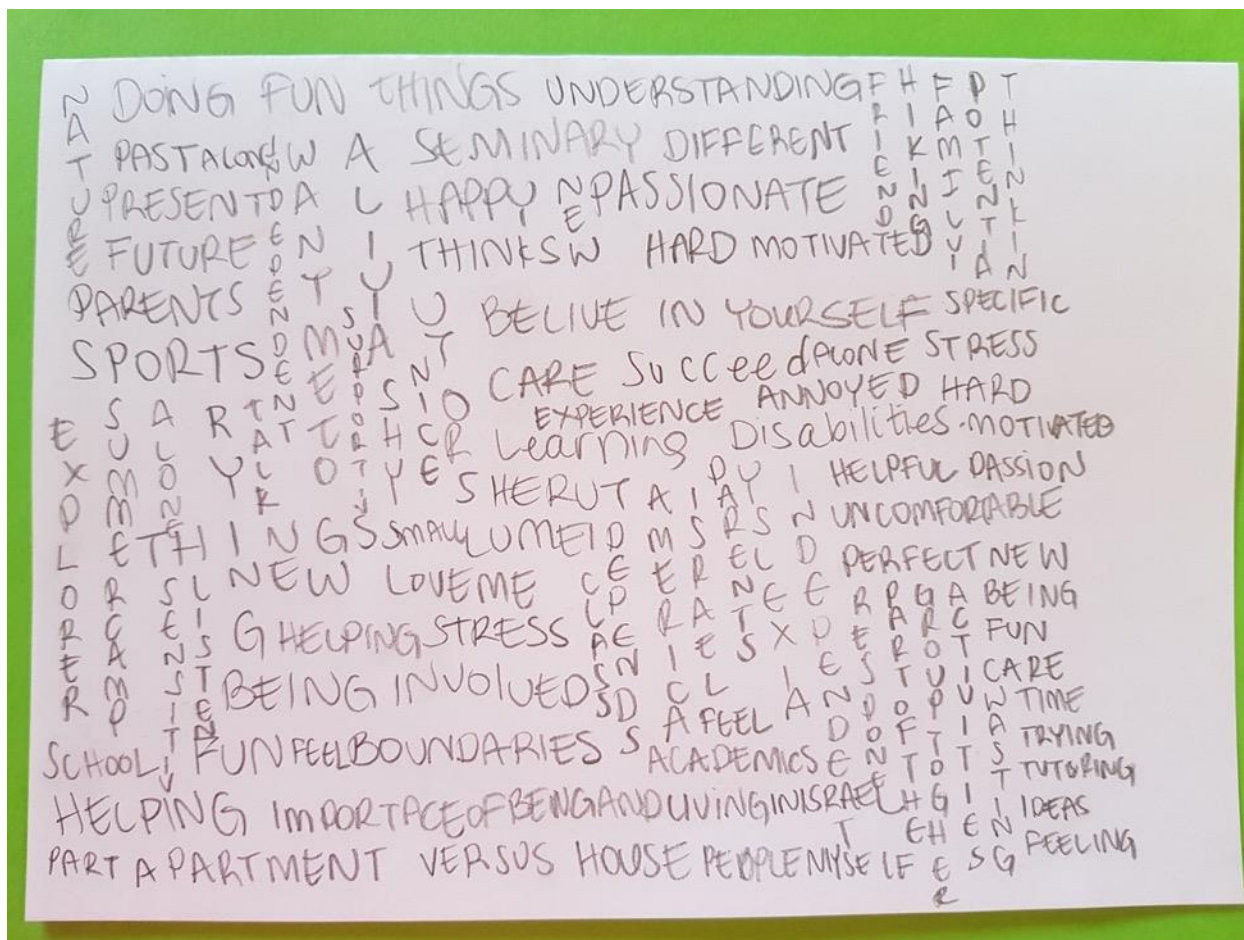


Figure 7. Responding to Liat's experience (Adi).

Roei: Dyslexia will not control my life, I am over it

Roei (see Figure 8) keeps moving on. He said that no one cares that you have dyslexia, you just have to get your job done no matter what, and that is the most important part. You want to succeed and show them what you are all about. I almost see him creating a bridge that a person is crossing through, having no care in the world, surviving the journey and making sure to keep going forward. He has a lot of self-confidence and self-awareness. I wonder if this self-confidence comes from the fact that his mother was very supportive and always believed him, or

if it was a response to his father being tough on him—perhaps the self-confidence is a way to prove his father wrong. I used the colors of the dinosaur that resonate with him.



Figure 8. *Responding to Roei's experience (Adi).*

David: Pieces that do not mesh together

David (see Figure 9) didn't draw anything because he was too scared of making a circle or a line that wasn't perfect. It seems that what he struggles with is stopping him from doing what he loves. He is a perfectionist. He is doing a dog training course—and he is very good at it—but there are written tests that will stop him from being successful. There is always a wall that is blocking him. His ADHD is always in his way and there is no way to control it. Everything has to be in the right spot and right place. It feels like different lines represent different pieces of his life that are all coming together but do not mesh together.



Figure 9. *Responding to David's experience (Adi).*

Jenny: I did it!

Jenny (see Figure 10) is very proud of herself for overcoming her difficulties and her fears. She feels that she has a good relationship with her parents and that they are very supportive to her. She seemed aware of her struggles, but it seemed like due to the support she got from her parents and teachers she was able to overcome the challenges she faced. She is still aware of the challenges she will face in the future, but really seems to understand the good things that she has experienced. She has a sense of confidence that makes it clear that she is comfortable with herself.



Figure 10. *Responding to Jenny's experience (Adi).*

Benny: Overcoming the words

Benny (see Figure 11) seems to have a feeling of overcoming the words that have been blocking him. He covered the words that are representing his difficulties, and was able to move towards a successful area in his life. Words are not the biggest factor in his life anymore. He was able to overcome his dyslexia and become someone very successful within his Ultra-Orthodox community. Benny found a way to deal with the parts that are difficult for him, he found that his sister can write his speech for him and then he can say it on stage without any fear. It seems that his parents didn't see him as much as his other siblings, therefore he might still be trying to prove himself in other ways. The art that represents Benny is a newspaper that has so many words and

its being covered slowly to show the insignificance of the words and that he can just go on and find a way to deal with it.

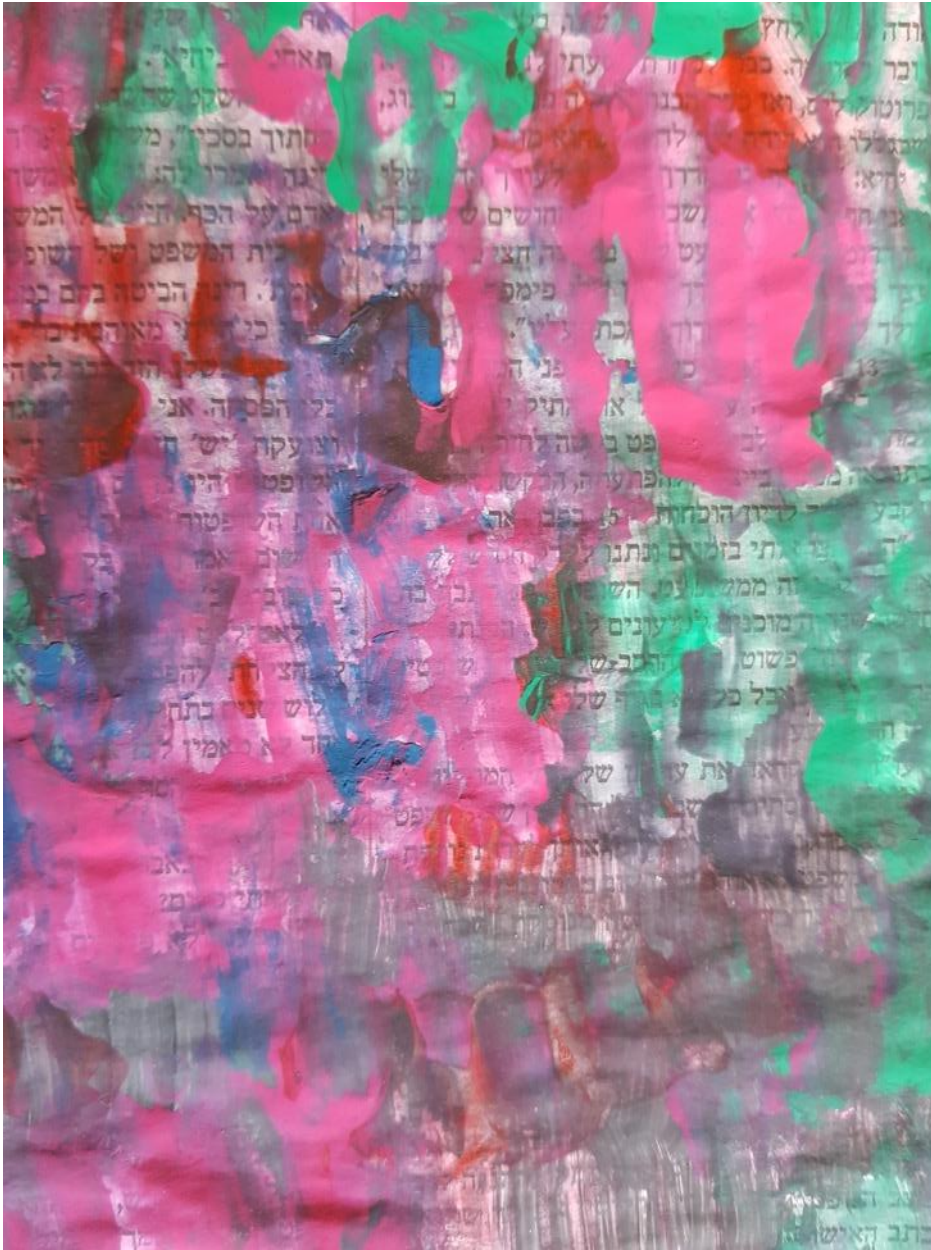


Figure 11. *Responding to Benny's experience (Adi).*

Jacob: Always three

Jacob's experience (see Figure 12) stated that his dyslexia still affect his life. In his drawings, the symbol 3 came up. Whether it was three circles or three shapes, he always drew

things in threes. The shapes were also either full or empty. He avoids anything that is too long, if it is something that he cannot read or deal with, he will skip it and do something else. Jacob mentioned how he struggles with words and expressing himself. He made a comment about going to school for the social element and finding friends who were quiet.



Figure 12. *Responding to Jacob's experience (Adi).*

Analysis from an Art Therapist

The art therapist looked at the participant's drawings as well as my own art responses and listened to the interview responses and together we discussed the data presented. I showed her all of the participants' drawings, one next to the other, so she could see what each participant had created. After that I read to her what each participant expressed and explained about each

drawing. The art therapist has psychoanalytic, dynamic and phenomenology training and gave her perspective and comments from these perspectives. She gave her interpretation of each drawing and discussed what she saw and felt.

Shira

The art therapist noted that Shira seemed to be talking about two different parts of her within some friendships (see Figure 13); her friends see her as either smart or bad. She went on to say:

It seems like there are two sides of a mask towards the outside world. Shira is filling up her emptiness towards her friends with her teachers. She hangs out during the breaks with her teachers. There also looks like there is a theme with couples of two. In her drawing towards her friends (see Figure 13) and how she feels towards her teachers (see Figure 14) are in couples. It also looks like they want to be close to each other but they are not. In the drawing about how she feels towards her parents (see Figure 15), they are all doing everything together. The table (see Figure 15) looks as though its set for four but there are only three people at the table. It is interesting that she needs to emphasize that she is a regular girl. The eyes in the drawing are hollow or dots; that can attest that there is a communication issue. Shira may feel more special but she doesn't feel like everyone, she is viewing the world in the way that the world is viewing her. It seems that Shira feels similarly to Libi. Her artwork feels very empty, isolated, and unable to grasp something.

Liat

The art therapist started looking closer to see what was written in each painting in order to try to understand what she was expressing.

In the drawing (see Figure 18) “how she feels towards her friends,” she's smiling in the center. When there are two group on the sides of her, it looks like she is alone. It feels that her drawings are full of words. The drawings of her house (see Figure 21) do not seem clear. Why does the house have a “missing piece?” It seems not as clear as the plane and the map (see Figure 20). The drawings feel like a map coming from one place to another with the curve going down. It feels that she is filling up the emptiness in the page.

Liat feels as though she is trying to fill in the entire page. It might be from an authentic place from inside. Or that its coming from a place that is trying to cover for something. She also added that without the dyslexia she would not be who she is today and therefore it seems that she accepted herself (see Figure 21).

David

From his drawings, it does not look like he is 27. In the drawings about how he feels towards his friends (see Figure 24), the square looks like the caravan that he is describing in third grade. In the drawing towards his teachers (see Figure 22), he wrote every good word. It sounds very sad, it sounds as if he is saying ‘just give me one good word to help me get through this school experience.’ Regarding the way he feels towards his mother (see Figure 23), the crown that he drew to symbolize the queen that she is does not look like a crown but more of something that is aggressive. It looks sharp and something that you should not go near as though it's the sun. The feeling towards himself (see Figure 25) has this feeling of being so heavy since the page itself is empty; something inside does not feel internalized. His story was more of what he heard growing up as a child, what his mother told him. David’s mother is one that takes all the space with the want to help

and to push. They might be in symbiosis together. He does not know who his friends are because they are not present in his life. He mentioned that he did not ask for help from his teachers, and that it is as though he is a fish in the water and they are trying to through him a little piece of food just for a little support from someone that might hear him. There is a feeling that is connected to the lack of father's presence, and that the mom is the backbone and that he's completely hung up and helpless in front of the world. He can't accomplish his dreams to be a dog trainer and struggles, because he has to prove himself to his mother.

Libi

In the two drawings of how she feels towards her friends (see Figure 27) and teachers (see Figure 26) the element of the line is as not as strong and confident as the two drawings about how she feels towards her parents (see Figure 28) and herself (see Figure 29). Even the way she wrote "okay" in how she feels towards herself is clearer with a strong line (see Figure 26). There are two brown colors used that are similar to the way she feels towards her teachers (see Figure 26) and parents (see Figure 28), but she drew in a different color for how she feels about herself (see Figure 29). The happy face in how she feels about her parents has more of a circle and is present with confidence (see Figure 28).

Jenny

It feels like she has learned a lot from her experience. How she is in her experience in school (see Figure 31) and towards her friends (see Figure 30) is the same. She drew the same drawing, with just different colors. The way she feels towards her parents (see Figure 32) shows that she knows that they are proud of her, and are behind her in

anything that she chooses, but what she feels is difficult for her. She knows that she is very proud of herself (see Figure 34) for her accomplishments and what she has gone through. She is aware of her difficulties, and can see her positive flowers that are growing. She knows that the path is not easy, but can see the path as the way to get to the point she wants to get to.

Miriam

Miriam seems that she is trying to grasp her place within her friends. She uses the art to explain her feelings. In the drawing “how I feel towards my teachers” (see Figure 37) it does not look like a loud speaker, but more of an axe with a red line that feels terribly aggressive. In the drawing “how I feel towards my friends?” (see Figure 36), it feels very grandiose, like being on top of a mountain and having everyone look at her. She reached the top of the mountain compared to the social isolation that has been there. The group of people in both of the social aspects it looks like a clump of people that look the same and there is no diagnosis of who each person is (see Figures 35,36). They look like a yellow block (see Figure 36); there is nothing special about each person.

Apparently, she shows it as different but in two places she is really isolated from the group. She also shows she has this broken heart that also resonates in this place, that she feels differently from society and the people in her class (see Figure 36). She showed division (see Figure 35) in her drawing of the teachers and her friends. Her feelings about the special education class seem divided into two.

The idea of being grandiose is that she is isolating herself from society, the ability to represent herself, when there is not anything authentic about herself. She might feel more

special; she still is not like everyone. I want to be part of the world (see Figure 39) but it is so far from my way of reach because of her difficulty.

Nof

You can't really say where she is in the drawings. All the girls appear the same and in the teacher's expression there is an emphasis on the mouth, what it is been said, and how she is standing. I don't think that everyone is listening to her but her face is very noticeable and the eyes and communication with the teacher is very noticeable. In the drawings on how she feels towards her friends (see Figure 40), everyone is the same and there is nothing that distinguishes between the friends. In the drawing on how she feels towards her parents (see Figure 42), there is a line between the mother and father where the mother is crying and the father is together hand in hand. In the drawing on how she feels towards herself (see Figure 43), there is a feeling of being false and that it not something that is strong even though she drew a superman hero type. She drew something that is not built well. It may have a wide shoulder, but it doesn't feel strong and stable. The feeling to be something so significant but ultimately incapable is wishful thinking.

Annie

She had to be the normal one in her family and not be like her brother, because he got rejected out of schools and she saw the outcomes and reactions from his surrounding, so she kept a low profile. The clouds are interesting (see Figure 45), as how she is portraying herself as a dream and what it brings to her. The feeling of disappearing when she talks about her dyslexia and comparing the same symbol to the clouds her appreciation to her teachers is also something that she can't touch. When you can't talk

about something, you have to shut down, and keep it to yourself without having someone support you in your difficulty.

Rina

It feels that she wanted to make her feelings stronger from the use of pencil under and then using oil pastels and markers on top of the circles she created, like using the purple of how she feels towards her teachers (see Figure 48). In the drawing of how she feels towards her teachers (see Figure 48), the purple and black on top seems very strong. The way she tore the paper into three is also interesting. The paper may have been too big and intimidating, as even within the smaller page she would create only on one side. The first thing is that it feels lacking between both parents (see Figure 50), and even then both parents feel not as present. They don't feel that they were as emphasized as with the other drawings. It feels like her parents could listen and respond to something. In the drawing on how she feels towards herself (see Figure 50), how she started from the inside and took her hearts outwards seems like a defense mechanism. Then at the end it says, "I'm good" with a line under to prove to myself that she sees herself as good. The pages feel dismantled from the truth, and that she is convincing herself into something positive that will come. It could possibly be becoming she come from such a close community that are not allowed to speak about anything.

Benny

Benny is representing society as the chairs and smiles with a head of facial features (see Figure 51). The group of chairs is listening to the teachers. They are not within any interaction between themselves, and each one is one person for himself. He is also emphasizing his sadness towards everyone and that he would like to be like everyone

else. In the drawing on the chair they are in the air and not on a floor. It feels helpless and like there is no stable ground.

In the drawing towards his teachers (see Figure 53), it looks like a traumatic experience, something monster like. Also, there is a feeling of aggression towards his parents (see Figure 54). He didn't even create a mouth for any of the people. Also, he did not create a face, so that he would not hear what his parents have to say because the radio is turned on so loud when he represents himself without hands and legs. Something is not clear.

Jacob

There is a repetition to the way that he feels with the people around him, seen in the line that is representing within his work. He doesn't seem to put himself in the large circle so he protected himself and created another circle where he is inside (see Figure 56). He is pushing himself towards and away from his mother and she was the one that had to deal with all of the boundaries, especially within the school aspect (see Figure 57). The father didn't have to deal with boundaries and there is a split between what each parent is, and who the authoritarian is.

In the drawing towards himself (see Figure 58), he used a colored silver pencil as opposed to the other three drawings where he used pencil, it feels like a spiral that goes back a forth like an 8.

Roei

The art therapist said Roei sounds very intelligent from the way he speaks about his experience as someone with LD. The art therapist said that if she were to compare his experience to David's, it would be possible because of the parental support that each of them received. He also received social support and it seems as though he so successful. It

could be because Roei's father is such a strong father figure, even though he did not approve of his abilities or his passion, this might have possibly been the reason for him to push and prove himself even more. He did experience the feeling of feeling small (see Figure 60), but it looks like what he made was cartoon-like. That the image that he created for himself is that he is a little dinosaur that comes to the world. He comes to the world with his head so inside the ground (see Figure 61) that he is embarrassed from his experience, and has the teacher next to his legs and looking at his feet. Compared to his mother that looks as though she is accepting him for who he is and licking his wounds (see Figure 63).

General reflections

There is a characteristic that all the participants want to get farther and compare themselves to and in society and they have so much ambition. What is hard for the participants is that the LD is not taking over the entire person and not giving them the ability to see past it. Do they have a center that is stable something different other than the LD? Roei showed that he has a symbol that he can relate to and can be pushed forward, but if there is no center they may not have something to push forward. Adults have a harder time than kids. It is something that characterizes them; they want to advance in society. They have a lot of ability and curiosity and their desire to learn but technically they fail to have such a big gap between what they want and what they can reach and still have the desire after so many experiences.

Another theme that came up is the participants being unseen by their parents. It seems that Annie has an experience that she is unseen. Annie's parents cannot see themselves and their connection to everyone. How could a father that has dyslexia not see her? And, in

Benny's experience, his parents are talking about him while he listens to music to block them out (see Figure 46).

It is interesting that the participants feel the need to meet societal expectations rather than to be aware of their own difficulties. For them to experience being normal, there is not normalization, and everything that is happening to them is so exceptional. People with LD need to see themselves, which can be challenging because they cannot see past the LD itself. That is a part of themselves that was present throughout all the themes, and they did not always let their strengths come through.

The art therapist also gave her interpretation of my artwork that I did in response to each participant. When she looked at the artwork I did in response to Miriam (see Figure 1), she said it looks like it is a game of archery, trying to hit the right place, the light blue background is creating a shadow behind it and give it a new effect and smoothens it but not completely. When she looked at the art work in response to Annie (see Figure 2), she said she saw a bag made out of rocks, that when you are trying to lift it, it won't move, but within looks like there are steps and you can walk up and down them. The bag looks opened; can it really hold and contain what's inside of it? In response to Shira (see Figure 3), she said the art looked like balloons, soaring in the air but they are all the same and I am different. The balloons are touching but not at the same time. Filling the entire space with water colors, it is not liquidy and doesn't spread. The overall feeling is that it is not perfect and something feels missing. When the art therapist looked at my art work in response to Nof (see Figure 4), she said it seemed like a person is trying to move something very heavy. It's not moving and she is stuck in its place all alone, it's not connected to the ground but does take up a lot of space. "Where is the person going? Why is it so important to push? What's inside the box? The box seems to be taking up a lot of space; it must

be important to her.” When the art therapist saw the response to Libi (see Figure 5), she said it looks like pop art; she explained that everything is ok; but really I am not fine, the frame is within the frame. “Feels that it's a cynical statement. Black background with a white bubble, feels that something is hiding behind in the dark. A frame within the frame. the work is controlled and ready.” In response to the art about Rina’s experience (see Figure 6), the art therapist said that everything is blurry, and not clear, liquidy and smearing. “Could it be ruined on purpose or by accident? Are they trying to get erased? Lots of movement and the drops make the movement stop. Possibly coffee drops, wasn't protected like it should have been.” The art therapist said that in the art about Liat’s experience (see Figure 7), looks like a crossword puzzle there is a lot of writing, but what is important in it? She sensed an experience of being attacked by information and words. “Getting lost within the words and being controlled.” When interpreting my artwork about Roei’s experience (see Figure 8), she said that it is a challenge, a question about stability. “As far as you can go across the bridge. dyslexia is not something that is expected. All of a sudden, you do not deal with it in a straight way, you have to build a safe bridge to cross, but then what happens if the road is not sturdy enough? Do you have a fear of heights? Does he want to prove his abilities?” In response to my artwork about David (see Figure 9), she said that it looks like a maze, but asked how you get out. She said it seems like you are stuck and then you can see that there are still many options inside the “stuckness.” “It’s controlled and repetitive, very aesthetic.” When the art therapist looked at my art in response to Jenny’s experience (see Figure 10), she said on the surface there is a feeling of being a winner and successful, which is a powerful experience. “I’ve been through a lot and now I am ignoring the difficulties there were there before.” She also added that there is a lot of control to fill in all the empty spaces and at the same time gentleness because of the use of colored pencils as the

medium. In response to the artwork about Benny's experience, (see Figure 11) the art therapist said that it feels like a dirty despised Torah scroll. There is no element of control, the writing is smeared and impossible to read, but there is still a lot of liveliness and beauty inside, cold and warm colors are only mixing in certain places. Lastly, in response to the art about Jacob's (see Figure 12) experience, she said that she saw prime colors, simplicity and order and control within the chaos. "Lack of inspiration or imagination. The red is above the two other colors, there is no sense of harmony and compatibility. The use of the pastels is opaque and precise and seems that it demands more effort to not leave the lines. The triad seems to symbolize the parent-child relationship."

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Interviews were conducted with twelve participants, six of whom were in inclusive education classrooms and six of whom were in special education classrooms. Participants spoke about their feelings towards themselves, their teachers, their peers, and their parents. The following 12 characteristics emerged from the data: (a) teachers eliciting positive feelings, (b) inclusive education teachers eliciting negative feelings (with subthemes of humiliation, getting taken out of classes, and physical abuse), (c) special education students struggled socially, (d) inclusive education students enjoyed being social, (e) inclusive education students felt frustrated with parents, (f) loved and admired by parents, (g) successful other siblings, (h) connection to a sibling, (i) positive feelings towards themselves (with subthemes of pride and ambition) (j) negative feelings towards themselves (with subthemes of failure, shame, feeling different, isolation, sadness, feeling dependent on others, feeling understood, dating (k) art making (with subthemes of being scared of drawing, coloring in notebooks, and paper size). (l) love to take care of animals. The following literature provides further insight into the topic of how people with learning disabilities feel and impact towards their surroundings.

Feelings at School

The relationship a student has with their teacher can greatly affect their experience in school. Al-Yagon (2016) explains that a healthy relationship with a teacher can increase a student's positive affect. Many students with LD do not feel supported and feel disconnected from their teachers, which was supported by the findings in this study.

Inclusive education teachers giving negative feelings. According to Al-Yagon (2016), children with LD often perceive their teachers as less accepting and available, and more distant

than children without LD. Additionally, the author explains that teachers similarly felt disconnected more so to students with LD than to their counterparts without LD. This is similar to what the participants in this study reported; several of the adults had relationships with their teacher that they classified as humiliating and negative, as opposed to the special education participants that had warm, positive relationships with their teachers.

Humiliation. Students with LD often feel humiliated by the ways they are treated differently than their peers (Cigman, 2007). The participants in this study, have highlighted the ways in which students with LD can be humiliated in school.

Getting taken out of classes. With regards to the subtheme of getting taken out of classes, the participants were aware of the social disadvantages of being separated from their classmates. Karin et al. (2012) support this by explaining that students feel socially disconnected when they are taken out of the classroom, but at the same time they appreciate the support they receive from their teachers. When a child is singled out in school for extra one-on-one time with a teacher, in school tutoring, and test taking privileges that include extra time, they are identified as different. The identification may be subjective and not one that their peers sense (Karin et al., 2012). However, as was pointed out in this study by several of the participants, feeling different due to special treatment can further enhance the feeling of isolation. Furthermore, as was noted from this study, children with LD may feel a sense of isolation and loneliness due to the different treatment they receive in school. Additionally, Cigman (2007) discusses how labels and being separated from peers can lead to students with disabilities feeling inferior and demeaned as was suggested several times by Miriam, Jacob and Benny in this study. Both Karin et al. (2012) and Cigman (2007) support the idea that participants from inclusive education who were removed

from their classes can lead to negative feelings and feelings of inadequacy in comparison to their peers.

Physical abuse by teachers. An Israeli news program (Channel 10 with Amnon Levy; Levy, A., 2018) recently described the abuse that happens in Ultra-Orthodox schools, which was similar to what some of the participants described. In a recent documentary (Channel 10 with Amnon Levy; Levy, A., 2018), former members of the Charedi community recounted being hit by a ruler or a belt, and one boy was hit so hard on the head that he had permanent brain damage. The rabbi told him to tell his mother that he hit his head himself so the school would not get in trouble. Writing using the pseudonym Samuel Friedman (2018), an anonymous author wrote an article about the abuse he faced as a student in an Ultra-Orthodox school. Some participants in this study faced similar abuse to those described by Levy (2018) and Friedman (2018). Children with disabilities are twice as likely to be victims of abuse (Reiter, Bryen, & Shachar, 2007). In addition to these recent projects, a new forum was created where people have shared tens of experiences of such abuse. These mediums have helped raise awareness of abuse that occurs within that community.

Feelings towards their Friends

Special education students struggled socially. Some participants who were in special education classes recalled struggling when it came to being social. Participants' responses are similar to those reported by Gaspar, Bilmória, Albergaria, and Gaspar Matos (2016). The researchers investigated the assumption that children and teenagers who receive special education services demonstrate increased challenges with social skills and being excluded from their peers. The participants mentioned that they had trouble making friends and recalled having only a few friends in total. Holt, Bowlby, and Lea (2017) did a study on the needs of children

who receive special education. They found that oftentimes, young people with learning disabilities had little or no friends in school. As Dodge et al. (2003) explained peer rejection impacts children beginning in elementary school and can have a long-term impact. The researchers investigated why children feel socially rejected and determined that social rejection occurs because children are introverted and withdrawn, or because aggressive behavior is shown towards a child (Dodge et al., 2003). The participants in this study experienced social rejection due to feeling withdrawn.

The data provided by Gaspar et al. (2016) is similar to the current participants' responses. The researchers confirm that students who came from special education classrooms demonstrated negative feelings socially, emotionally, and health-related. The participants also expressed that they were negatively impacted by friends. In addition, while the participants felt positively supported by their parents, the participants in Gaspar et al.'s (2016) study trended towards dissatisfaction towards their parents.

Inclusive education students enjoyed being social. The participants in this study who were in inclusive classrooms shared that they enjoyed the social aspect of their education and that they felt like they were a part of their class, socially. These participants also mentioned having a decent amount of friends despite their LD. They also said that having their friends in the classroom with them made the hard aspects of school more manageable because they were looking forward to socializing. Moser Opitz, Grob, Wittich, Häsel-Weide, and Nührenbörger (2018) explain that the social aspect of inclusive classrooms is important and that students with LDs show positive achievement in these classrooms. The participants in this study support this research. Ruijs and Peetsma (2009) explain that inclusive classrooms support social interaction among these students with their local peers, which then might lead to further social development.

Feelings towards Parents and Siblings

Participants in general felt that their connection to their parents was important, and this was particularly true amongst children from the special education classroom, who felt especially strong connections towards their parents. Chethik (2000) adds that when a child feels his parents support and is invested in their success, it can help their self-esteem. Prior to addressing parental support, it is important to explore parental feelings and reactions to having a child diagnosed with LD. Smith (1995) suggests that the process parents with children who have been diagnosed with LD go through can be understood through Kubler-Ross's five stage model (1980) of grief. Although this model was originally proposed for terminally ill patients after diagnosis, the model was adapted to pertain to other diagnoses as well. The stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Parents often experience a sense of denial, choosing to ignore problems that are evident. Annie's description of her experience supports this research, and Nof only got diagnosed in 11th grade. Next, they may feel anger and express rage at the lot they have been handed by fate. The bargaining stage manifests itself in thinking that maybe switching schools or moving to a new community may solve the problem. These compromises are made in an effort to resolve the issues. The following stage includes grieving for what may have been the child and family's future had the child not been diagnosed and may become depressed. Last, the parent's transition to a stage of acceptance of the child as a whole, who has strengths and weaknesses, and are ready to figure out ways to help the child succeed (Kubler Ross, 1980; Smith, 1995). It is important to note that Kubler Ross' (1980) model is non-linear in the sense that there can be regression to earlier stages at any point in time.

Smith (1995) notes that initially, parents may feel confused by the contrast between their child's abilities and disabilities. Additionally, it may be unclear where the line is drawn between

a child's incapability and resistant behavior. Furthermore, parents may sense the child's feelings of failure and internalize it as their own. A parent may feel that had they parented differently, set different guidelines, and invested more in the child, it may have yielded different results. Thus, it is important to explain to parents that LD is an organic issue and not a result of external factors (Smith 1991;1995).

Another struggle parents of LD child face, is the confusing feedback they receive from the various professionals involved in their child's care. The psychologist, family doctor, and the teacher may share conflicting reports and suggestions for how to best help the child progress. The various reports can cause confusion and anxiety (Smith, 1995) Therefore, as Goldman (1973) suggested, it is important for professionals and parents to have a positive working relationship; providing feedback to each other is important so that as a team, they may consistently help the child and thus positively affect the child's self-esteem (Smith, 2001). Following the nucleus, the child with LD has a great chance of getting his or her outlook affected. The parents and family have the most power to influence the child's self-esteem. However, in order for the parents to relay positive messages to the child, they may have to go through a process wherein they reach a realization that the disability, which marks the child as different, is not equivalent to the child being inferior to his or her peers. In fact, the opposite may be true with the data that points to a link between severe disabilities and extraordinary abilities (Smith, 1995).

Inclusive education students felt frustrated with parents. Participants in this study expressed feeling frustration towards their parents due to the pressure they felt from them. As Nof said, her biggest mistake was giving in to her mother's pressure to study a subject that was too challenging for her. Researchers have examined this and found that interactions between

students and their parents can often be misunderstood by both parties. Pomerantz and Moorman (2007) reported that children and their parents tend to become more frustrated when working together on homework if one of them is frustrated by the material. Jacob mentioned that working with his mother on homework was hard because she was demanding. In other words, frustration begets more frustration. The authors explain that “when parents are involved in an irritable, critical manner, they may convey that doing schoolwork is an unpleasant task,” (p. 238), thus creating further frustration.

Loved and admired by parents. Attachment theory is a developmental psychological theory which deals with long-term relational dynamics between people, rooted in the evolving relationship between child and mother early in life (Waters & Corcoran, 2005). The central premise of the theory is that there is an innate and universal need of babies to develop a relationship with at least one central caregiver. This relationship is essential to the development of social and emotional functioning of the baby and also has a long-lasting impact. There are four theorized styles of attachment, secure, insecure avoidant, insecure ambivalent and disorganized attachment. These four groups capture different kinds of attachment relationships with the caregiver, which suggest methods of communication, emotion regulation, and ways of answering to apparent threats.

Although attachment theory is related to individual parent-child relationships, Hill Fonagy, Safier, and Sargent (2003) pragmatically applied these concepts to family systems. Through the family’s attachment style, various cognitive, emotional, and other behaviors will arise within the family. The family’s coherence, according to these authors, is the basis of the child functioning as an individual. When the communication between family members is clear and able to be trusted, it gives a sense of confidence to the child, as was with the participants in

the special education, where they felt accepted and loved. An example of that is the way that special education participants such as Shira, Liat, Libi, David and Miriam felt towards their parents. When an individual is not understood inside their family circle, it may create confusion and make their place in the family dynamic more fragile, causing them to begin losing confidence in themselves as did four of the inclusive participants, such as Annie, Nof, Benny and Jacob, and therefore can explain the inclusive LD student's feelings towards their parents. The quality of the attachment is an important influence on the child's development.

Connection to a sibling. The relationship between siblings within the family is one of the longest relationships in a person's life (Feinberg, Solmeyer, & McHale, 2012). Rina mentioned how her brother assisted and provided for one another with social relationships, emotional support (Goetting, 1986), and they directly affect each other in behavior, learning, and development throughout life, especially in childhood and adolescence (McHale, Updergraff, & Whiteman, 2012). Usually, siblings and siblings with developing disabilities have a strong, positive relationship (Begum & Blacher, 2011). In this regard, siblings without disabilities commonly show increased levels of empathy, maturity, self-confidence, and have a greater understanding of being responsible. Also, they are more aware of their own health and intellectual abilities, when compared to siblings who do not have a sibling with a disability (Begum & Blacher, 2011). Rina mentioned discussing her difficulties with her brother. Mostatche, Brady and Noberini (1983) explored the relationship between sibling support during a family crisis. These authors explain that the relationship during this time is particularly strong, because they are connected by blood, share similar backgrounds, and understand the social responsibilities that come with that role. The authors explain that these times might include the

death of a parent, leaving home, or when one sibling gets married, as Rina mentioned the night before her brother's wedding.

Successful other siblings. Benny, Annie, and Liat all mentioned that their siblings are "successful." In this manner, they felt inferior and inadequate compared to their siblings, who are typically-developing. Benny and Annie are on the younger spectrum of their siblings and Liat is the youngest sibling in her family. Kolak and Volling (2011) explore the relationship between older and younger siblings and the feelings of jealousy that result. In this article, they examine the concept that older siblings are typically in a leadership and teacher role over their younger siblings throughout the preschool and elementary school years. Kolak and Volling (2011) further explain that older siblings' behaviors towards their younger siblings was stable during these years, whereas younger siblings demonstrated less stable behavior towards their older siblings, as Benny, Annie, and Liat expressed. Kolak and Volling (2011) further explored the connection between jealousy and sibling relationships. The article describes that jealousy both occurs within oneself and between others. The jealousy complex, as proposed by Kolak and Volling (2011), consists of three parts: emotional, behavioral, and intellectual. Depending on the relationship between the beloved and the rival, the jealousy complex differs. Although Benny, Annie, and Liat were not directly jealous of their older siblings, their inferiority led them to believe that their older siblings were more successful. As Annie mentioned, she felt that her parents valued her brother's achievements more than they valued her own, which made her feel inferior.

Positive Feelings Towards Themselves

Ambition versus failure. Nof, Roei, Benny, and Rina, who were participants from inclusive education, mentioned their ambition and their success. In an article by Gerber, Ginsberg, & Reiff, (1992) the authors discussed the theme of having ambition and successes. In

this regard, a person who has multiple learning disabilities must set a goal that they can achieve. Also, he or she must be aware of the learning disability as well as their own strengths and weaknesses. This knowledge is important in order for the person to fulfill his or her goals.

Gerber et al.,(1992) continued that people with learning disabilities sometimes feel nervous about the idea of failure, and therefore, need to have a clear goal in mind to order to attain success. Current participants felt that their LD gave them a sense of a negative self-esteem; this feeling made it difficult for them to be successful (Coopersmith, 1967). Annie, Miriam and David mentioned that their LD is an overall sense of failure and therefore, are unable to succeed or become anything that they dream. Heyman (1990) adds that individuals with LD have a tendency to associate academic failure with the feeling of overall failure. Students in this study that were in inclusive classes experienced more feelings of social success coupled with feelings of academic failure, while students in special needs classes experienced more feelings of academic success coupled with social failure.

Negative Feelings Towards Themselves

Shame. Participants in the study discussed not wanting to talk about the disability with their friends. Despite the fact that children with LD can be successful in school, the labels and stigma that surround LDs can often make these students feel less confident about their abilities. Furthermore, being diagnosed with an LD can also affect how parents and teachers view a child (Shifer, 2013).

Walker (2017) discussed the relationship between shame, feeling left out of groups, and non-acceptance by peers and how they are culturally relevant. In other words, group dynamics and emotions vary in different cultures. Therefore, when understanding how shame and disconnection affect people, it is important to be aware of the ways these emotions are expressed

within the culture. The participants in this study did not share much with others about their experiences with LDs, and instead they chose to keep their experiences to themselves. Walker (2017) also explored the inner workings of how shame impacts individuals on multiple levels. He explains that shame, which could be social, harmful, experiential, an obstacle, or induce feelings of negative self-worth, impact learning experiences in a multitude of ways for both students and teachers. Students in inclusive classrooms in this study were more prone to feeling shame than students in special education classes.

Feeling different. The concept of feeling different is supported by the research conducted by Stiefel, Shieraw, Schwartz, and Gottfried (2017). Feelings of self-consciousness and comparing oneself to classmates is especially important throughout the middle and high school years. During these years, students experience increased social pressure and therefore, feel the need for heightened positive relationships with classmates and school staff. Feeling a sense of belonging is particularly impactful for middle and high school students in order for them to form their academic and social identities. The research, therefore, supports the idea that middle school is a vitally important part of a person's development. This is particularly true in regard to development of social skills and forming one's identity. Parents believe that if their children are in classrooms where they fit in academically (meaning a special education classroom), they will be happier due to the fact they are not being viewed as different from their peers (Bajwa-Patel & Devecchi, 2014). Conversely, the students in this study felt that they were different from their peers even within the special education classroom.

The feeling of being alone may have distanced themselves from the peers. This behavior may have started as a choice by the child with LD, but at the same time it can spring into a feeling of rejection by classmates aimed at the child with LD. These feelings of rejection

oftentimes are the contributing factor towards depression (Gorman, 2001). Liat's picture (see Figure 18.), showed feelings of loneliness even when with her friends. The arts-based research showed that Shira's drawing (see Figure 13.), perceives that she is socially accepted and a regular girl but in reality has difficulties socializing.

Isolation. Social isolation is an important challenge that children with LD face. Social incompetence impacts individuals with LD in relation to their classmates. In addition, there were a few students who appeared to not have any close friends. Isolation was impactful for some students, and therefore, were rarely seen with their classmates. On the other hand, other students had friendships that were contradictory, impermanent, and highly conflictual. Holt, Bowlby & Lea (2017) interviewed a special education student, Simon, who attends a rural mainstream school. Simon stated, "since everyone knows me, I don't have a clear peer group in school. Hanging out with the same people gets boring, so I like to move around" (p.1369). Some students in this study such as Libi, Shira and David from special education did not have any close friends.

Sadness. The participants in this study expressed the feelings of sadness in various ways, whether it was a sense of sadness or sadness about what to do in the future. David described feeling despair regarding finishing his certification. Libi (see Figure 27.), drew a sad face to describe her feelings towards her peers, and Benny referred to an overall "sense of sadness." Raes, Hermans, Williams, Bijttebier and Eelen (2007) describe that the feeling of sadness can arise for anyone throughout life in various situations and there are many approaches regarding how to deal with this feeling. These authors feel that one might think that it is important to find the source of the sadness in order to be released from the burden of feeling sad. However, Raes et al. (2007) explain that by dwelling on the sad feelings, one may get further absorbed in those

feelings, thus leading them into a constant never-ending cycle of sadness. Therefore, being aware of the sadness and releasing that feeling may be more efficient.

Pride. As discussed in the literature review, Argyle (2008) suggests an individual's idea of self-accomplishment and feeling proud is based on the reaction of others. The relationship between self-accomplishment and the development of a positive self-image in children who have LD is further supported by Kloomok and Cosden (1994). The researchers explored the connections between self-esteem, appearance, behavior, and sports, while simultaneously receiving social support in a class. Kloomok and Cosden (1994) concluded that while there were clear differences in an individual's academic abilities in relation to appearance, parental, and social support, results indicated that social support was of primary importance in impacting a learning disabled child's attitude. Another important finding was that when the child receives parental support, he or she generally feels more successful (Kloomok & Cosden, 1994). Nof and Annie from inclusive education and David from special education all received positive feedback from their teachers. Roei takes great pride in his achievements (see Figure 67.); he feels that he succeeded in overcoming his learning disability, which can also be seen in the arts-based research as seen in Figure 64. Jenny felt very proud that she achieved an important goal that she set for herself.

Argyle (2008) adds that there are four contributors and that the participants fell under some of the contributing factors. The first factor describes feeling pride based on other's perceptions. The second factor is one compares him or herself to others, as Jenny compared herself to her classmates and felt a sense of pride as well. The third factor explores the relationship between social roles and society. The fourth and final factor examines an

individual's self-identification of position and/or role in a group. All of these contribute to forming one's personality traits, which thus impacts his or her self-esteem (Argyle, 2008).

Feeling Dependent on Others. O'Farrell (2017) mentioned that people with LD are more dependent on others when compared to those without LD. The participants discussed their experiences with being dependent on others for various reasons. Such as tutors for feeling success in school or being dependent on family members for assisting them in school experiences.

Yearning to feel understood. The participants expressed their feeling of being understood by others and therefore, felt the need to explain themselves. According to Morelli, Torre, and Eisenberger (2014) feeling understood is a critical component of social interaction, physical, and psychological well-being. Participants who felt more understood demonstrated a stronger connection to other people; this important connection is shown when Benny and Annie mentioned that their teachers understood them. Based on this research, if the participants did not feel understood in their daily interaction, they may avoid continuing to pursue their relationship instead of trying to strengthen the social relationship. This connection was found when Nof (see Figure 29.), mentioned her relationships with her teachers. This information means that participants may lose their motivation to go to school. O'Farrell (2017) adds that individuals with LD have a difficult time understanding their surroundings as well as being understood. Feeling understood is an important piece of one's overall well-being according to O'Farrell (2017). It is stressful being misunderstood and can cause people to distance themselves more from social relationships/interactions/situations (Shelton, Douglass, Garcia, Yip, & Trail, 2014).

Dating. In the Modern Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jewish cultures, men and women date for marriage and are usually set up by a third party (Milevsky, Niman, Raab, & Gross,

2011). There were three participants that brought up the idea of dating. Milevsky et al. (2011) also mention that a couple only dates a few times before deciding to get married. Participants from each group, most specifically Miriam and Benny, experienced nervousness and apprehension about going on dates.

Art making

While adults may have their guard up when they enter therapy, the creative flow of energy is a natural one that children have not yet suppressed. McNiff (2009) supports this idea when discussing the healing power of imagination. He finds that children have an innate sense of spontaneity. Such results were corroborated in the pilot study conducted as part of this research (Greenboim-Zimchoni, 2017). As such, the arts are conducive to authentic self-expression, both on an interpersonal and intrapersonal level (Moriyah, 2000). There were participants such as Miriam and Roei, who have artistic backgrounds, that had an easier time explaining themselves after drawing. They commented that it was easier to verbalize how they were feelings after they had drawn it. The visual nature of art assists the person in organizing and understanding his or her own feeling (Safran, 2002). Additionally, the art can help communicate to the therapist the client's inner thoughts and feelings as well as his or her relationships to their surroundings (French & Klein, 2012). The ability to communicate through the art is specifically important for children and adults with LD as the nonverbal nature of art making may be helpful for individuals with LD that have difficulties with verbal communication (Liebmann, 1990; Greenboim-Zimchoni, 2017).

Scared of drawing. An individual's unfamiliarity and inexperience with these art materials, as the participants were, impacts his or her ability to participate in an art therapy session. Some of the participants felt this discomfort and may have felt uneasy with utilizing the

materials. Pipitone (2015) is an art therapist who recognizes that many people are hesitant to engage in art therapy because they claim they are not artists or fear that their art will not be good or accepted by others, as Libi and Annie expressed during the study. This is most likely why some of the participants seemed resistant to creating artwork when they were asked. Nishiyama (2017) explains that many people do not draw because they fear being bad at it and Burns (2009) also discusses how blank paper at the start of a session can sometimes cause anxiety for a client. David expressed his fear of not knowing what to create and therefore left a blank paper. However, Nishiyama (2017) reminds readers that that is the process of learning: we start as failures, but as we learn, we gain self-confidence that allows us to continue practicing. Fussell (2014) agrees that a lack of confidence can lead to a stifled art making process, or the lack of one altogether.

Coloring in their notebooks. Aquino (2013) states that doodling is often seen as disrespectful and offensive to teachers. Teachers want their students to pay attention and listen in class. However, some students with LD might find doodling to be a way to relax or escape from class. For example, Andrade (2009) reports that doodling can often aid concentration and does not necessarily decrease academic success.

During the study Nof and Roei mentioned drawing as a way to escape the classroom. While this might be momentarily beneficial for students, it can leave them confused and behind when they mentally return to class. This was not mentioned during the interviews in the study.

Paper size. Jenny and Liat were the only two participants that used A3 paper as opposed to the rest that used A4 paper. Burns (2009) explains that when doing art, clients can use a wide variety of materials to create the image they desire. Burns adds that the clients must have an understanding of what they want to create in order to choose the materials to reach their desired

outcome. Burns implies that it is important to pay attention to the choices a client makes regarding the materials they use and the mediums chosen. These choices might sometimes hold deeper meanings than what appears at the surface.

Love to take care of animals

Serpell (2006), and Santori (2011) explored the idea that animals provide social interaction, comfort, and joy to their human owners. Handlin, Hydbring-Sandberg, Nilsson, Ejdeback, Jansson, and Uvna's-Moberg (2011) discussed the idea that by promoting feelings of safety, animals can decrease anxiety. Guttman (1984) suggested that the bond between animals and people provides an impactful emotional connection. Shira and David from special education and Benny from inclusive education mentioned that they enjoy taking care of animals and that animals are part of their lives.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study was that the special education group and the inclusive education group were limited in gender diversity. This was because the sample special education group consisted of five females and one male; the inclusive education group consisted of three males and three females. This is in contrast to what was reported during the 2015 to 2016 school year where the National Center for Education Statistics found that 17 percent of male students ages 6 to 21, as opposed to only 9 percent of female students, obtained special services in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (NJCLD, 2018). Therefore, the gender representation in the special education group did not accurately represent the gender diversity that is actually present in special education. Another important limitation to note was that secular Jewish Israelis and Arabs were not included in either group.

The Ultra-Orthodox community is a very closed, secretive, and sensitive community. The motive for seclusion is the desire to avoid assimilation and cultural and social influences from the outside world. Therefore, it was impossible to use social media to reach this community, because their internet access is extremely limited to nonexistent. Both participants from this community asked to meet me in places that are very far from their community; in addition, they asked several times if the meeting would be anonymous.

Meeting in public places was also challenging, because it was difficult for the adults with ADHD to concentrate. It was difficult to get the data, and at times, to understand the participants' feelings and encourage them to express themselves. During our sessions, it felt as if they were not always aware of or connected to their pasts. An assigned studio for all of the research would give a more homogenous data collecting environment.

Some of the adults were fearful of drawing and creating and may have prevented them expressing themselves fully. Another point of interest was that none of the adults used any paints, watercolors, scissors, or glue. When I offered the adults a larger-than-average piece of paper, they looked at it as if it was intimidating and seemed apprehensive about being able to fill up the page.

In addition, utilizing another art therapist to review the data in this research study had its advantages and disadvantages. For example, the other art therapist had psychoanalytical and phenomenology training in art therapy, which brings a certain bias and perspective. She gave her thoughts on the participants' drawings, heard what they had to say about their experiences, and looked at themes from the art and from their own words through her own lens. However, she did not attend the sessions with the participants, so she was limited in the amount of knowledge she had about them. She also works mostly with children, rather than adults, which was the population studied.

Conclusion

The education system in Israel is undergoing major reform. Part of the reform includes trying to integrate more special education students within the inclusive classrooms. All regular schools and all regular classes will have to change. Part of the reform will include changing the criteria for special education students, and this may set them back in the academic skills they have been doing well with until now (Chernick 2018). According to the Jerusalem Post, there are about 11% of students in the education system with special needs. Only 8% of those children qualify as complex cases, such as chromosomal disorders, autism, or cerebral palsy (Chernick 2018). There seem to be contradictions in debate about the reform, as the government is suggesting that parents will benefit from having a choice in which environment their children get educated, but parents and teachers have argued that the reform will hurt children who already receive support in integrated classrooms (Chernick 2018). After conducting this research, inclusive environments seem to have the utmost importance. In my experience working in schools, teachers do not have the right tools and training to reach their students, on personal, educational and emotional levels. It might be helpful for teachers to consider to have a person to consult with on a weekly basis to present their daily challenges that require consultation and guidance. Creating an open channel for dialog between parents and staff is important for success. From working in the field for the past eight years, I see the importance of parental cooperation and parental acceptance of responsibility for the placement of their children as areas of utmost significance, but most parents have difficulty arriving to this point either because they are frustrated with the education system or are unwilling to listen to the teacher's advice.

Both this study and my personal experiences working in this field have demonstrated that the social component of a child's life is an extremely sensitive domain and feeling included by

their peers is crucial. As stated by McConaughly, (1987) when children feel included socially, they are given the foundation for positive interactions and relationships later in life.

In addition, special education classes in Israel have a maximum of 14 students with various learning, emotional, and behavioral difficulties. LD students benefit from this environment because it enables each student to receive a great amount of personal attention from their teachers; one participant mentioned that she would rather spend her break with her teachers than with her classmates. However, it seems that in the special education classroom, academic learning is emphasized over developing social skills, causing their social lives to suffer as a result of their decision to learn in special education classes. These children are often looked down upon and ridiculed; as one participant said, the rest of the school referred to his class as “the jungle,” emphasizing how socially different they were from the rest of the student body.

One possible way to make students in the special education program feel more included is to adopt a co-teaching method. For example, McConaughly (1987) discusses the potential emotional benefits of a co-teaching model in which the special education teacher and the inclusive teacher work together in a non-competitive environment. This would alleviate the isolation of special education students in a small separate class and allow them to socialize with the rest of their peers. This would also allow special education students to feel a sense of belonging in the inclusive classroom, rather than just attending a few times a week and often feeling like visitors in another classroom. A co-teaching model would help students not feel as intimidated by their teachers, as having both teachers in the classroom would let them get to all of the students in the class with the level of support that each child needs.

From the data in this study, it is clear that parents and special education teachers serve as a source of strength for children with LD. This may be because the parents have emotionally

accepted their children's disability and do not have to prove to the school or to themselves that their children could be in a different environment. Three participants from the inclusive education group spoke about their experience with the principal and how their parents have to speak up to the principal to prove their place in the education system. On the other hand, inclusive students have a better social experience in school and a frustrating connection with their parents. From the data in this study, the social aspect is something that gave the LD students the ability to come to school despite suffering feelings of humiliation and shame. The teachers and parents that interact with these children every day could be more aware of their feelings and needs. They could help the children where they have the most difficulties whether on the educational or social domains.

For individuals with LD, their sense of self as an adult is very much influenced by the experiences they had as a student. Quality of relationships with teachers and social accomplishments or lack thereof greatly influence how these students see themselves. In this study, inclusive education teachers elicited negative feelings; participants who attended inclusive classes remembered being asked to leave the classroom, feelings of being humiliated by the teacher, and even physical abuse by the teacher. Conversely, special education teachers elicited extremely positive feelings; their students felt that their teachers truly cared about them, and the teacher provided extra individualized attention academically and emotionally. The experiences of dating as an adult and trying to enter university, which can cause them to be rejected both socially and academically, were impacted by their childhood experiences, when they experienced similar feelings of rejection.

Regarding LD students' interpersonal relationships, students within the special education system spoke about struggling socially and inclusive education students spoke about enjoying a

successful social life. Participants within inclusive education felt frustrated by their parents, while most of the special education students felt loved and admired by their parents. In terms of their feelings towards themselves, each type of student harbored both positive and negative feelings. Some of the participants felt that they were thankful for having an LD and for the process that they have been through, while others explained that their disability is holding them back from becoming something better, and others mentioned that they have learned to live with their LD and know that they will have to circumvent it to succeed in accomplishing their dreams.

The methods that were used were arts-based research, phenomenology and phenomenology with art. It seems as though the interview would have been harder for some of the participants without the art. When the participants went through the art making process they were able to show and point out their own personal experience, in how big or small they felt or a situation that they went through. It was easier to explain and show what they went through. The accessibility of art making goes for the participants in both inclusive and special education classrooms. Most of the inclusive students had an easier time expressing themselves through art as well as verbally. The individuals that had an artistic background had an easier time with the imagery, drawing it in the exact way they imagined. Two participants from special education had a difficult time drawing as well as with the interview. They said it was because they want it to come out the way they see it, and they know that they cannot, therefore they both pushed the art away.

In addition to thinking about their past and explaining what they went through, when they started to draw, as mentioned above, all but two of the participants looked as though they knew what they wanted to portray. Some participants drew about experiences and specific events

from their childhood. They were able to show what has been challenging for them and used symbolism to demonstrate what they were going through.

The value in arts based research and responding as the researcher through art was gaining a deeper understanding of the participants lived experiences. Art based research was a way of discovering themes and ideas by using art and connecting to the participant's personal stories (McNiff, 2007). Delving into their stories, and feeling their colors and lines made them feel more real and tangible.

My personal process as an adult that has LD and hearing these stories, was that their stories were resonating with me and I felt like I was hearing my story from other people, specifically the ones in inclusive classrooms. What I have discovered during this process are the similarities that adults with LD share, especially with their symptoms, experiences, and what they went through. Because no words were used during the art making process, it was much easier to engage and communicate without trying to put everything into words. Through the art, I was able to see the participants' strengths and weaknesses and find the theme that connected to each one and to all of them as one. I was also able to give them a new way of presenting their experiences and through the process, was able to reexamine my own experiences, understand the data presented in a new way and apply the participants' experiences to my clients that I currently work with as an art therapist with greater sensitivity and empathy.

The contribution to art therapy/expressive therapies

This study is an important contribution to art therapy/expressive therapies. The Understand Me and My Surroundings tool (Appendix B), which was created for and used in this study, can be used in client intake, as it provides important information about the client's background and personality, and can also be used later during therapy. Using this tool gives the therapist an understanding of the specific interpersonal relationships that a client had during an experience which they need to work through and offers a way for the client to explain their point of view. While using the tool, the therapist will see the client's ability to create and express themselves through the art materials, as well as the client's positive or negative experience with the art. The creative process can be self-reflective and can mirror an experience the client is revisiting, which may prompt a conversation for those that have difficulty expressing themselves verbally. In addition, when used in a group setting, this tool creates a way for the group members to meet and encourages them to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences. School guidance counselors can use this tool to help students process their relationships with their teachers and their peers. The tool is simple to use, non-invasive, and can be used at any point of a clinical experience.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should include a much greater number of participants and use art making, as well as interviews, to compare the experiences of adults with LD and adults without LD, in order to come to more definitive conclusions regarding the lives of children with LD in general, beyond the feelings of adults in schools in Israel.

Furthermore, questions that lead to more specific answers should be asked of participants as follow-up to the art making in order to better understand their experiences. For example, it

could be beneficial to ask participants directly about their emotional state before, during, and after the project was completed.

Positive and negative questions about the adult's experiences during their childhood may be beneficial to ask in future studies. Participants could be asked to reflect on both what made them happy in school and what upset them, with a follow up question of "which memory is stronger or has stayed with you more?" This would help participants to analyze their experiences, rather than having the researcher do the analysis and make interpretations.

Another comparison could be done between students that come from different sects of Israeli society, or more deeply focus on the commonalities of experiences within a sect. Researching the Ultra-Orthodox community exclusively would also be beneficial as there has not been much research done with this community. For future research it is necessary to explore other methods that more directly interact with the Chareidi community.

Future research could also study which art materials adults with LD feel most comfortable. It might be beneficial to meet with each participant at the same place, and have the art materials provided in the same manner. Asking the participants to create portraits of themselves would bring self-awareness to the drawing which could help them work on that part of their life with that relationship and experience.

Final Thoughts

The adults that participated in this study had a need to feel heard; normally it is difficult for them to explain themselves and express their feelings. An art assessment of student's feelings done periodically throughout the school year would help teachers, parents, and clinicians understand what children are experiencing, such as bullying or social anxiety. Furthermore, an

art assessment would allow teachers to better understand the root of a child's actions or academic performance, rather than punishing them for misbehavior or poor grades.

By asking adults to reflect on their childhood experiences as a student with LD, the goal of this research was to elevate the LD experience for the greater good by advocating for the feelings that individuals with LD share. Children and adults with LD should be seen beyond their difficulties. After all, if we move beyond our differences, we can discover the similarities we all share.

APPENDIX A

UNDERSTAND ME AND MY SURROUNDINGS TOOL FOR STUDENTS

How to use the tool: as the adult interacting with a student with LD, to try to understand their inner world:

The process must be free of judgment and personal comments by the adult.

1. Give the student the opportunity to think and get in touch with their own feelings, specifically how they feel towards their friends, teacher, parents, and themselves.
2. Beginning with how they feel towards their friends, the student should draw a picture of their feelings. On their choice of either A3 or A4 paper, with any two dimensional materials (such as markers, crayons, colored pencils, pencils).
3. Ask the student to explain what they drew and anything else they want to say.
4. If the student has trouble explaining their drawing or feelings, guide them back to the original question.
5. Help the student identify one or more specific emotions that emerged from the drawings or discussion.
6. Repeat steps 2-5 for how the student feels towards their teacher, parents and themselves.
7. Together with the student, look at all the drawings, and make sure that the student's point of view was projected the way they wanted.

APPENDIX B
VERBAL QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS

1. How old are you?
2. What is your marital status?
3. Do you have kids? If so, how many?
4. Do you identify with a religious/ social group? which group?
5. What is your occupation?
6. Place of birth?
7. Native language?
8. Language spoken at home?
9. What are your strengths?
10. What are your weaknesses?
11. What do you like to do?
12. What do you dislike to do?
13. Do you take any medications?
14. Anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX C
PARTICIPANTS RESPONSES

The research study included 12 adults in Israel. They ranged in age from 18 to 31 years and consisted of four males and eight females diagnosed with learning disabilities during their childhood between third and eleventh grade. The research took place at their homes or a public area where I and the participants were made to feel as comfortable as possible for one meeting. Through artwork, the participants were requested to express their feelings towards their friends, teachers, parents, and themselves when they were children in school, as well as aspects of these specific relationships, through four drawings on four separate pieces of paper. Participants also completed a verbal questionnaire (see Appendix B). Each person was then asked a series of verbal questions about their drawings and their answers have been summarized in each introductory descriptive paragraph below.

Participant #1: Shira - Special Education

Shira is 18.5 years old, single, and does not have children. She identifies herself as Modern Orthodox. She is a student in twelfth grade in a special education class. She was born in Israel and speaks Hebrew. Shira describes her strengths as helping others, being creative, and understanding people. Shira explains her weakness as getting easily upset and taking control of her anger management. She expands on not having patience and having a hard time in society. Shira enjoys cooking, taking care of animals, being alone, learning new things and organizing parties and activities. She does not like it when people force her to do something, even when it is for her own good. Shira takes anti-anxiety medication.

Drawing # 1- Feelings towards her Friends

Shira made the drawing into two categories (see Figure 13.), Shira added “I really enjoy learning anything that is related. I think that I’m smart. On the social aspect I suck, I’m always getting into fights with other girls about anything. Everything that I say is always bad. The past few months I’m trying to do a big change with myself. When I get annoyed I scream, sometimes I really want to impress everyone around me (teachers and girls) and on the other hand I want people to hear what I have to say. I have a lot of issues. At the end, I give up on myself, so that other people can get what they want. At home, I’m myself and at school I’m someone different. At home, I know that no matter what I do everything will be ok and they will love me. At school, I have to work hard so that people will see me and listen to me. I’m really trying to make a difference in the social area.

I drew two things: Books and learning that I really love and on the other side I drew that I’m throwing things, because I’m angry and get annoyed. I wrote on top educational and social; they see me as smart and that I like to help. On the other side, she has no respect and she’s always bad. (social)”

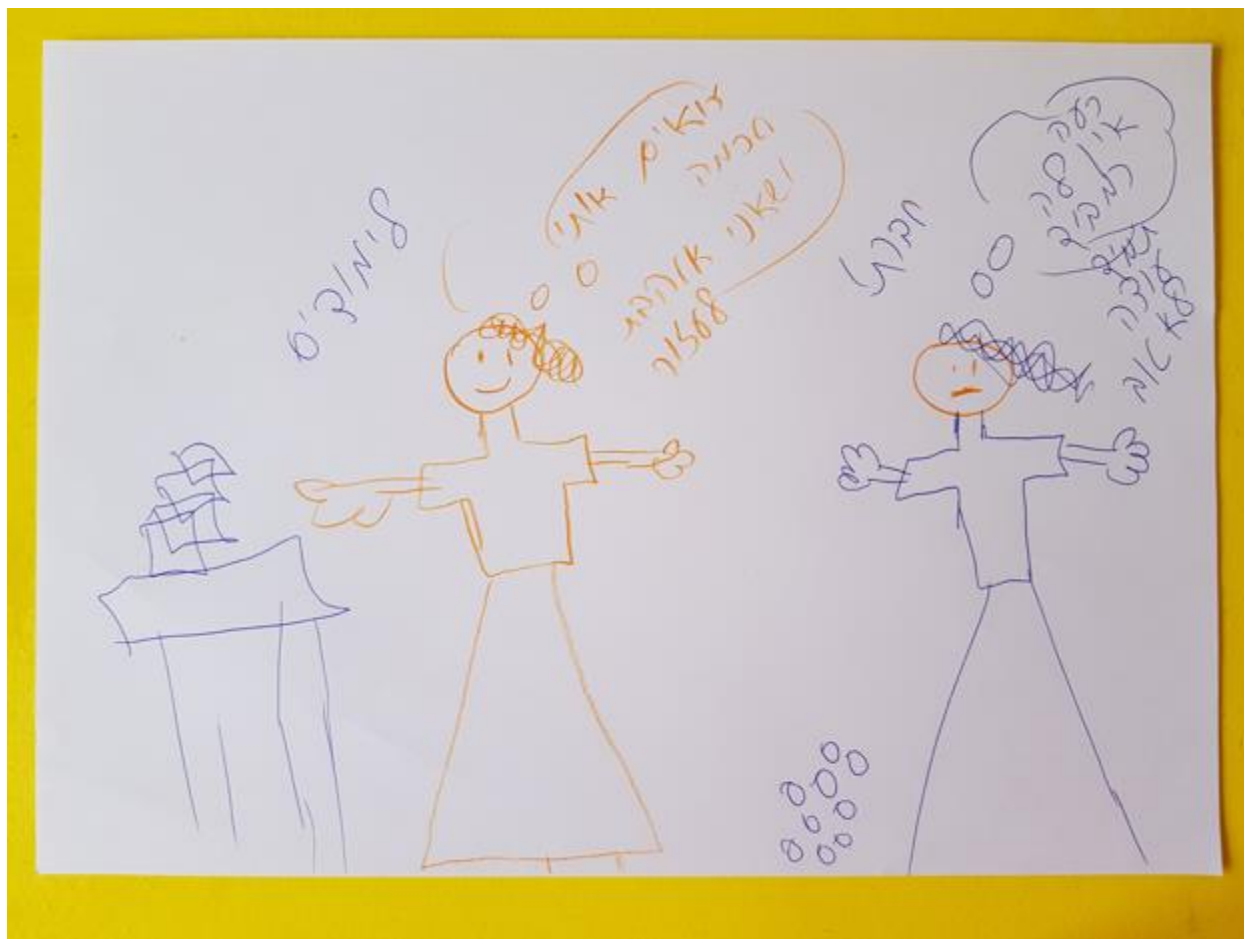


Figure 13. *How I feel towards my friends (Shira).*

Drawing #2- Feelings towards her Teachers

These are the teachers that I really love (see Figure 14). We have fun together. And on the other side it's the teachers that teach us subjects that I don't like, I know that they will try to help me with the learning area, if I have a problem I know I can try to get help from them. They sat with me for a year to help me get the material. Without these teachers I would have left a lot sooner. I feel that these teachers are scared of me because they know that I can get angry easily, they only help me so I don't explode on them. I have a lot of anger management issues, I throw tables and chairs. I think that these teachers are scared of me, they told my parents to come a lot and that I scream and yell. I only wanted them to hear me but I don't have a way to express it.

During recess, I can hang out with my teachers that I like, even teachers that are not teaching me today, I spend more time with the teachers than with my classmates.

I think that these subject teachers are scared of me, they will do anything to be ok with me. I don't want to scare other people. I only have one good friend to talk to, and even she doesn't always understand me.



Figure 14. *How I feel towards my Teachers (Shira).*

Drawing #3- Feelings towards Parents

My parents, they are everything to me. I drew presents, because they love to show love to me and give me presents. They give me a lot. We also love to talk to each other (mom and dad) I'm in the beige (See Figure 15), my mom is in red and dad is green and blue, colorful colors.

We got out to restaurants, there was a big fight at school and they took me to a restaurant to calm down. We're all in it together, we share everything together. If I didn't have these parents, I don't know what I would have done without them. Here its happiness, smiley faces.



Figure 15. *How I feel towards my parents (Shira).*

Thank you for supporting me and it helps me to continue living. I owe my parents everything. It's a big circle of thank you and it has all these feelings inside of it; what I would say to them. (Translation from the paper: Shalom, good word, real, regular girl, giving, happiness, caring, love, caring, warm words, they only see the good. they see me as a normal girl and that's

most important. The surroundings don't see me as a normal girl, it's hard for me to integrate with my surroundings. I really appreciate them and everything that they have done for me.)



Figure 16. *How I feel towards my parents, what I would say to them (Shira).*

Drawing #4- Feelings towards Herself

I really love life and nature; I think that I'm a normal girl. I really like to take care of animals. I see myself as a happy girl even though I have so many difficulties. I think that it would all be yellow glowing happy. I want to be glowing like a yellow highlighter of glowing happiness. Yellow is a color for me that is warm and positive.



Figure 17. *How I feel towards myself (Shira).*

Participant #2: Liat-Special Education

Liat who is 18, was in special education for her entire life. Liat is single and doesn't have kids. She identifies herself, as modern orthodox. She is a student and will be volunteering for national service next year. Liat was born in the United States and moved to Israel in eighth grade. She said that her strengths are that “she is good at studying, I’ve been doing it all my life,” being able to find time to do things that she likes to do. She also said if it’s not important to her she won’t succeed in it. Liat expresses her weakness is to set boundaries; “Sometimes I can do too much of something” and sometimes she doesn't want to do something but she still does it.

She enjoys being with her family, friends and hiking in nature. She dislikes wasting time. She wanted to add that she volunteers with children that have Down-Syndrome a few times a week.

Drawing # 1- Feelings towards her Friends

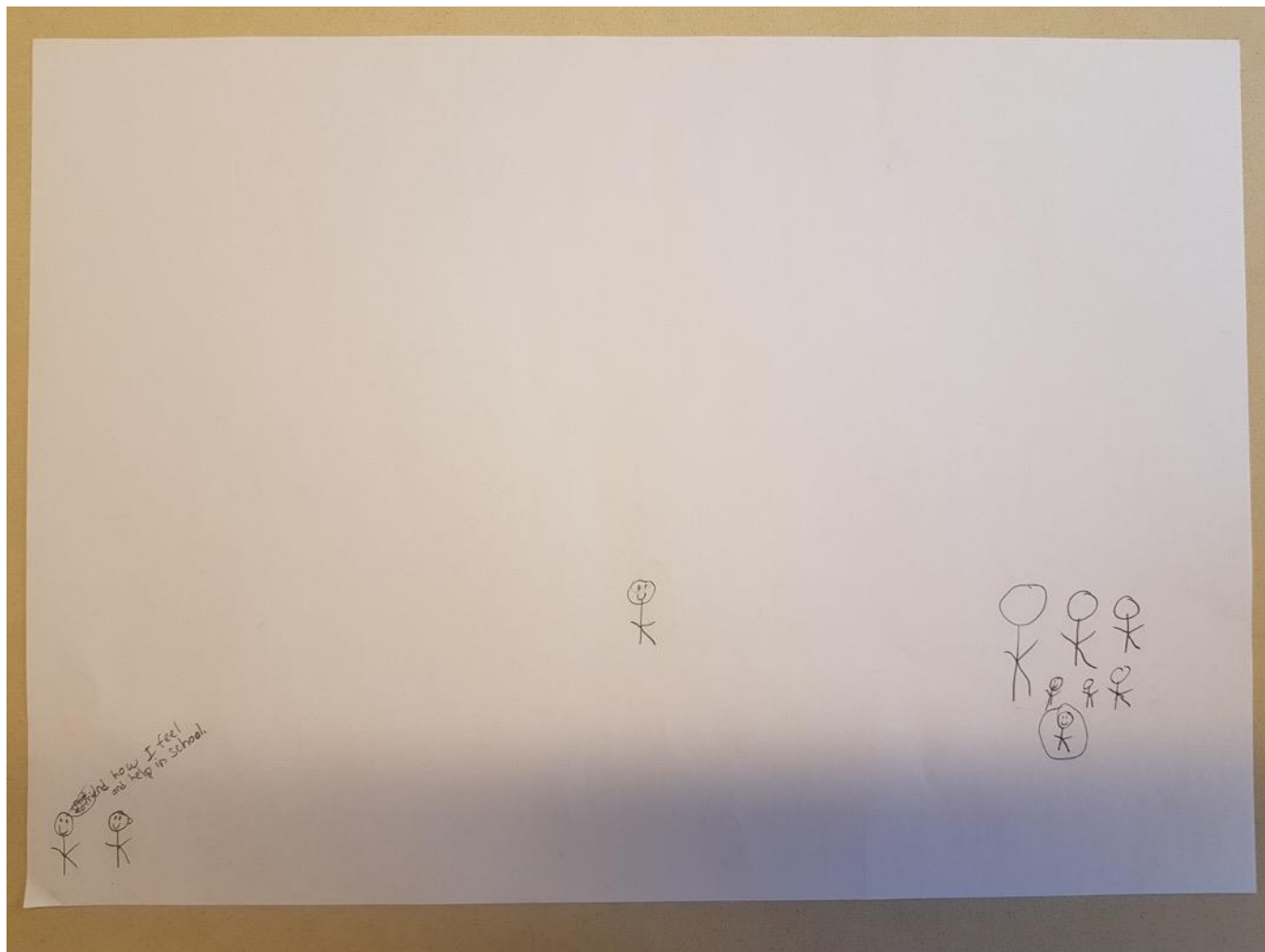


Figure 18. *How I feel towards my friends (Liat).*

I drew that occasionally I feel alone (see Figure 18). Sometimes, I feel part of the group since I'm in a small class. I have a difficult time making friends, because I am always with the same classmates. After school my friends do different activities together. I like to be part of the group and enjoy being part of it. I'm friendly with everyone, but because my class is small, it is difficult to make friends. I don't have close friends, but I want to be part of the group.

Drawing #2- Feelings towards her Teachers

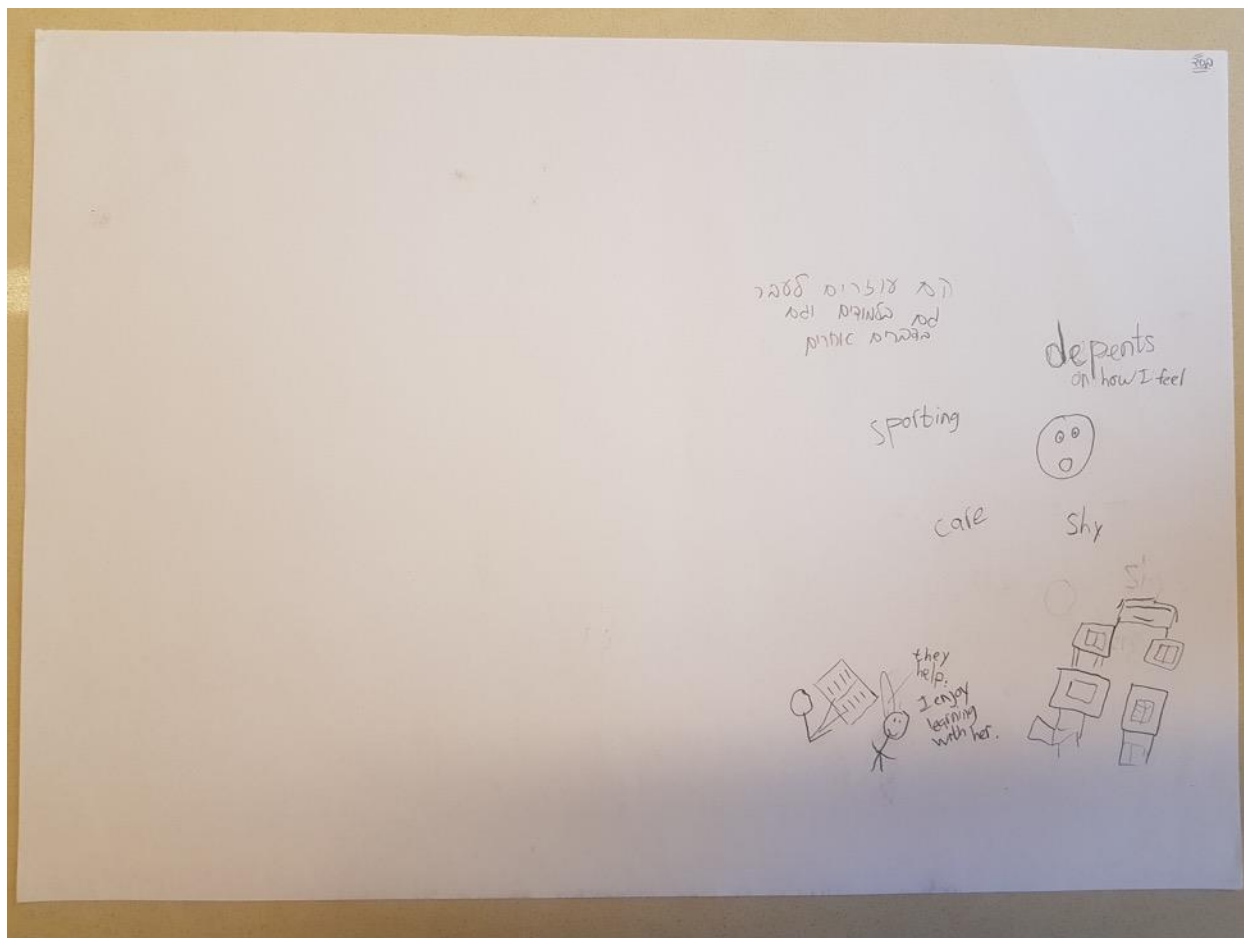


Figure 19. *How I feel towards my teachers (Liat).*

The teachers in my school really care and they really listen and try to help us get to where we want to go. I could talk to them, but it depends on the situation. I know people feel uncomfortable when I am with other people. My teachers are very nice and supportive. Sometimes, if you don't do something right away, it is not a big deal. As I grow up, I am asked to take on more responsibilities. Some of these I don't want to do, such as apply to Shreut Leumi (volunteering for a year instead of army service). I am stressed to complete these tasks because I have to study. Sometimes life is just stressful. They are supporting, they are trying to help.

I occasionally feel that my teachers are helpful. I drew (see Figure 19) the class setting that looks like all is perfect. My classmates provide individual assistance. Sometimes I feel uncomfortable towards them. I don't know how to explain it, but I express myself more when I am alone than I do with friends. Sometimes, I speak to my mom and occasionally to my teachers about different situations with friends. Whether my teacher can really help is situation dependent. When I have a problem, I talk to the teacher or to another adult. I was told that in ninth grade they did not think that I would finish that year. I am now I twelfth grade; my teachers continue to tell me how proud they are of me.

Drawing #3- Feelings towards Parents

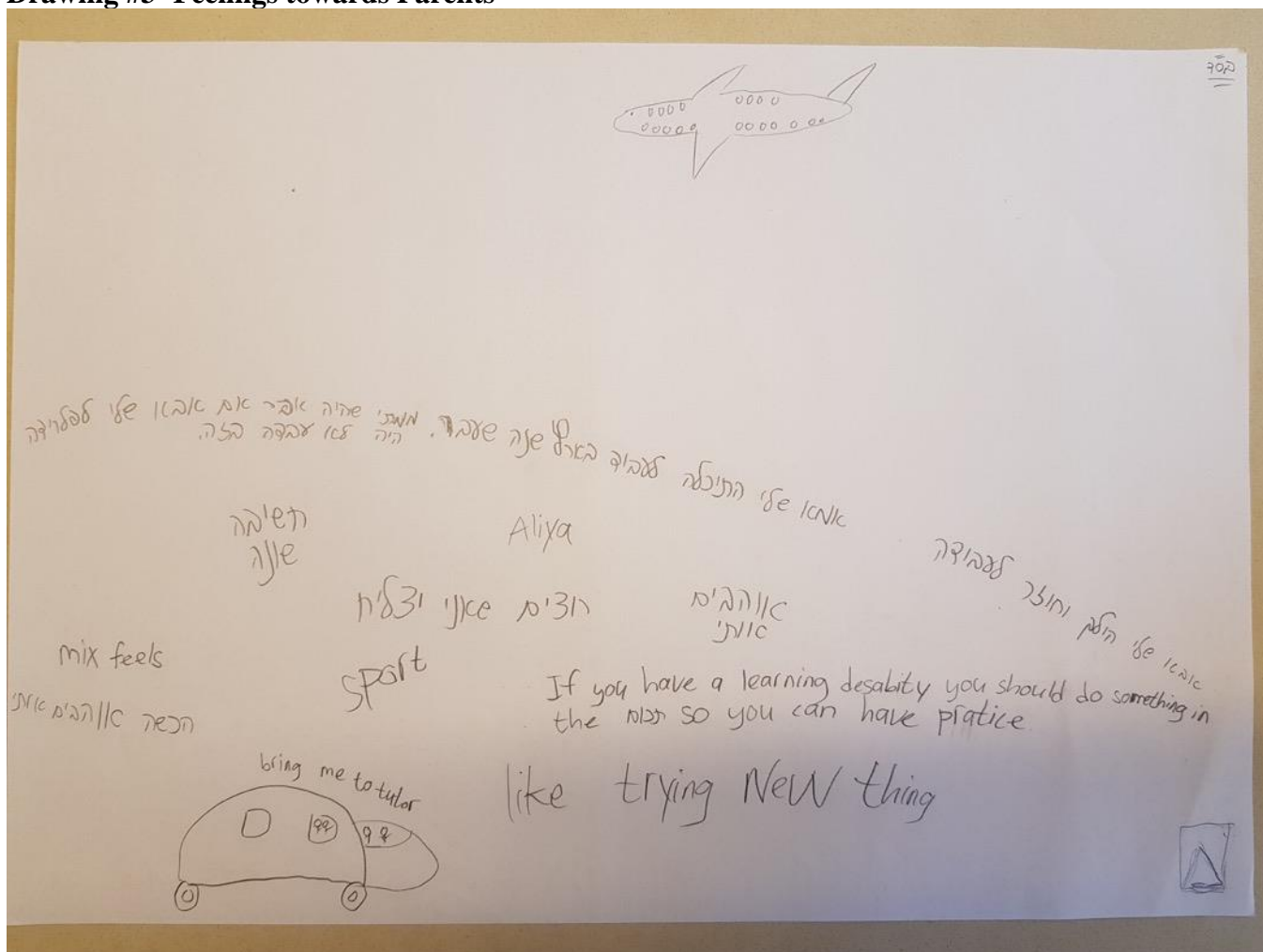


Figure 20. How I feel towards my parents (Liat).

I realized that I have been heavily thinking about something. Perhaps this thought means I am interested in the subject. I don't know if it is more my feeling, or my parents' but I will think about it in both ways. My dad travels frequently (from America to Israel). In 2012, I came to Israel. When I think about my parents' situation, it is difficult for me that my dad travels back and forth. As a result, we don't feel like a family and sometimes my mom and I are alone. When we lived in Florida, she worked as a psychologist. However, since we arrived in Israel, she has not worked. This year, she began a job, which is new and hard for me. Aliyah (moving to Israel) is an entirely new idea. Sometimes my thoughts are different and I have very mixed feelings. My parents love me very much. They wanted my academic life to be of the utmost importance. I was always encouraged to attend tutoring sessions. Of course, my parents realized my potential. I want to do something more than just academics and participate in extracurricular activities. I was always encouraged to try something new. Each time I tried, I received much support. Sometimes I get annoyed, but not always. I want to study by myself and ask to be left alone. I am a very independent thinker so do not tell me what to do. On occasion, I get motivated to seek new opportunities. If given the opportunity, Shreut Leumi will teach me valuable life skills in the future. However, I want to do something that is different to try something new. My parents want me to do *Chinuch Miyuchad*- (special education). I didn't decide what I want to do and I now understand why my parents want me to take advantage of new opportunities. Having the desire to seek out and try new opportunities will make you a stronger individual. I want to do Shreut Leumi. When I want to try something and practice my Hebrew and English, I will go out of the city but not too far. Sometimes having the feeling that you are out there is great since I enjoy cultural experiences. I want to be independent. I do not want to do something in Shreut Leumi that is stressful, but instead provide me with a meaningful experience. Sometimes, I just want to

learn Torah all year, and my mom says that I am going to feel different. My mom is not wrong because I understand what she means. The culture is different in Israel from America. I want my independence from my parents. I have to believe in myself because I don't always have someone believing in me. (the shape on the side) It is two different things that are one in the other.

Drawing #4- Feelings towards Herself

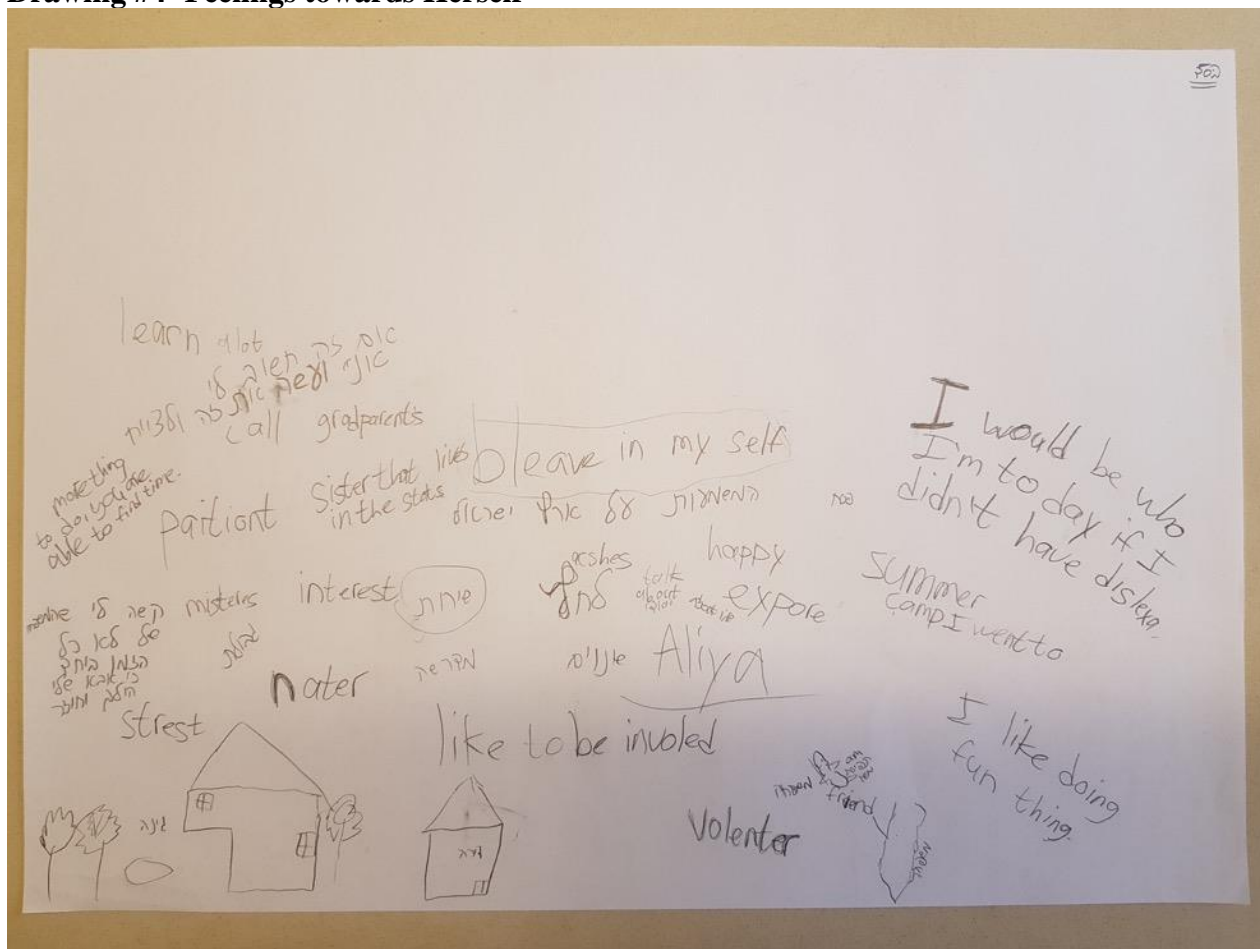


Figure 21. How I feel towards myself (Liat).

I have very mixed feelings because I have friends both here (in Israel) and friends here (in America). Going from my previous life in a house to now living in an apartment has been a huge change. I enjoy living in Israel, but my mom might go back to the United States to be with my dad. He works as a doctor so it is easier for him to live there. All of my family members are

doctors. I am the youngest in my family. I enjoy exploring nature. I don't know where I would be without my dyslexia; I wouldn't be as sensitive and go through things in my life. I sometimes believe in myself, but it depends on the situation. Summer programs that were fun and made me grow from them. I like to be involved. I have very strong organizational skills.

When I was little around age four, I was a late speaker. I took all these tests and went to a special school that was from first grade-eighth grade. I worked with tutors and speech therapy beginning in third grade. Starting in fourth grade, I was enrolled in a Hebrew program because my parents always wanted me to move to Israel. In fifth grade, I went to the regular class, and a tutor came to my school to help me. I wonder what school would be like if I weren't in the special education class. I wish I was in the other class; now that I was more *Shiluv (integration with the inclusion class)*, it is too late to switch because the year is almost over. I missed out and I cannot do anything about it. I recently decided this year that I wanted to be part of the regular class. Sometimes, I want to be alone and I get frustrated by other peoples' actions. I wanted to end my life and I spoke about it with my mom in the past; however, I wasn't going to do anything about it. My mom supported me and helped me make that feeling go away. I am trying to make every experience to be positive.

Participant #3: David-Special Education

David, who is 27 years old, is single and doesn't have children. He doesn't like to identify himself with any Jewish denomination. He works as a security guard and is studying to become a dog trainer. He was born in Israel and speaks Hebrew. David says, "I can't find any strengths about myself, go ask someone who knows me." David says that his weakness is difficult to answer. He enjoys sleeping and going out with friends, anything that is connected to animals. He doesn't like to get up in the morning and go to work. He can't deal with people telling him what

to do. He doesn't take any medications. David has been diagnosed with dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia. He also had a difficult time connecting to the art. David explained that he doesn't have any strengths except that he is good at training dogs.

Drawing #1- Feelings towards his Teachers

Until third grade, teachers removed me from my class. This occurred until I switched to a small class, which began in third grade. I moved to a small class an hour away from my house. From third grade-twelfth grade I switched schools all the time. The city near me didn't accept people with difficulties because it would lower their standard and prizes of their amazing educated city. It was so tiring to be so far from my house; I'd wake up so early to get out of the house. They don't know how to deal with kids that have problems at this school that I attended. The teacher was definitely not knowledgeable about special education. We listened to the aid and almost never to the teacher. This is a regular school that tried to open a special education class, without any experience. Once they switched teachers it was better. You are allowed to sit for 15 minutes. I took and tried Ritalin, but it made me so tired that I fell asleep for over 12 hours. Ritalin didn't help me. It's hard for me to draw because I need it to be perfect. Perfection is my problem area. I won't let it be imperfect. In high school, there were some good moments with teachers. Every year our school moved to a new place (around the city). I don't know what went on in this school, but I feel that I was a victim at this school. I felt that they had no idea what to do with me. When I was in high school, the teachers tried to help me. It makes me sad to think about it now, that I wasn't in a good place. Everything that I went through I still feel today. One teacher told me that something will come out of me at the end. This advice really helped me. Living with ADHD is difficult, and it's a mess in my head. In my first school in first grade, if I wasn't listening, they would kick me out. However, in the other school, it was every good word

that tried and helped me; the teachers pushed me to try and to do better. They always came to me, I never asked for help. They would give me a wake-up call. The teachers would do everything to help make it easier. They pushed you to do your best.

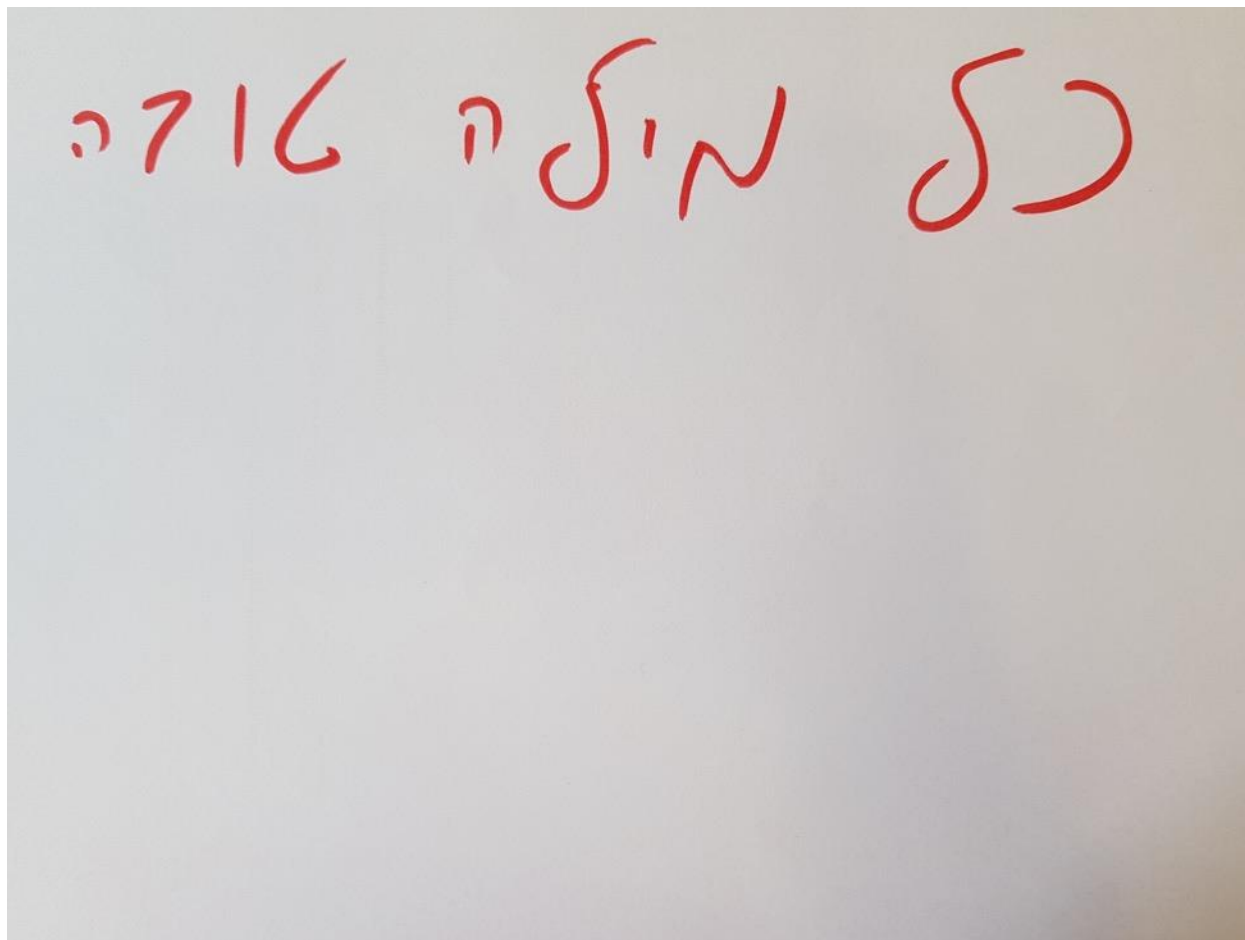


Figure 22. *How I feel towards my Teachers Description of drawing: The words “every good word” translated from Hebrew (David).*

Drawing #2- Feelings towards mother

Without my mother’s help, I would have never gotten to a small classroom. She turned over the world for me so that I would get to the right place so I could study.

I don't know how to make it into a picture. But I think that with my dysgraphia it’s challenging for me. However, because my mother is a queen I’d draw a crown for her (see Figure 23).

My father passed away when I was four years old, so it's in the past. My mom cared for me. I have many concerns; she turned all the tables so that I will be in the right place for me. My mother wanted the best for me and she hoped that something positive would come out of me. I felt that I needed to show her that I can sit and study the material.

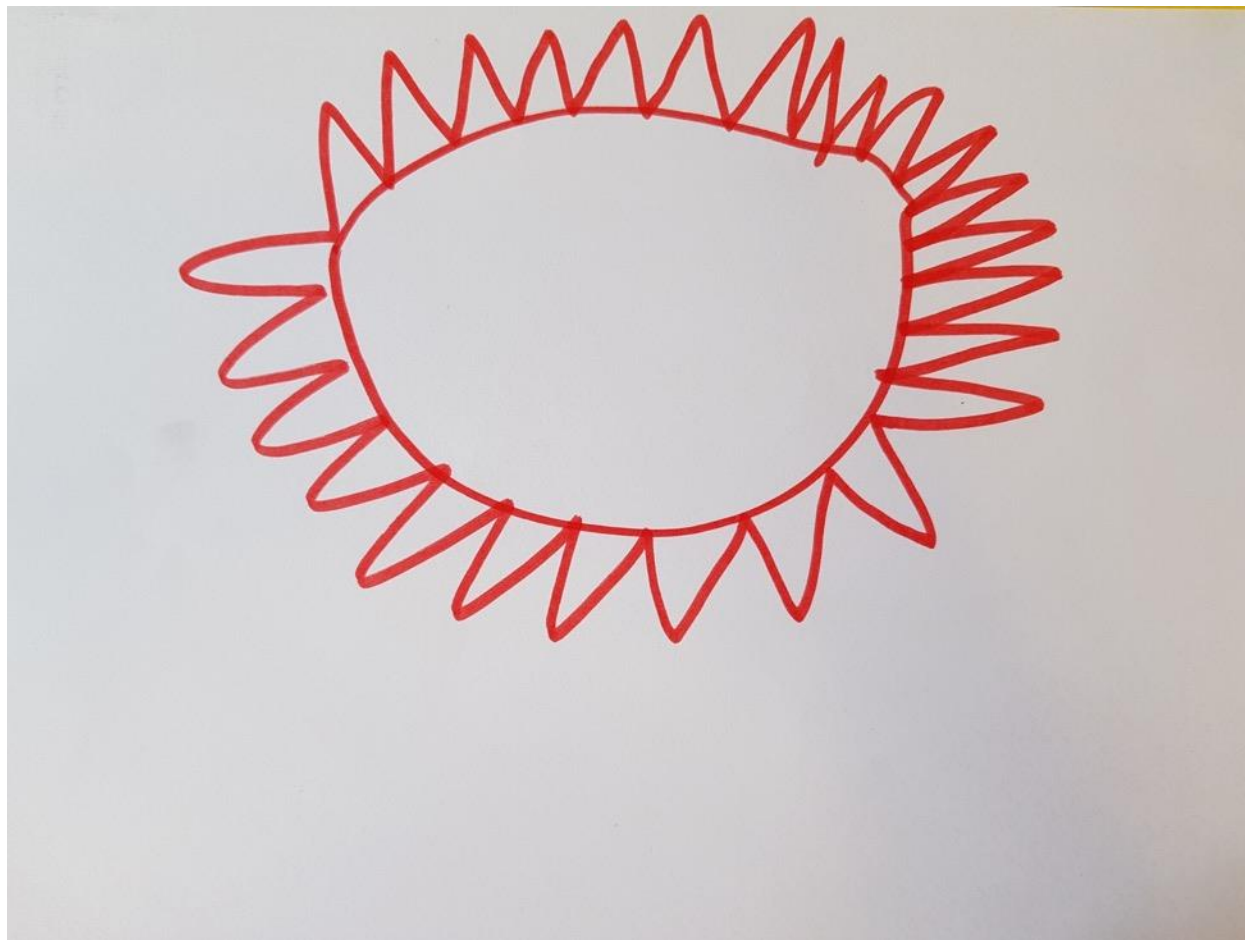


Figure 23. *How I feel towards my mother (David).*

Drawing # 3- Feelings towards his Friends

I had one friend that I was close with until third grade, and I had another one until eighth grade. I don't really know where they are today. I don't know if my neighbor was a friend, he was just there. Friends were there to make sure that the day will go by, however they are not true real friends. Even today I don't really know who they are or where they went. My friends from the

army are my friends for life. It's like the classroom, except that we didn't leave the classroom. Our classroom was at the end of the school in a caravan. We never left it because it felt like the safari. You know those weirdo kids, they are from that class (see Figure 24). It was such a difficult time and not a pleasant situation. I didn't have a close friend, I just needed to sit and do it. I switched to a different school, where you sit on sofas to learn. It's a school that teaches you have to want to learn. No one will push you, and I felt like I was running to the classes after one point. I would go walking to the beach and to the mall, and then when I got sick of it, I went into classes. We had a farm; once when I was at the farm to attend to the horses, one teacher told me that I need to push myself in the classes and to try to become someone great. This is standard practice in education. I have to desire to push myself.

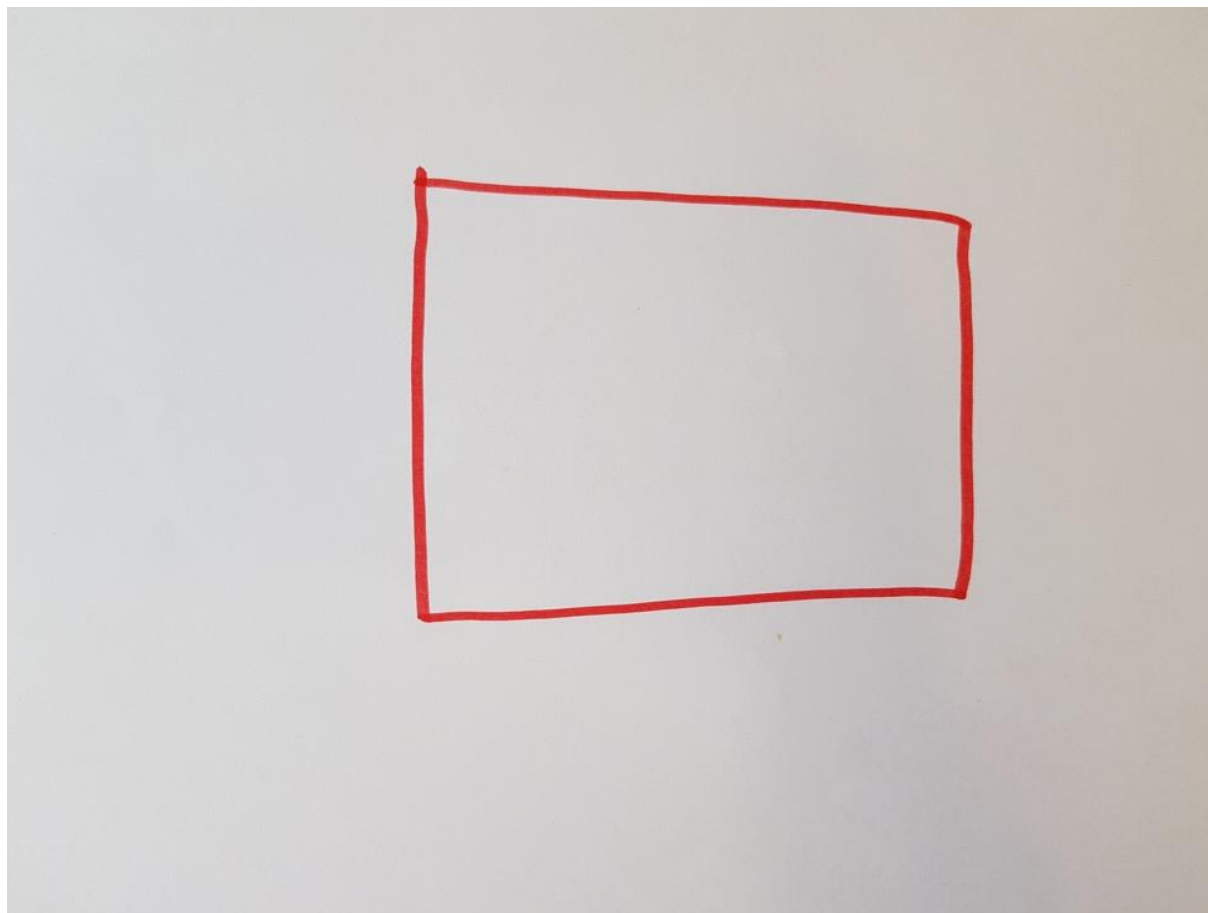


Figure 24. *How I feel towards my friends (David).*

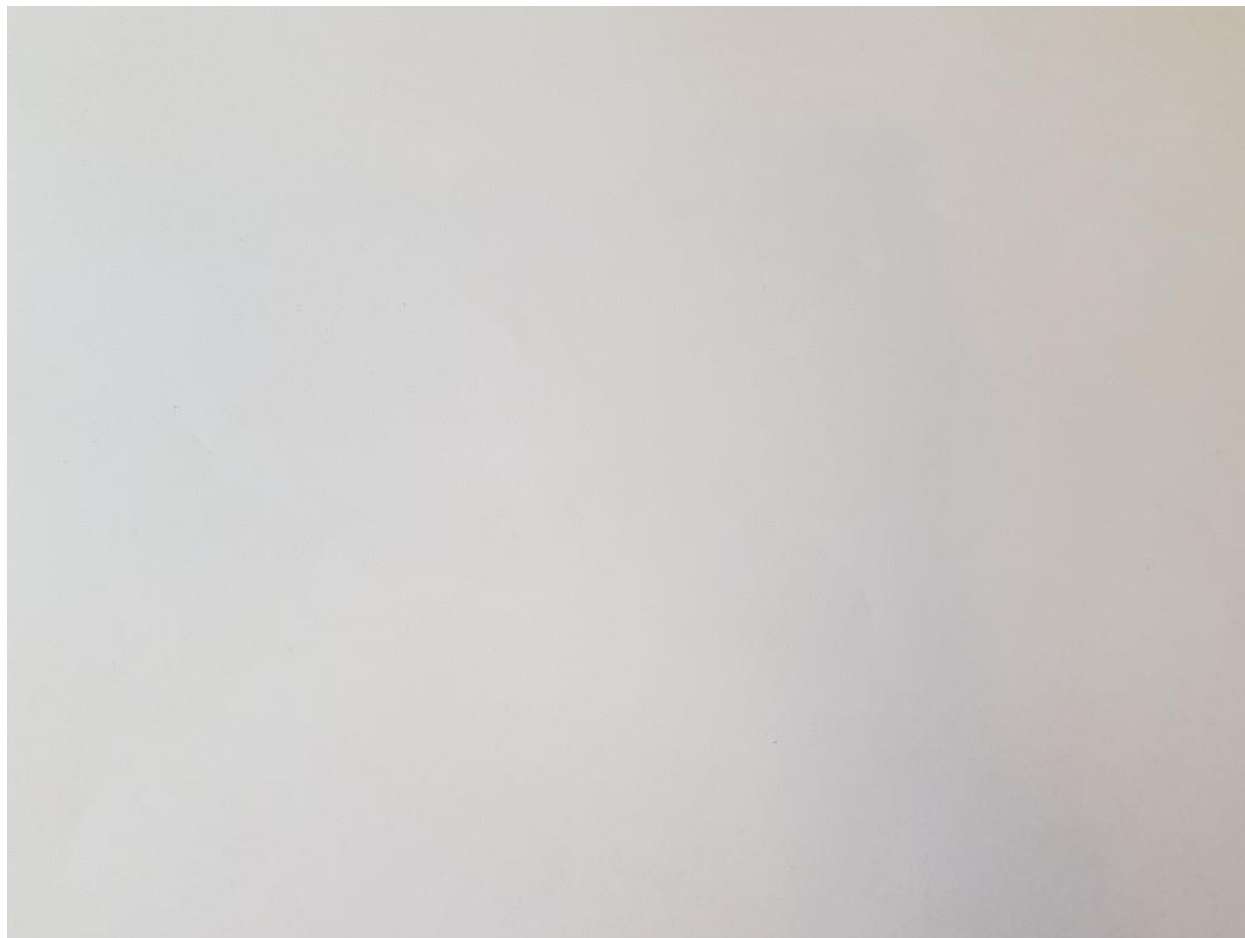
Drawing #4- Feelings towards Himself

Figure 25. *How I feel towards myself (David).*

I'm very critical of myself because of my perfectionism. This is problematic for me; however, I am working to allow imperfection. I wish I could make the disability disappear (see Figure 25). I don't understand anything in my class. However, I love learning but am unable to succeed. I'm falling between the cracks. I can't be in it 100 percent, and I experience difficulty concentrating on the task at hand. Concentration is very difficult for me. At work, if two people are talking to me at the same time, I find it challenging to simultaneously listen to each person. If I had the magic to make this challenge disappear, I would do so. This question is difficult for me to answer. I need someone to read something to me, and then explain the information.

Participant #4: Libi - Special Education

Libi, who is 21 years old, attended a special education classroom. She's single and identifies as Modern Orthodox. Libi is a student and also participates in National Service, where she fixes wheelchairs. She was born in Israel and speaks both Hebrew and English at home. Libi's strength is computer graphics, and completing tasks at a fast pace is her weakness. She likes to be on the phone and on the computer. Libi also enjoys designing invitations. She dislikes doing laundry and the dishes.

Drawing #1- Feelings towards her Teachers

My teachers supported me in everything I wanted to do. I'm not good at drawing so I'm just going to write down that it's okay when I was in the special education class. I felt that I didn't have enough friends in my class and that the other kids in the inclusive class were nicer to me. We were all in the same level of difficulty, so it was easier to be friends. But in the special education class, we were all at different levels and I think that's what made it harder to interact with everyone. So, I always felt alone. It's hard for me to explain. I think that having 10 students in the class it's harder for me. Now I have six kids in my class. They knew what each student needed and geared it towards us as individuals. We learned strategies that are going to help us instead of content.

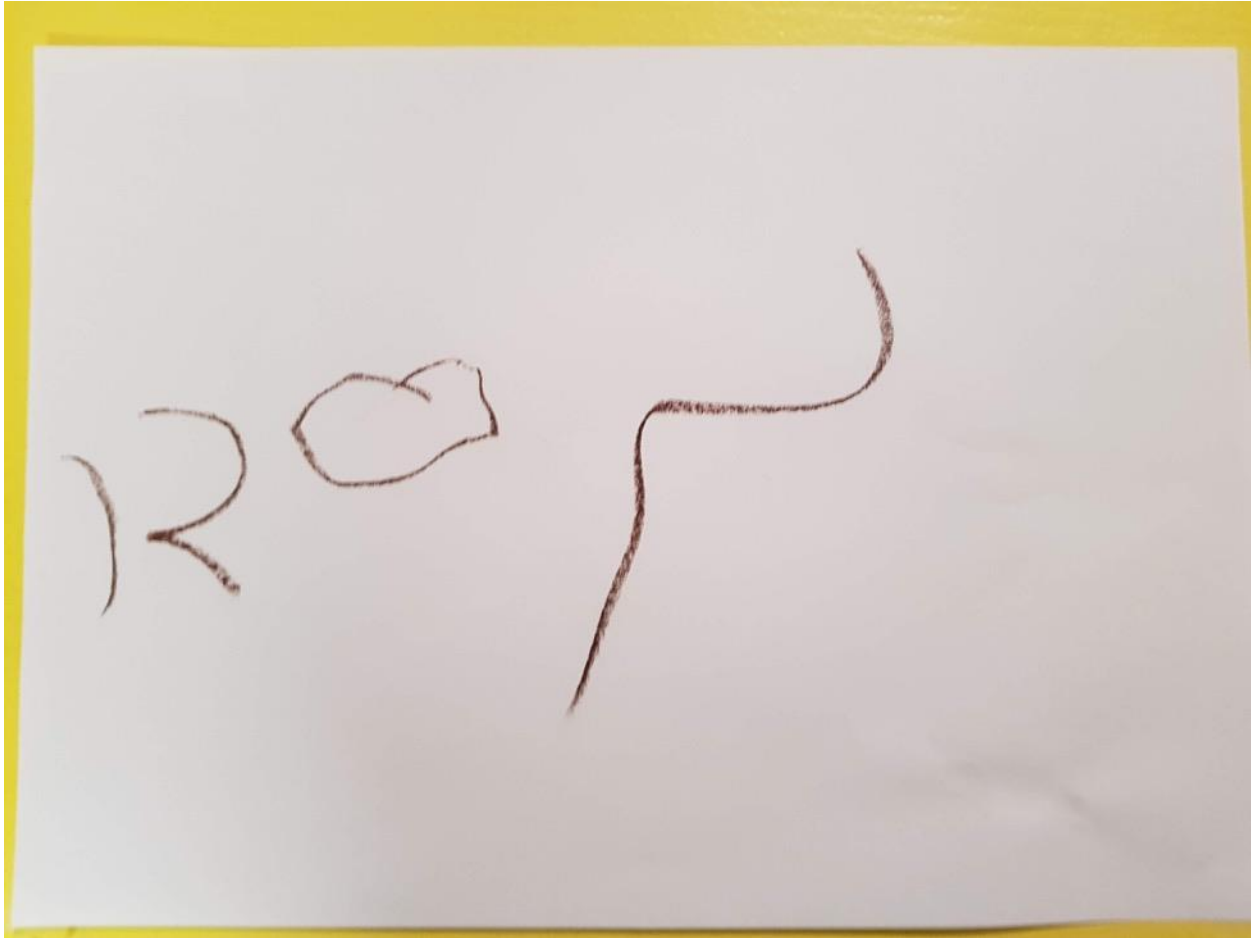


Figure 26. *How I feel towards my Teachers. Description of drawing: The word "okay" translated from Hebrew (Libi).*

Drawing # 2- Feelings towards her Friends

It wasn't a good experience because they didn't understand me. It was challenging for me to make friends and push myself. It's not fun to feel different. Everyone is one way and you are another way. They work fast but you work slow, it's not something that everyone else is doing. But at the same time, you're always behind everyone else. I didn't feel a part of them. I don't know how to draw this, but it's sad for me to feel this way. I'm not talented at drawing.

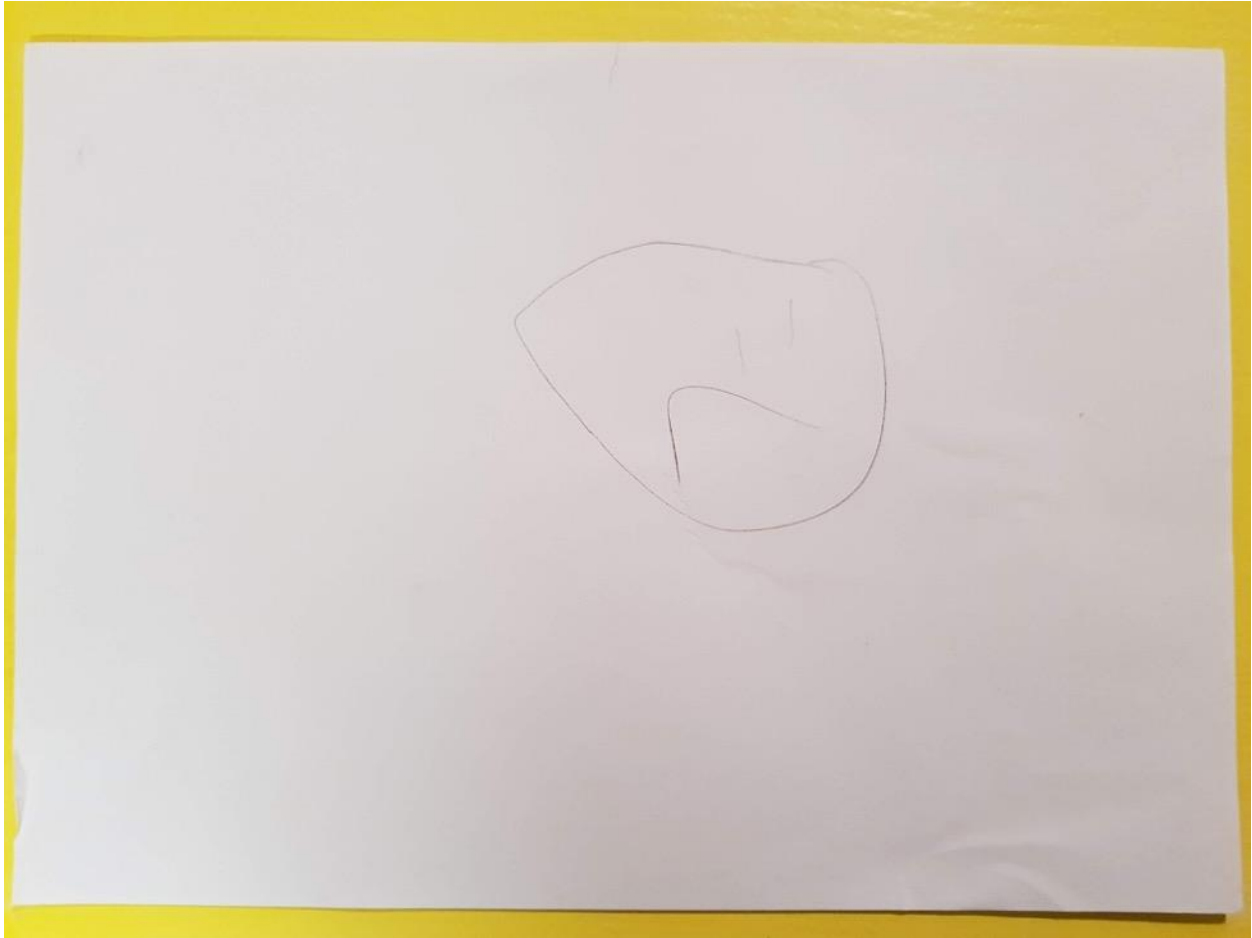


Figure 27. *How I feel towards my friends. Description of drawing: A sad face (Libi).*

Drawing #3- Feelings towards Parents

I have positive feelings towards my parents. They support me and cheer me on. In general, it depends on the situation, but sometimes it's annoying. However, most of the time I appreciate it. I love my parents dearly.

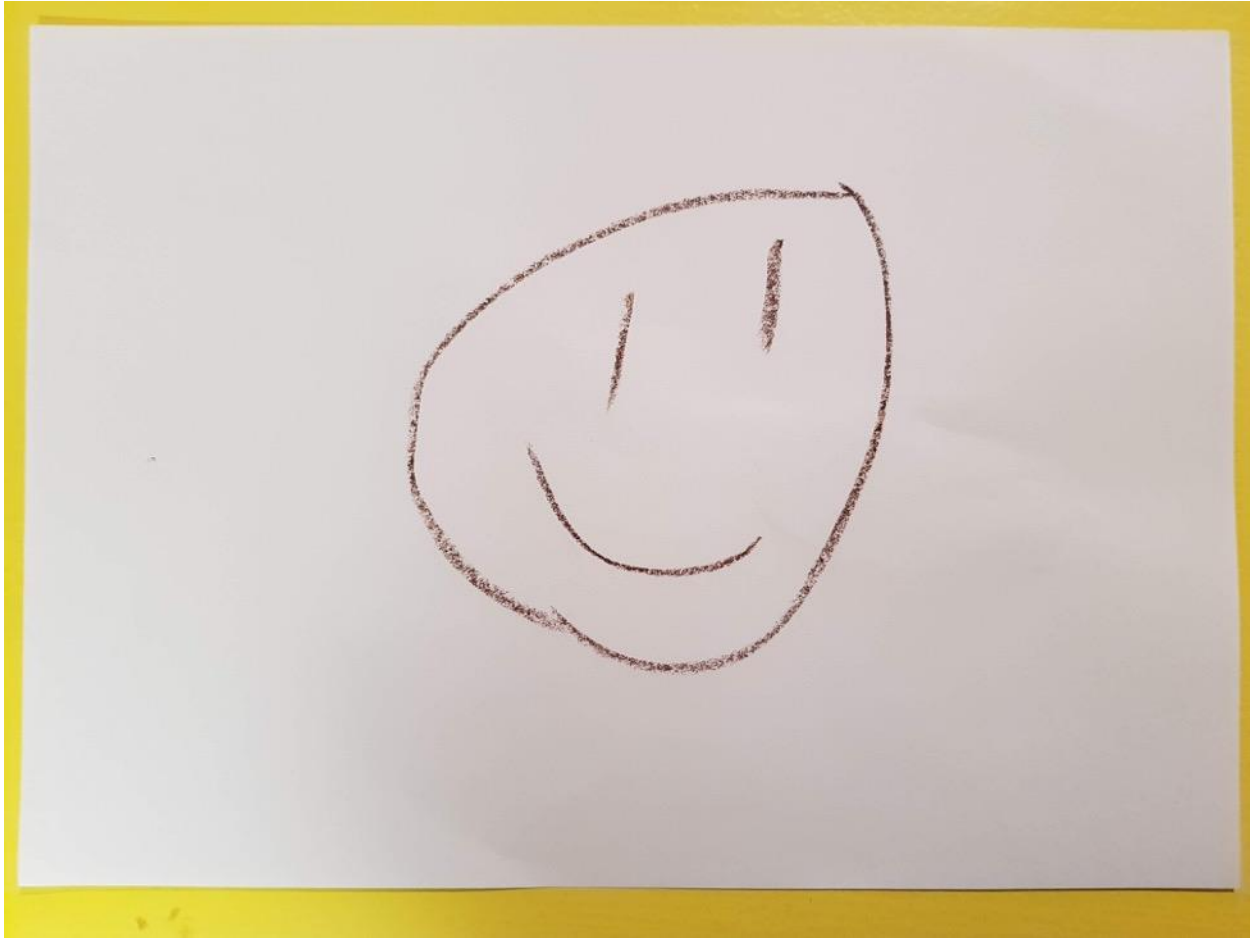


Figure 28. *How I feel towards my parents. Description of the drawing- a happy face (Libi).*

Drawing #4- Feelings towards Herself

I feel okay about myself. I can't write, so I got a computer from the municipality. Sometimes, I get really angry when I'm at home. My parents are the only ones who know how to control it, because I can't control it. I have had anger management issues from birth and my identical twin sister has Cerebral Palsy. She stopped breathing and no one watched her. As a result of not getting air to her brain, she now she has Cerebral Palsy. We are three siblings; I also

have a little brother.

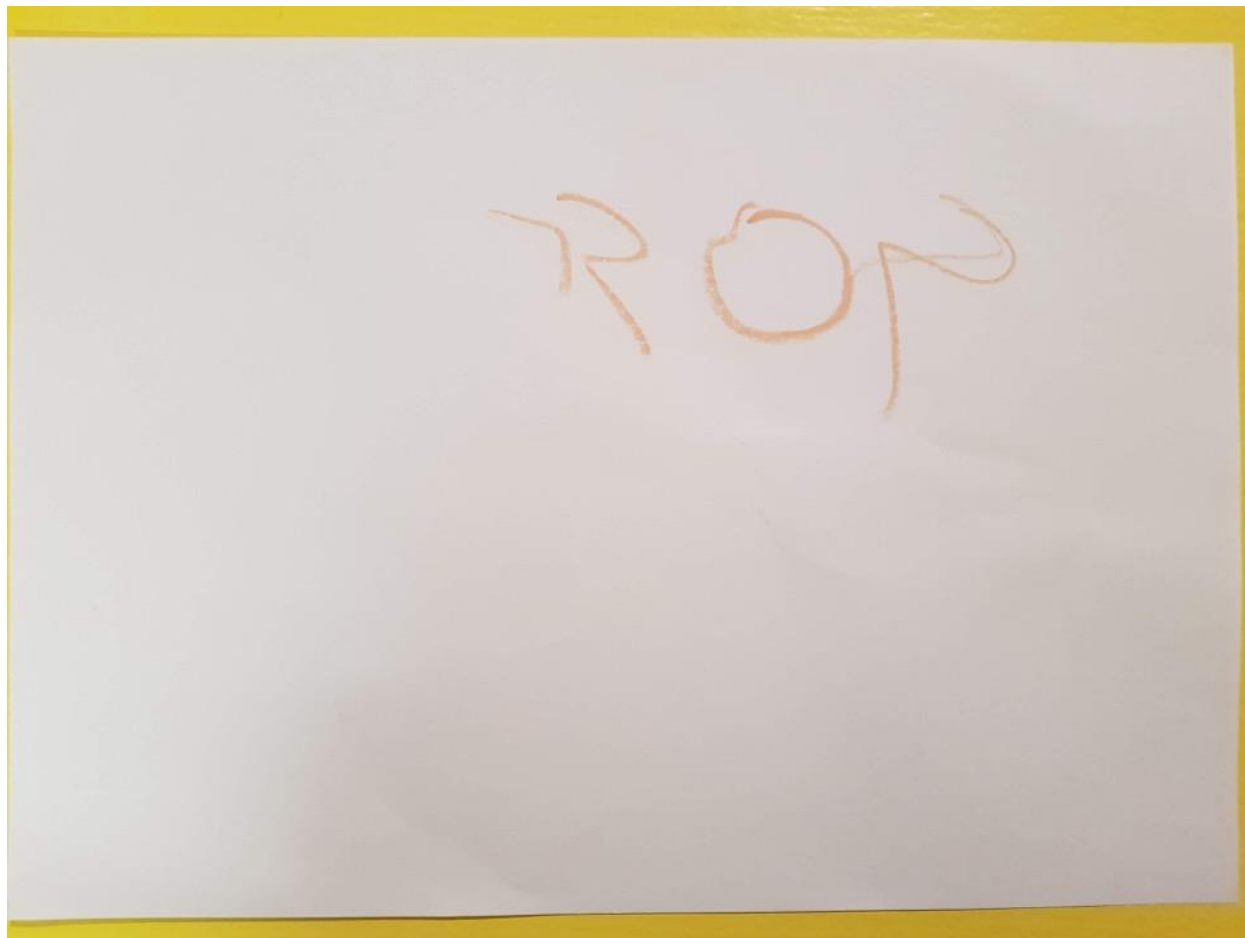


Figure 29. *How I feel towards myself. Description drawing: The word “okay” translated from Hebrew (Libi).*

Participant #5: Jenny-Special Education

Jenny who is 18, was in special education. Jenny is single and she does not have children. She identifies herself as Modern Orthodox and just finished high school. She was born in Jerusalem, Israel and speaks Dutch, English and Hebrew at home. Jenny says that her strengths are art, sports and to immerse herself in something all the way. She explains that her weaknesses are mathematics and it is hard for her to do something if she doesn't feel that she is 100% in it. She likes to cook, clean, read, travel, create art. Jenny does not like to do things that are difficult for her.

Drawing #1- Feelings towards her Friends

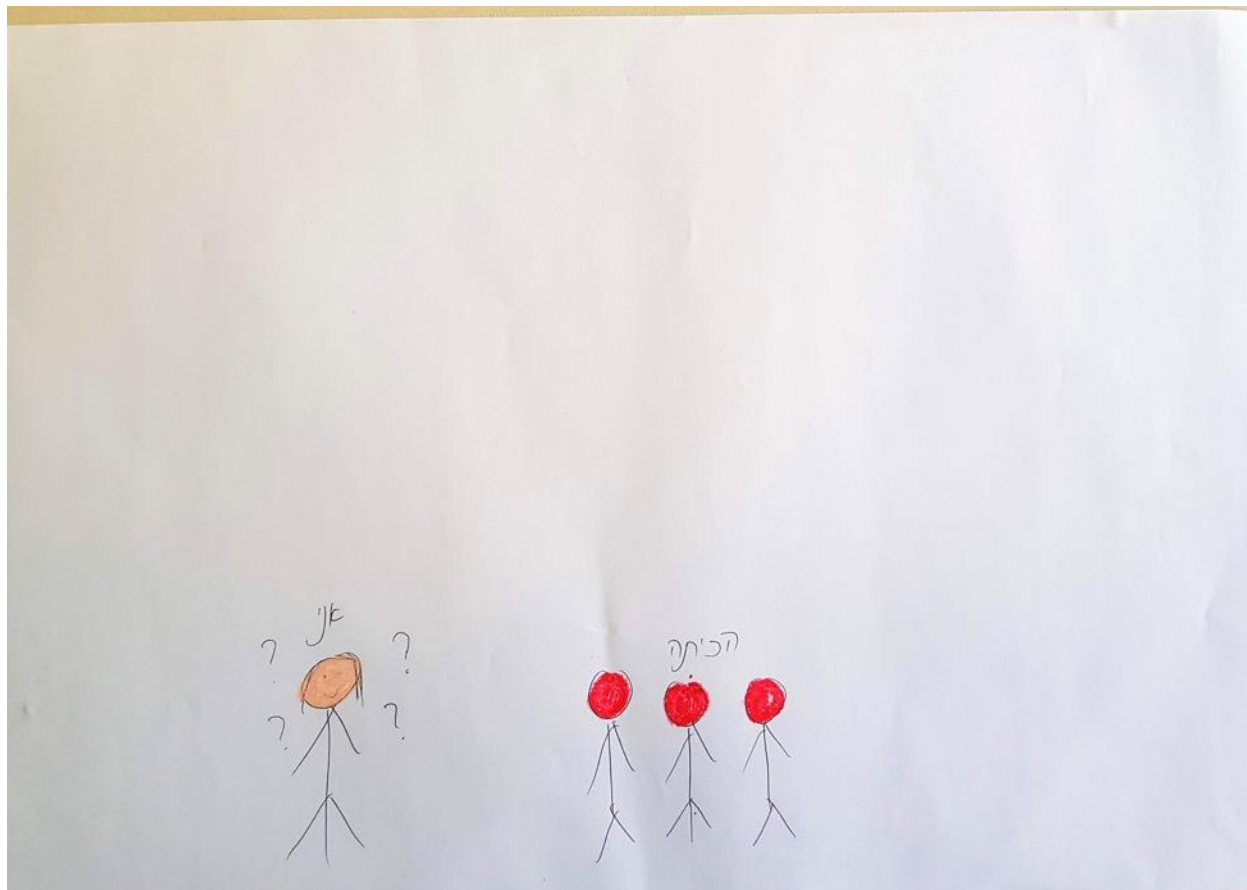


Figure 30. *How I feel towards my friends (Jenny).*

Jenny chose A3 papers. She drew herself (see Figure .30). “I didn't understand why I was going to a special education class. I felt very different from everyone that's why I drew myself in a very gentle color and everyone else in the class is red and strong. I felt that the girls in the class were very different than me. I felt that they were all the same and I was different one. I felt that I did not really understand what I'm really supposed to be doing in the special education class and how I'm supposed to be part of this class.

In ninth grade I moved to a special education class because the staff suggested that it's a quieter environment, it's smaller and I would get more attention as opposed to being in an inclusive classroom. At the beginning I didn't want to go to the special education class because I

was scared of the girl's reaction from the grade. Possibly the stigma that comes with being in the special education class as well as feeling that you're not good enough. My fears were feelings differently, and losing my friend in the inclusive class, and feeling far from them.

At the beginning it was hard for me to create friendships inside the special class because I felt that they weren't on my level. I felt that they were on a lower level than me mentally, in addition to feeling neglected because I was new and they were all friends for the past two years. It became better and I started feeling more part of the group. It took a really long time.

In ninth grade, there were four classes- three inclusive classes and one special education class. The school decided to place the inclusive classes on the bottom floor and our class- the special education one they put on the top floor. I remember that most people in the school didn't even know that there was another ninth grade class, and once they had an activity that was only for ninth grade and they completely forgot to even let us know because the class that organized it had no idea we even existed. It made us feel that they forgot us, and that we weren't part of the school. We were new to the school and no one realized we were not there for the activity. It was a really awful feeling.

Drawing #2- Feelings towards her Teachers

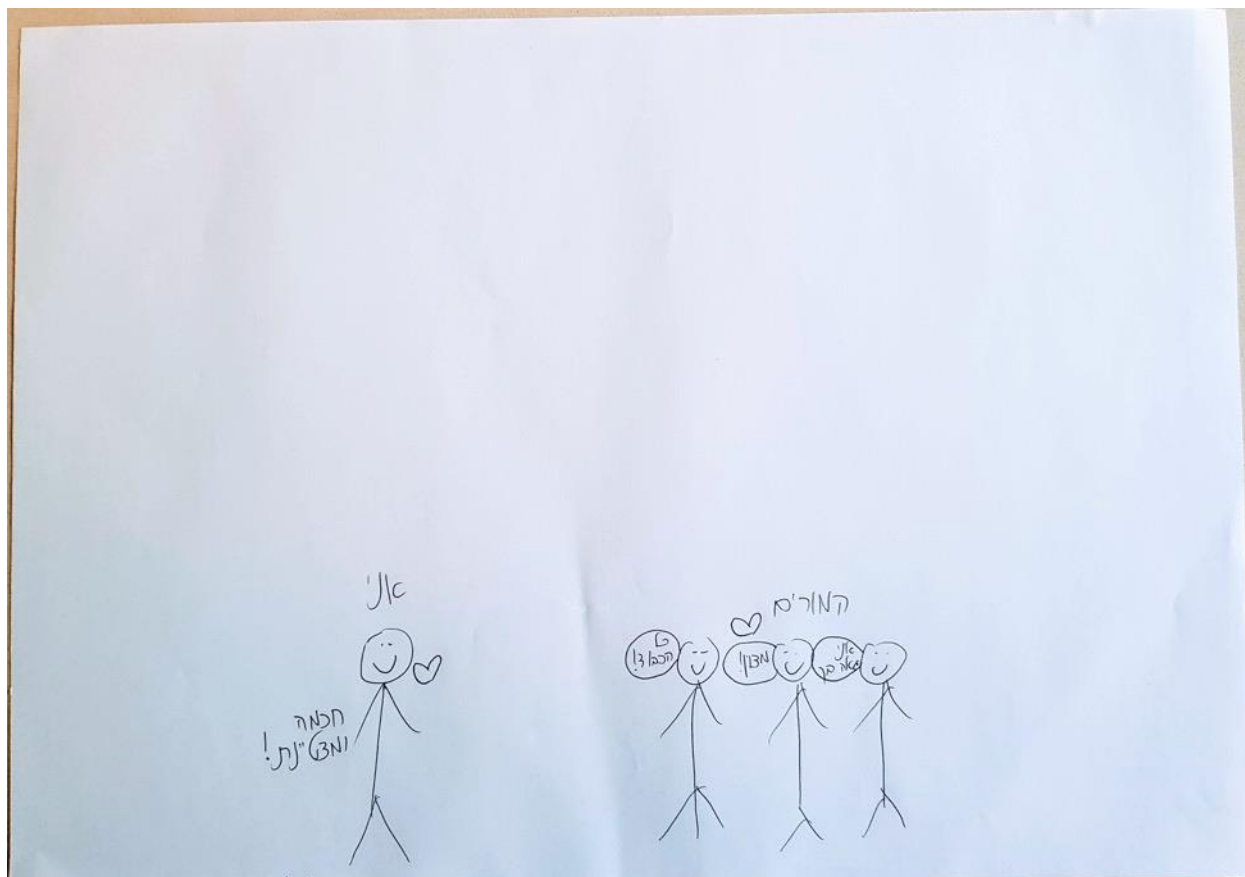


Figure 31. *How I feel towards my teachers (Jenny).*

I felt towards my teachers that they loved me (see Figure 31); gave me a feeling of success and that I am smart. I had the feeling of being the smartest girl in the class. I finally succeeded. I got good grades. I even participated in the classroom. While in the inclusive classroom I never participated and I never got good grades. I was always quiet on the side. I felt all of a sudden that the teachers are proud of me and they also like how I'm succeeding.

When I was in the inclusive class, I felt that I wasn't comfortable because I didn't get good grades. I felt that they weren't paying any attention to me if I could say what my teachers thought it would sound "she's not succeeding and that's how it is like and would push me to the

side.” The teachers would not really pay any attention to me. They would only give attention to the succeeding girls and they would put me on the side.

Drawing #3- Feelings towards Parents

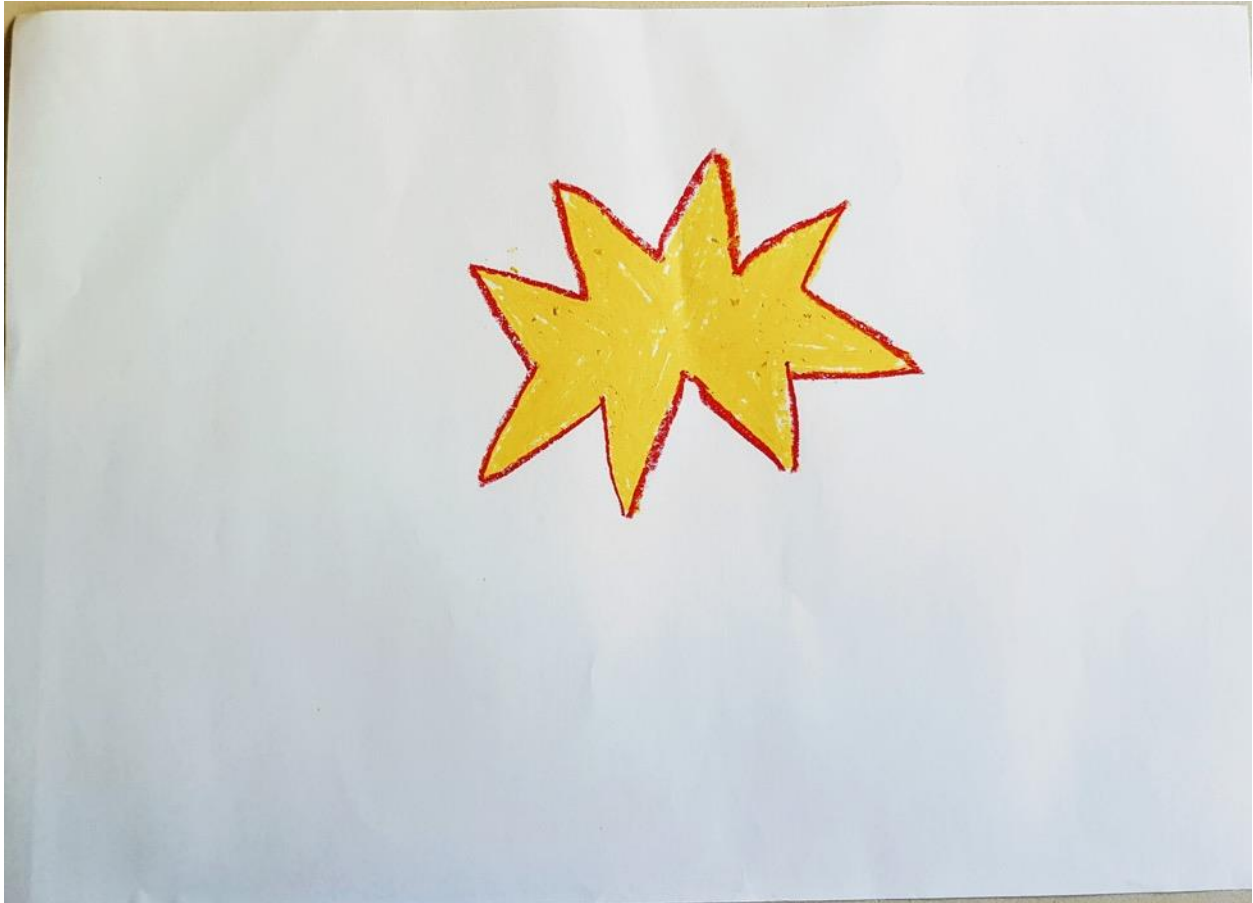


Figure 32. *Feelings that my parents think of me (Jenny).*

I drew a star (see Figure 32). I think that my parents think of me as a star. Most of the time I feel that they are very proud of me for everything that I'm doing and everything that I do. They are proud of the way that I do it and the way that I'm succeeding. They are letting me do whatever I think is right for myself. It's important for them for me to succeed.

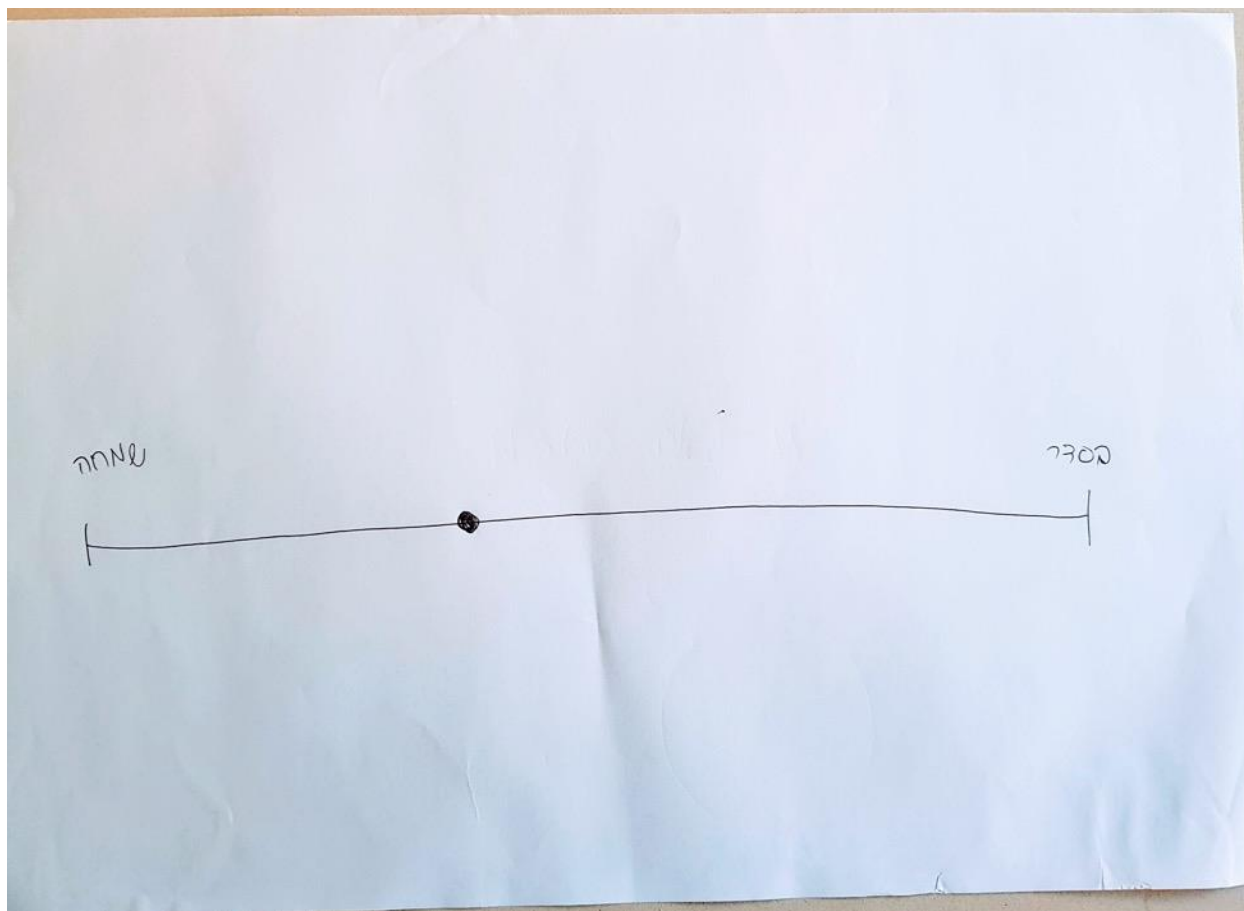


Figure 33. *Feeling that I feel towards my parents (Jenny).*

I'm happy with who they are to me as parents. In between okay and happy (see Figure 33); more towards the happy. I am happy they are giving me the space to decide everything for myself. Our connection is strong and good.

Drawing #4- Feelings towards Herself

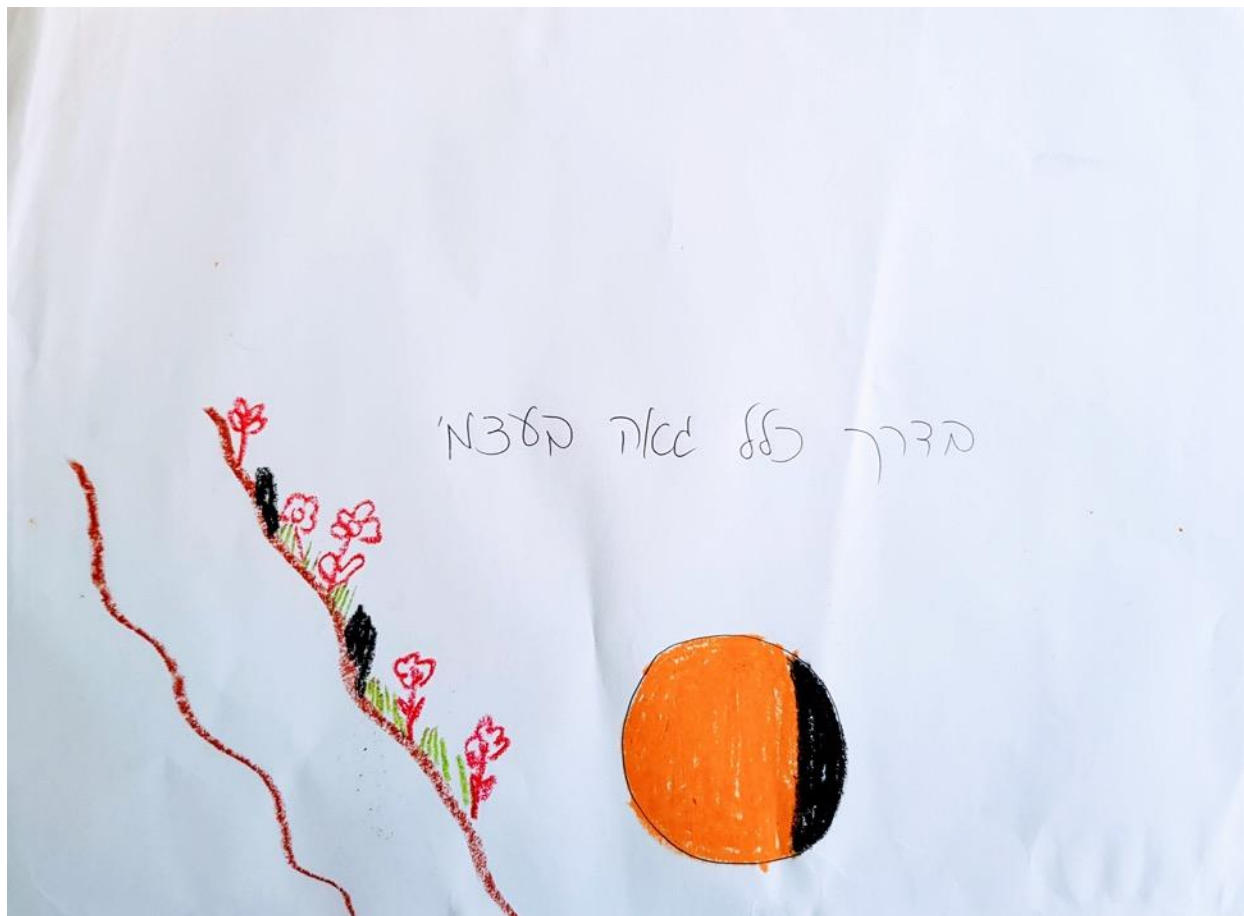


Figure 34. *Feelings towards myself (Jenny).*

I'm usually pretty proud of myself. Of course there are days where I feel less proud of myself When I'm disappointed in myself but most of the time I'm really proud of myself in the way that I have accomplished during my life. I drew a path (see Figure 34) with flowers; the flower symbolizes good, success and the rocks symbolize the hard difficult aspects most of the time I'm proud of myself and sometimes less. The orange circle is also the amount of feeling proud and the black symbolizes the difficulty. When I succeed I feel proud of myself when I overcome my difficulties or my fear. Until a few years ago I was really scared of public speaking and I really wanted to overcome this fear. I started this process with myself that I will start to public speak. The first time I stood in front of my entire grade my heart was pounding and I was so scared and then the second time it was less and then the third time was less and at

my graduation I was the moderator for the entire grade. I didn't have any heart palpitations and I really felt that I overcame my fear, it was a long process every time I came closer. I felt better with myself. My teacher really pushed me and supported me through this process so that I could really do it.

Participant #6: Miriam both Inclusive and Special Education

Miriam, who is 25 years old, is single and doesn't have children. She associates herself as Modern Orthodox and works in a store that sells women's clothes. She was born in Israel and speaks Hebrew at home. Miriam received services in both special education and inclusive education. During her tenth grade year, she switched to special education only. Therefore, she provided both points of view regarding her feelings towards her friends and teachers. Miriam feels that she doesn't have any strengths; she acknowledges that her memory is a weakness. She has difficulty remembering anything. In school, Miriam needed help explaining herself both in writing and reading tasks. She likes to eat, sleep, and meet up with friends. She doesn't like to work, clean, and learn. When around people she deems smarter than her, she finds it necessary to prove herself to them. She doesn't take any medication. Miriam wants to study something like communication and marketing. However, she is too scared to try; she knows that success is difficult to attain and also fears rejection.

Drawing # 1- Feelings towards her Friends

My feelings are very divided because when I was older, it was different from when I was younger. I started in a small class but then transferred to a regular class. I was later placed back in a special education class. So my feelings are very split. When I was in elementary school, it was very frustrating to be there. However, once I switched to a special education/ smaller class, I became the genius of the class. I started drawing and because it was a Chardei (Ultra-Orthodox)

school, I automatically drew a skirt. I divided the feeling into two because I was socially different from them. When I was in tenth grade, I came into their class, but they were already together from seventh grade. I came from a Chardei (Ultra-Orthodox) school, and they all came from traditional houses. I was totally in shock because of their way of speaking and how they dressed. I had a difficult time connecting with them. In twelfth grade, I only felt that I was their friend and only started to even speak to them. In regard to learning, I had a really good experience. I started in a school near my house, but the principal kicked me out of the school. I was removed because I lowered the school's average. The principal invited my mother and I into the room; he said, "you're lowering the average in my school (this is a government school). I'm not used to this so please take your things." I took my things and left in the middle of the year. We left in humiliation. I then sat home for a few months. Finally, I went to this school far away. My mother said, "if you don't want her you're missing out." My mother is a lioness when it's about her kids; she doesn't see anything besides them. The teacher didn't really know how to deal with me, so she would just keep me outside the classroom. This was because I wasn't on the same speed as the class. The teacher would take me out of the class, and she brought her daughters' Barbie's so I would play with them. I basically missed an entire year of first grade, but then I switched schools and completed first grade for the second time. I had teachers help

me and take me out of classes- also known as *shiluv*.

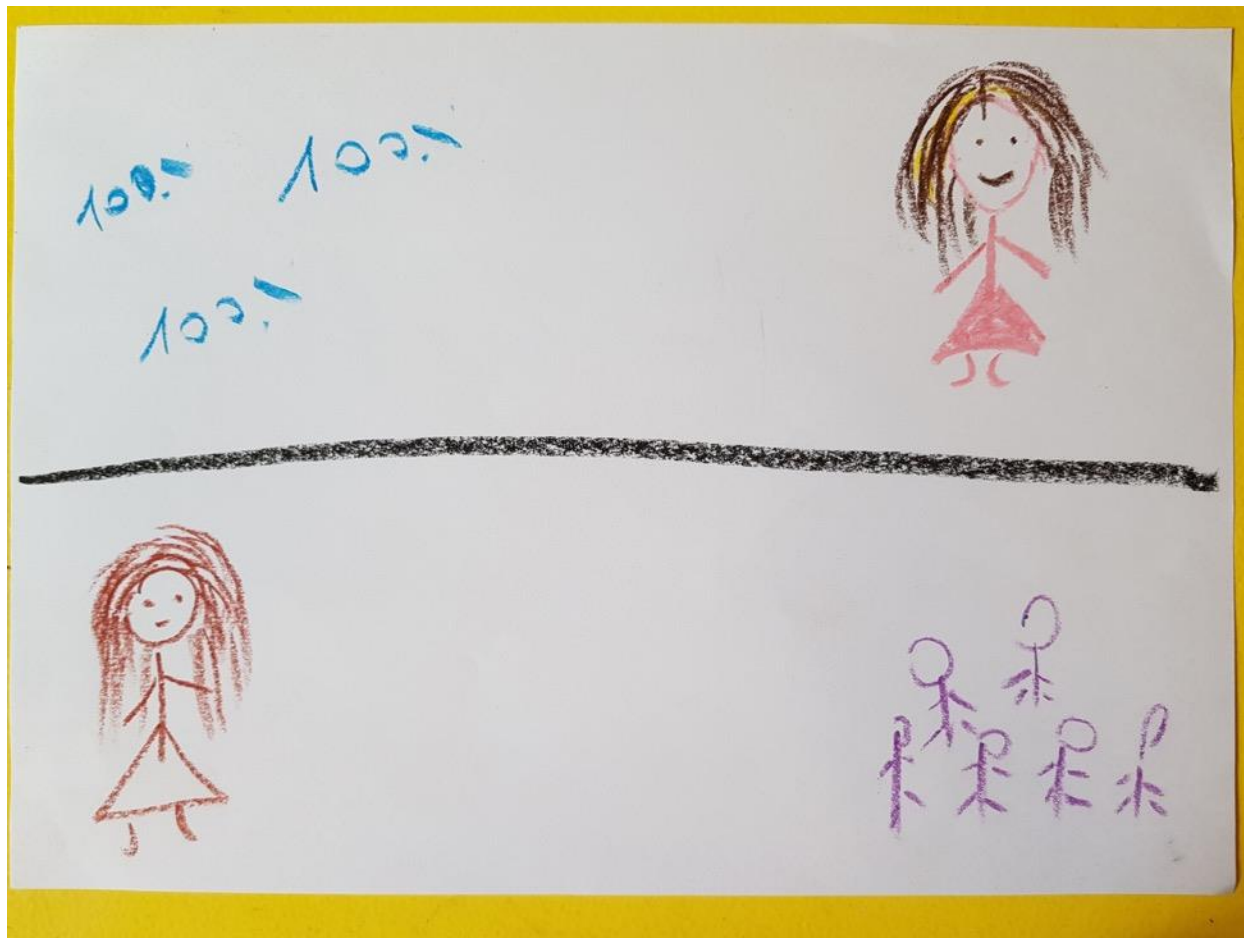


Figure 35. *Feelings towards teachers on top and feeling towards friends on bottom, experiences in the special education class (Miriam).*

Description of drawing

Tenth until twelfth grade (special education class) - The paper is divided into two sections. The top is my success with my teachers and the bottom explains how I felt (the brown image) towards my friends that were a cohesive group.

This is me and I had a difficult time entering their group. It was easier once I got there because there was a girl who helped me get in. However, this was only after two years of not being with them. In school, “I had an amazing teacher who always pushed, helped and explained; she never let me give up on anything. She wasn't even my homeroom teacher, but rather a

subject teacher. She helped me in everything and I finally got 100 % in the classes that I took. She gave me a feeling of success and to this day, I'm still in touch with her. From the special education class this is how I felt. We're good friends; she believes in me and I will wait to sit and talk to her. If I am sad from school, she always gives me that drive to push myself.



Figure 36. *Feeling towards friends in an inclusive class (Miriam).*

Description of drawing: it's the opposite feeling from special education classroom. In elementary school, I was the queen of the class and trampled over everyone. I'll try to draw it. I was so popular and loved by everyone. All the girls in my class thought I was so cool. Wow you have a TV in your house! Wow you're allowed to wear pants? You're so cool!

But inside myself I remember feeling awful. There were a few girls, including me, who would get taken out of the classrooms. Every time that a teacher would come and take me out, I became so embarrassed. Until I built up my entire image of “being cool,” some lady is coming to help me and take me away from all of this. I was so bummed out. I didn't want to come back to the class. Tutoring was a waste of time because I didn't even know how to read. My teacher wanted me to read in front of everyone and she saw how I couldn't read in fourth grade. She's like okay, okay I understand. You can stop reading. As I reflect and remember just how awful these teachers are, the memories are powerful. If you're going to be a teacher, you have to help your students achieve their dreams and give them self-confidence. Will you know how to help your students get better in what they are doing? If not, don't become a teacher.

When the teachers would take me out, my heart broke. I missed all the fun things with the teachers and I couldn't do half of the classes that they did. I didn't go to math, science, or geography with my class. Every time they would learn together I would be out of the picture.

Drawing #2- Feelings towards her Teachers

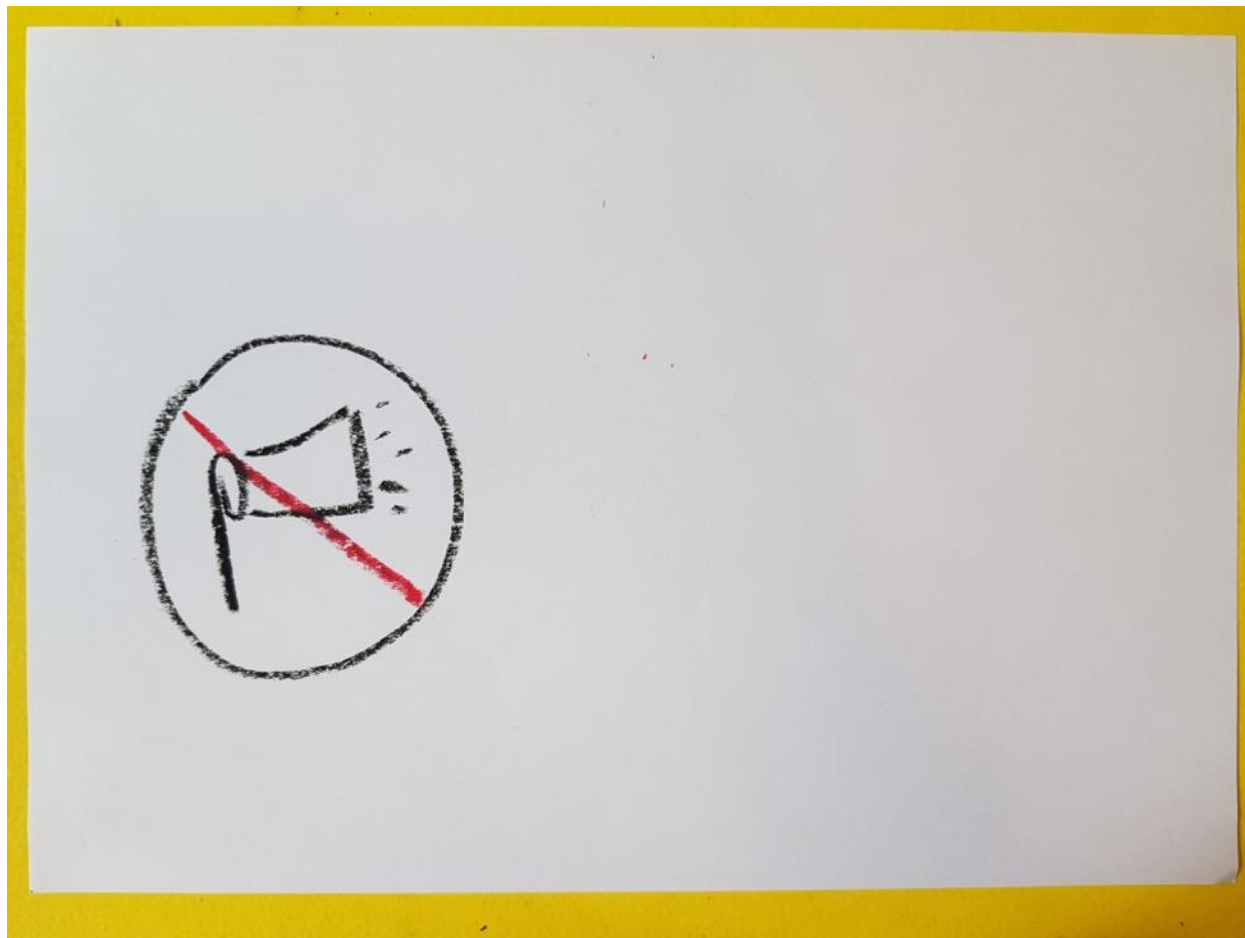


Figure 37. *Feelings towards teacher in an inclusive class (Miriam).*

Description of drawing

In elementary school, the teachers asked me to be quiet. I was not allowed to express myself. There was that horrible teacher, who commanded me, in front of everyone, to be quiet. I'm going to make a loudspeaker with an X over it. My thought is clever. At my job, I feel stupid because I know that I am intelligent. I know that I can't get a degree in anything because of my disability. I want to do something that will stimulate my mind. It's frustrating because dyslexia block me.

Drawing #3- Feelings towards Parents/mother

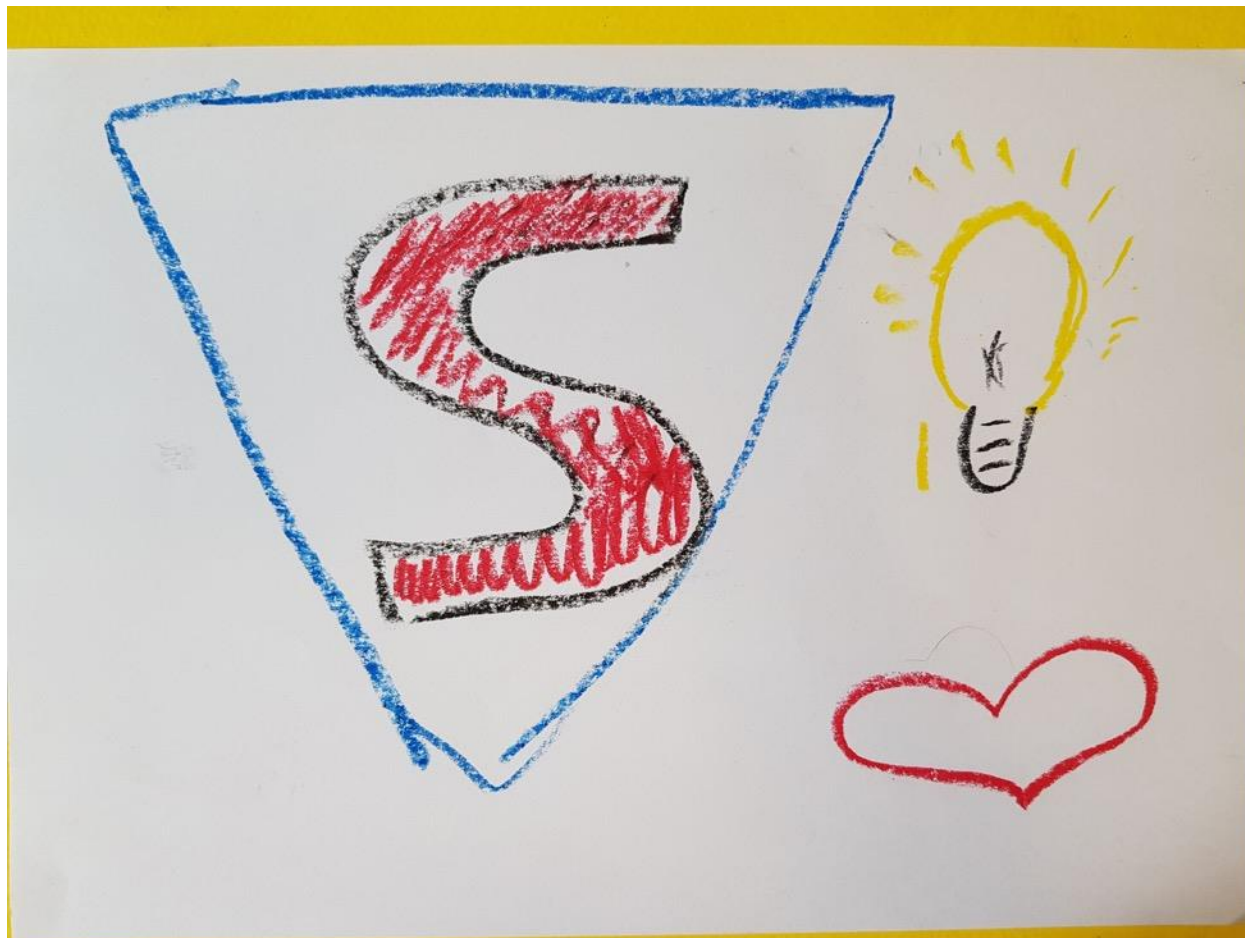


Figure 38. *Feelings towards mother Description of drawing. Symbols of her mother. Superwomen- symbol. The lightbulb- smart- the heart- love. (Miriam).*

My mother is superwoman; I admire and love her. She is smart and brilliant. I am also worried for her because I want her to always be happy. I worry for her that she never be sad. She never broke towards the system of the Ministry of Education. This is a place where it's easy to break down The Ministry of Education forgets that it's a system for children and that all students should receive the necessary services to attain success. They should provide better attention to everyone's learning needs. When I went with my mom to the principal, he said, "every year I get a prize for being the best educator of the city." My mom told him, "it's not about helping the

successful kids, but instead helping the non-successful students become successful.” She always believes in me, but I always give up.

Drawing #4- Feelings towards Herself



Figure 39. *Feelings towards myself (Miriam).*

Description of drawing

I drew myself against the world. I'm in pencil and not colorful. I feel that I can't reach the bubble with all the colors inside.

The way to get there is too far and hard. The world has so many things to offer and it has so much light and sun. I'm the little girl who can't get there because I lack confidence. I don't want to go into the hardships that prevent me from entering the bubble. The hardship is

represented by the journey; I want to be inside the bubble, where all the colors are inside, without having to go on a journey. I will even use two papers to show how far it is from the bubble. It's really a hard feeling. It even impacts my dating and my life in general. "What, you're 25 years old and you don't have a first degree?" Or when I go to a restaurant and I can't read the menu, "What, you can't read the menu? It's a disability. She's stupid because she can't read."

Participant #7: Nof -Inclusive Education

Nof is 27, married with one child. She was in an inclusive class in an academic school. Nof comes from a religious Modern Orthodox family, she grew up speaking Hebrew and a little French at home. Nof is a teacher for special education for inclusive children in the education system. Nof expressed her strengths as being diligent and not giving up, she's good with things like computers. Nof expressed her weaknesses as being shy and expressing herself by heart and in writing especially in biology. Nof likes to swim, bike, sports and create origami. She avoids anything that has to do with writing. She has epilepsy and takes medication for it. She hopes that her story will be helpful for future research.

Drawing # 1- Feelings towards her Friends

I described a situation (see Figure 40) where I'm sitting in front of the class and in front of my teacher. I feel pretty bitter and am looking in a thousand directions. My friends were always academically more competent and knew to answer any question and information that the teacher was talking about. I always felt alone. In the social aspect I felt alone during breaks even though I had friends. I'm sure that the teacher noticed that I wasn't able to maintain the same grades as my peers. The girls in my class were smarter and more successful; they understood the teacher within a few seconds. In order to not miss what the teacher said, I wrote everything

down; this includes information deemed not essential. I was somewhat diligent in my note-taking, but in my notebook it was full of drawings.

I had a hard time concentrating, I would just stare at various places in the classroom. In order to show the teacher that I was listening, I would just color in my notebook, as if I were keeping up with the class. I always felt that I was behind my friends academically, and that they are much more successful and on a higher level than me. My school had very high academic standards, and I was never able to close that achievement gap. I had so many notes and I was full of motivation but something just did not seem right.

When I was in the seventh or eighth grade, I began to take notes. However, the gaps in my knowledge were significant. I had a really hard time demonstrating my knowledge in a few subjects. My friends would study for two hours and I would study for five days in advance. In most cases, the end result would be that I would receive a 60 % and they would get a 90%. When this occurred, all I could think of is where did I go wrong? In tenth grade, I took an elective in biology and I received individualized instruction. At this point, my comprehension of the material really broke down because I didn't succeed at all. Until then it was repressed and I also didn't pay much attention to my grades, I had acceptable grades; I had a lot of motivation that came from within me and I didn't give up until 10th grade. I had a crisis and it felt like I had no strength left in me at all.

The biggest mistake I made was that I didn't use my oral exam opportunity; in this way, my self- confidence was diminished and my self-image was even more so. I didn't want my classmates to look at me differently. My teachers took off many questions on my test but this strategy was not helpful. Until today, I try to avoid this topic as much as I can. It just brings me bitterness and frustration.

If I took an oral test everyone would know that I'm different, and if the teacher would just customize my test, no one would know that I'm different. An oral test would have definitely helped me, more than anything else. My difficulty is actually writing down the answer in the teacher's desired format. There was no doubt that I knew the material. I just had to word it in the right way and that's where I always fell, I wasn't able to express myself.

I had good friends and wasn't socially isolated. I also had a few friends that were in my same situation. However, I still kept my LD to myself. There was one friend that we were in the same boat. We would study together and laugh about how bitter we are that we chose to study biology and not art like all the rest of the class.

My mom pushed me to learn biology. She said that biology is important and it will be good for university, maybe even for medical school. When I started, I didn't think about it too much and when I wanted to switch to another elective it was too late. I fell between the cracks and failed.

I'm still mad at my mom. There is no doubt that if I had chosen art as an elective, my life would have changed for the better. The number of hours I put into biology led to frustration. My self-confidence decreased and my self-image disintegrated. This made me feel as if I can't do anything. At first I kept it only to myself, only later when I got more frustrated I would prove to my mom that I am not able to do it, and "why did you tell me to go to biology?" This is the biggest mistake and I was so frustrated and I had no choice but to deal with it. I also had all of the smartest girls in my elective and I didn't have anyone to be with me in my difficulty. Actually, there was one girl that was also frustrated with me. We would do projects together and be bitter together. We both did nonsense things together like copying from tests and it really helped me but I was still very frustrated.

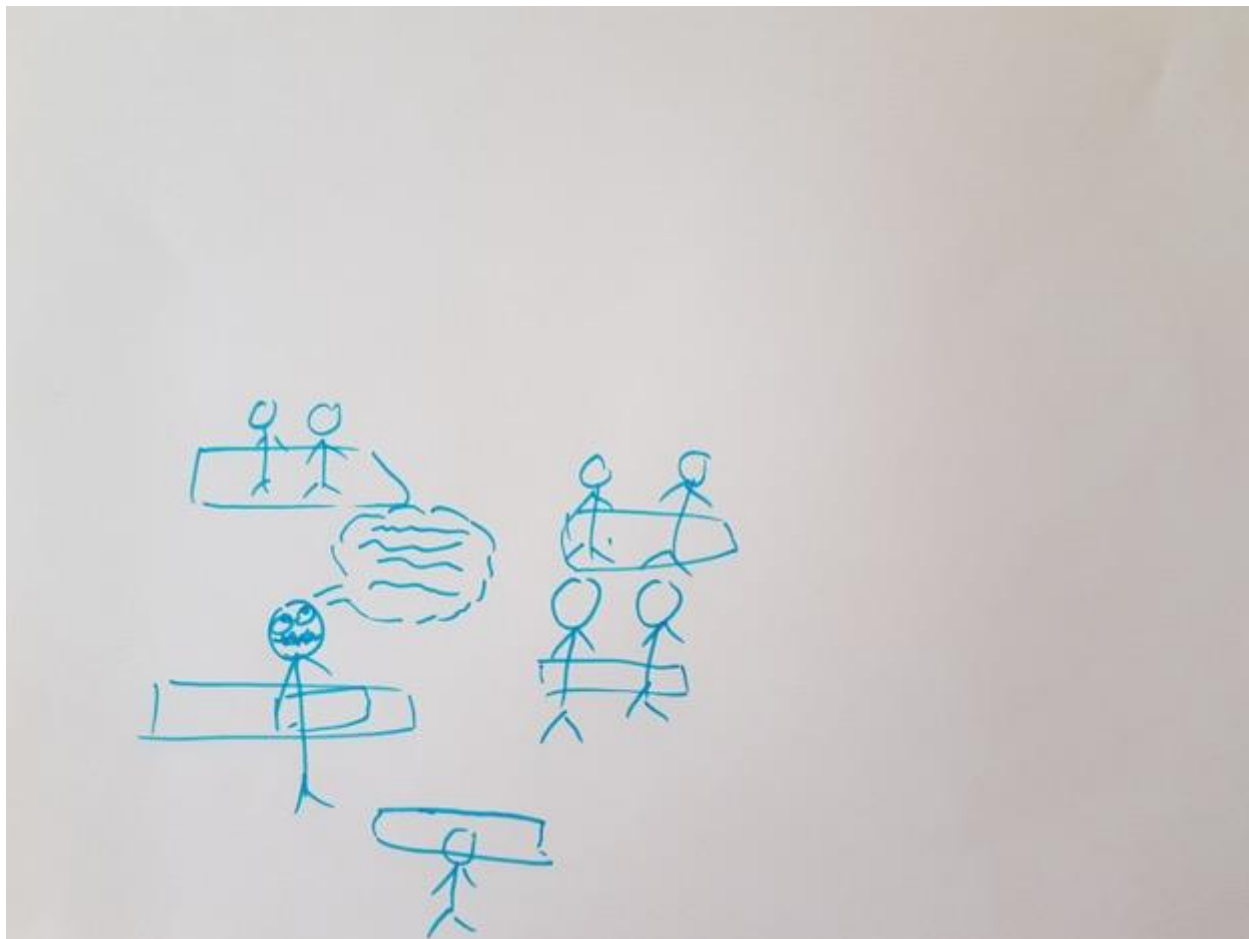


Figure 40. *Feelings towards friends (Nof).*

Drawing #2- Feelings towards her Teachers

Ninth and twelfth grade I had the same homeroom teacher and she understood my difficulty and gave me support and really believed in me. She also helped me and guided me. In 10th and 11th grade I had homeroom teachers that didn't understand my difficulty as an LD and I also didn't connect to them. It's really difficult to connect and not understand your side, I didn't try to go closer to them. I didn't see them as someone that can help me and I think that I had more difficulties in tenth and eleventh grade because of them.

I also feel that if the teacher believes in you than you can do anything. I needed someone that would support me and believe in me, that will be there with me so I can depend on her to

give me the confidence I need. Someone that is listening to me, and that's why I drew large ears, she was a very tall teacher physically but she always "came down to me" and listened to anything that I had to say. The two other teachers were never there for me and in 11th grade I got so lost and I felt that it was just a hard year.

I didn't want to explain it to them, I didn't feel that they were a listening ear for me. I didn't feel comfortable. I was always a quiet and shy girl and that was my label in high school. But at the same time, I was diligent and had a lot of will power, I didn't feel comfortable with these teachers, but even though I was shy I was able that this one homeroom teacher will listen to me, and won't let me be in that low place. She always placed me in the classroom in the front and gave me tips on how and what to do. I felt that I could depend on her. I never went to complain to the girls in my class how hard class was because I didn't want to feel weak and burden, my school was on a really high level. All the girls would learn and put in a lot of effort. I didn't want to feel like "why are you coming to complain to us that you are not succeeding in tests?" I didn't feel like they understood me. I had a LD and I really tried my hardest. My twelfth grade teacher did a 180 on me and gave me confidence and let me feel that I'm worth more than what I thought until now.

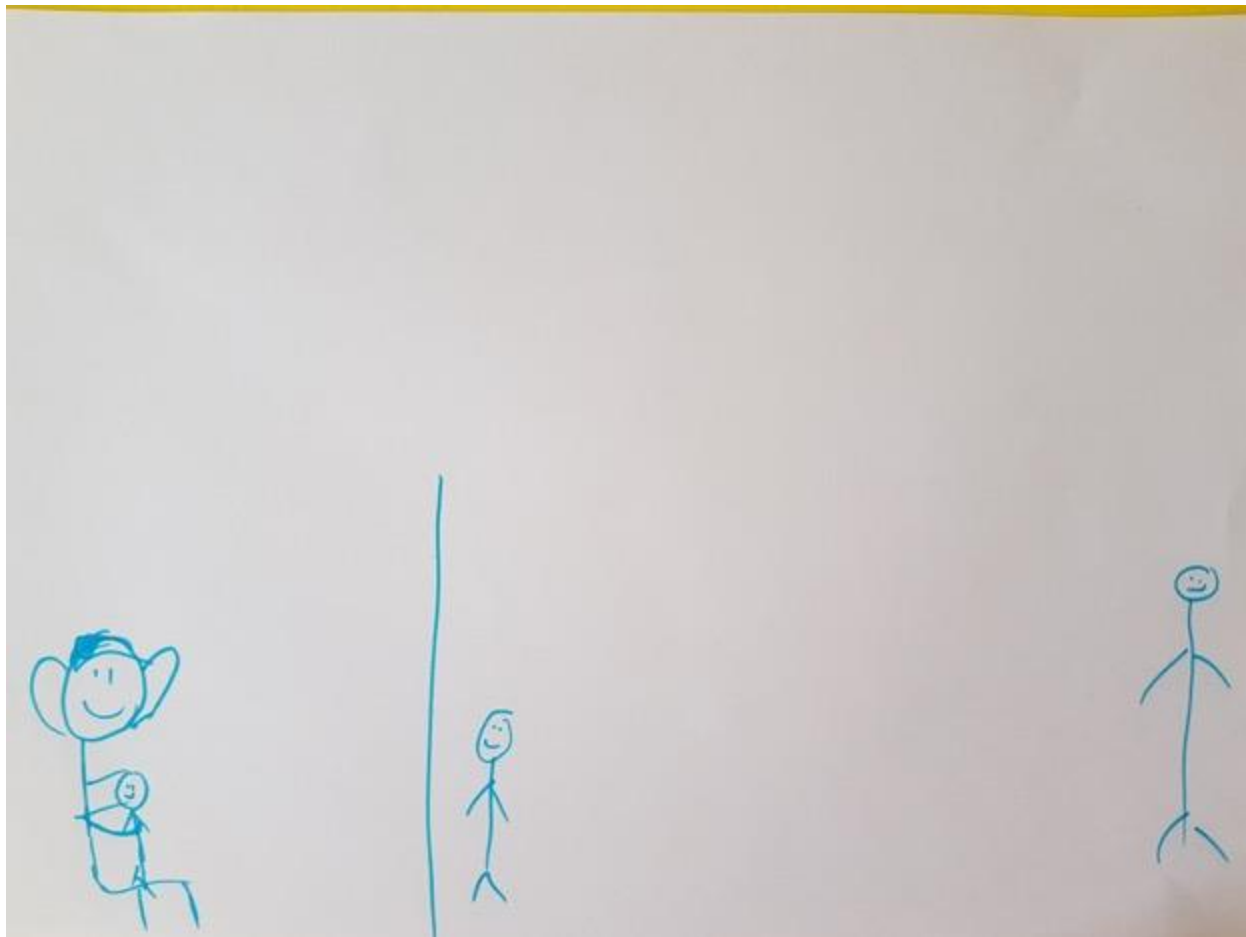


Figure 41. *Feelings towards my teachers (Nof).*

Drawing #3- Feelings towards Parents

Ninth and tenth grade my mother was very frustrated. I didn't draw my father in the picture because he was never on the education side. He wasn't significant for me in the education aspect, he moved to Israel in his 20's and he didn't understand Hebrew well, he didn't try to ever be involved so it's not so relevant, if I bring him up at all. In ninth and tenth grade I was very bitter about the situation that I wasn't succeeding and my mom tried as much as she could to help me catch up on my pace with private tutors. In eleventh grade she took me to get diagnosed and then she understood that I have a difficulty, that I'm not struggling for no reason, and from then on there was more of a "hand in hand" feeling It's not a good situation when you always have to

ask your mom for private tutors in math and Torah studies. There were times that I just let myself have the easier test and my teacher gave me assurance that it doesn't make me less worthy.

My father was there for me to take to me to the private tutors and paid for them, he couldn't help me because my mom is more of the listening type. With him there is nothing to talk about, I never saw him as someone that is a listening ear in the education aspect. During my diagnosis test my mom was there for me and my father didn't understand, he never went to parent-teacher conferences but it wasn't something that was missing, he was there for me for practical things like teaching me to ride a bike and swimming.

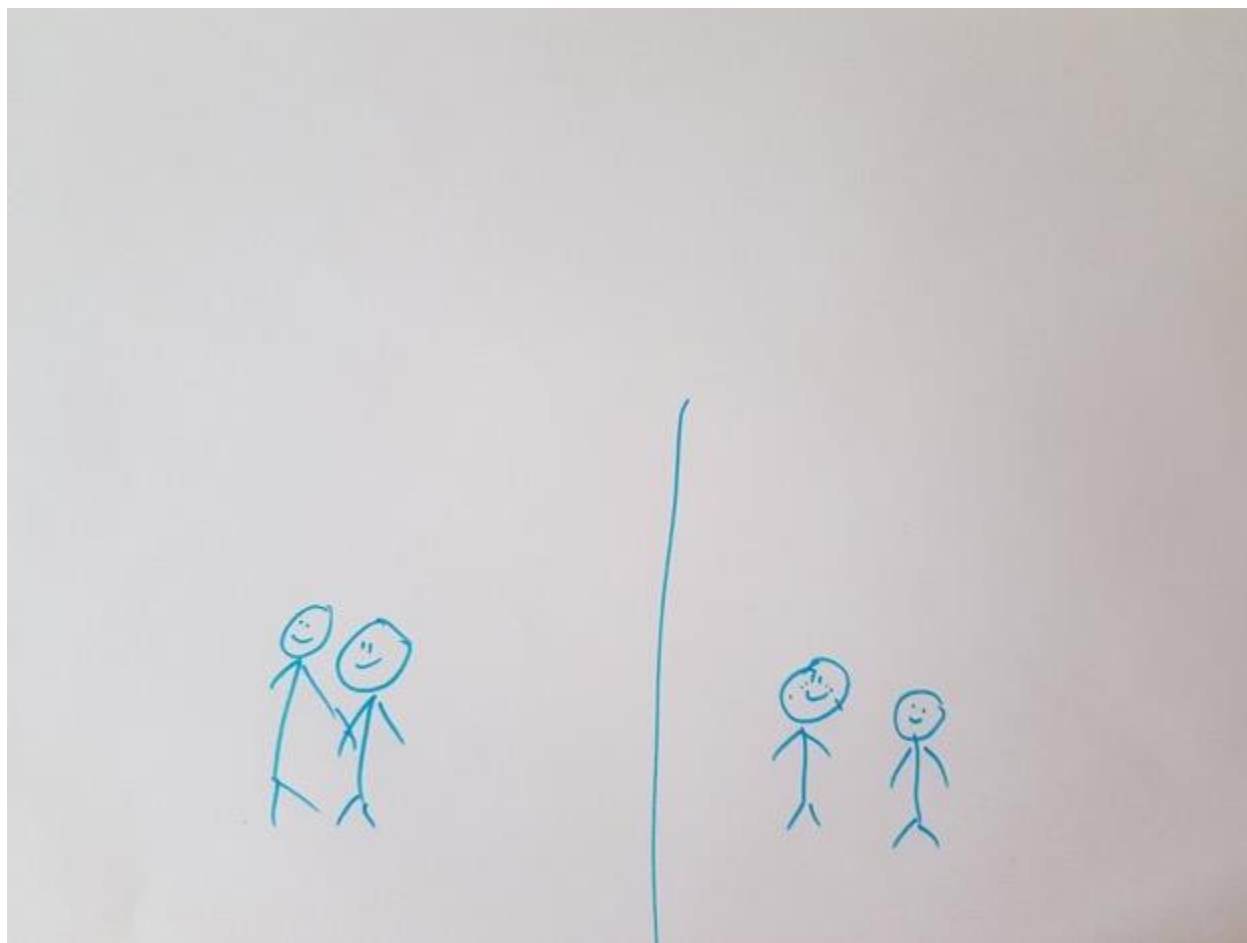


Figure 42. *Feelings towards my parents(Nof).*

Drawing #4- Feelings towards Herself

Figure 43. *Feelings towards myself(Nof).*

I felt like wonder woman, I was always very proud of myself. Also in retrospect and also then, I never gave up on myself, although I had many chances. I was also very diligent and I always tried to see the light at the end of the tunnel and believe that I am able to do it. Not only in biology, I tried to do everything to pass all of these obstacles and to pass it. I had a lot of will power and belief in myself, without it, it could have been very hard to fall between, I didn't give up and I tried again and again. There were teachers that really gave me a higher grade for effort, I never wanted them to say about me that I never tried even though it was very hard for her. I didn't give up on tests only once when I copied in biology class. I always tried to get to school

on time and went to all the tests. You can look at it in retrospect and like the kids here that I teach, they can all say that it's hard for me and that I can't do it. But I'm proud of them that they are able to progress slowly at their own pace.

Participant #8: Annie-Inclusive Education

Annie is 30 years old. She is married and has three kids. Annie identifies as modern orthodox. Annie is a student and parents supervisor. She was born in New York, and speaks Hebrew and English at home. When growing up she spoke English and now with her kids she tries to continue and give them that second language. Her strengths are that she's good with people and has empathy, she has a good memory for and feels that it gives her a learning advantage. She describes her weakness as a lot. She feels impatient because of her dyslexia. What Annie likes to do most is to spend time with her kids and to enjoy studying and learning new things. She dislikes doing papers and tests. She doesn't take medication. She started off saying: "It's hard for me to remember what time of my life I want to connect to."

Drawing # 1- Feelings towards her Friends

Most of my friends I tried to keep a secret. I was ashamed that I had a learning disability. 15 years ago it was called giving someone easier work, whereas now we give people accommodations. It was very embarrassing, when I got 100 on my tests because I did it by heart. Everyone knew that I was doing an oral exam but nobody really asked me why, and I didn't talk about having a learning disability. I didn't tell anyone that I was doing the *Psycholmeteri* by heart (a college entrance exam similar to the SAT) in high school. Everyone thought that of course I'm getting 100 because I got an adjustment. That was the approach in society. That's what society said. Whoever knew about my oral test would give me a face, and say "of course you got 100." I finished the test in the Ministry of Education with an excellent report card, (111 on my

average.) it's really high. "Of course, it's easy for you." I don't remember telling them so much, I tried to hide it. I think that the girls in my class possibly knew about it. It was such a long time ago and I told my three close friends, we would always talk about the hardships. I had my group of friends and we did everything together. Just like I spoke to them about what's hard for me and we all had our difficulties. One mom had cancer and one mom was handicapped from a terrorist attack. We would talk about our difficulties in life. We were really close together. I didn't talk to other people about my dyslexia. I was the one that had the best notes and summaries from the class, everyone always wanted my notes. If I write slowly I have really nice handwriting. I have spelling mistakes; it also took me a long time to read this consent form. I ask my husband to summarize articles for me, and write my papers for me. I ask for help from people around me, now that I'm doing a master's degree there aren't any oral exams, I get extra time. I get extra time on tests. I have a hard time expressing myself. I was diagnosed in eighth grade, until then I wouldn't get good grades. I would get 70s and 80s, after I was the one that taught them for the test, and they would get 100 on the same exam, and it was very frustrating. Everyone always wanted to study with me. My memory for information is very good and I was able to explain the material very well. The principal in my school told my parents to take me to a test to get a diagnosis. After, I cried after every test. Only in a later grade I was diagnosed.

I drew a person that is saying "don't tell" because I don't want anyone to know. I don't want anyone to take away my good grades because I did my tests orally. My 100 is really 100 and not because I got "help" during the test, because I got it done orally.



Figure 44. *Feelings towards my friends (Annie).*

Drawing #2- Feelings towards her Teachers

Drawing isn't my strong point and I'm trying to express it in the best way possible. The heart represents the star teachers that really helped me, the principal that was there for me, and told my parents about going to get tested. And there was another teacher that gave me a feeling that I deserve everything, the hearts represent them. And the third pair of hearts was my teacher for life and they gave me a good feeling about oral tests, and then it was more of the teachers that I was more ambivalent towards. I don't remember that there was a lot of attention about it. They were ok with putting in the time and effort. I don't remember fighting for getting more time on tests. I went to an artist's school, it's a school that brings out the arts in you. You didn't have to get good grades all in words, but teachers always gave an option to give in homework in an artistic way. It's not just a coincidence that I went to a school like this. This didn't give me a

good feeling about having a LD, but there wasn't as much humiliation in this interest. There was one teacher that made things more humiliating, after a certain amount of times I don't remember having her as a big part. She wasn't really fit to be a teacher. I also drew some sort of cloud that isn't something with a shape or something that you can touch. My teacher for life, he was a big part of my life after high school. He is in my life and he is an amazing person. He never gave me a bad feeling about my LD, he always gave me a positive one. My English teacher as well was a big part of my life.

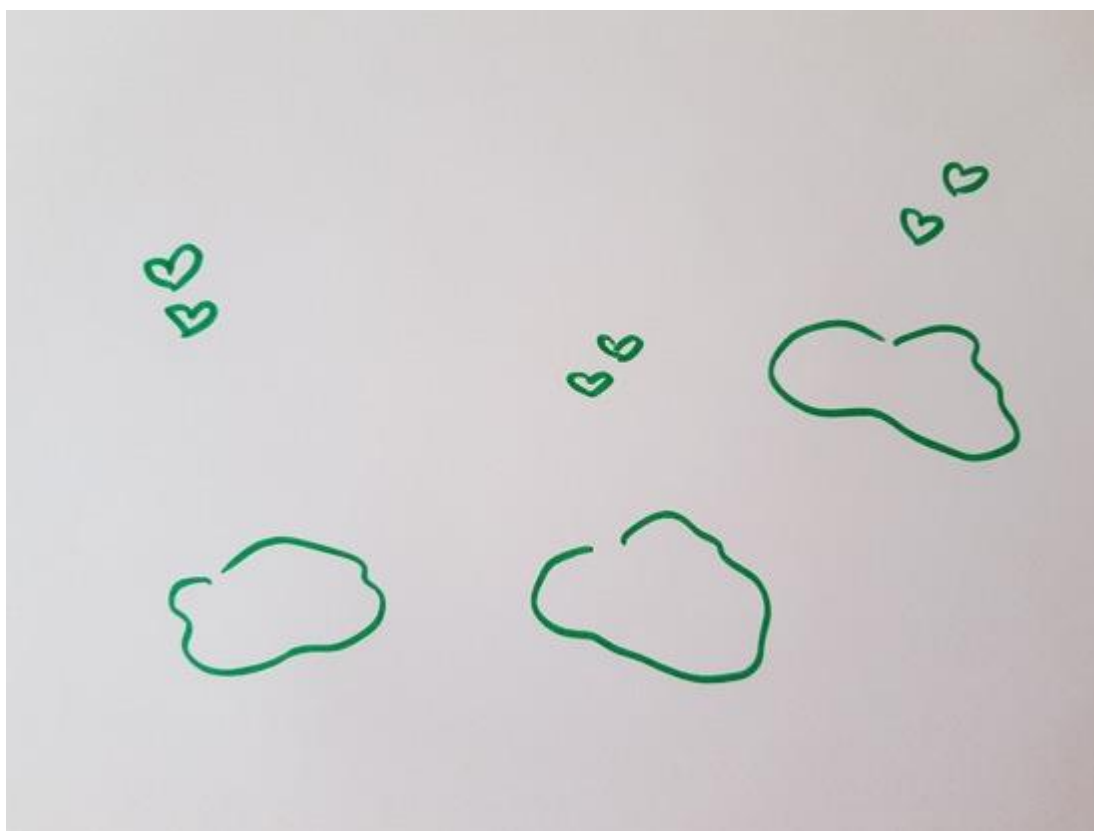


Figure 45. *Feelings towards my teachers (Annie).*

Drawing #3- Feelings towards Parents

This is a very sensitive subject. I feel anger towards my parents. My dad has ADHD and dyslexia. How did you not assume at all that your own daughter has dyslexia Why did you only

test me in 8th grade? My favorite brother, we have a great connection with one another and he has ADHD and he got all the attention in the world. ADHD is more of a difficulty that you see and have to deal with. So he got all of the attention, I had to deal with myself and I had to help him with his own homework. I have a lot of siblings, well just five.

I have a brother with dyslexia, another brother without a diagnosis. Then there is me and my brother with ADHD and another brother with nothing (no diagnosis). My parents told my younger brother that if he gets an 80 average on his tests then he will get whatever he wants, and I got 100 on tests and no one ever saw me, that's not fair, because I also am working hard. The test administrator said that I was able to figure out how to work with my difficulty. Why do I have to be in this anger, I was in the wave of LD, so no one saw me. My oldest brother would get all the attention, and I'm annoyed, I would always complain. My brother that finished his degree in computer science got a really big gift from my father. I finished my degree in education on a full scholarship and I didn't get anything. I did a program that was a free degree because I had such good grades, just look and appreciate my degree that I worked so hard to get. They helped me a little with private tutors, but it's not like I got anything different from them. My little brother has a very successful business, and doesn't need anyone to pay anything. I need help from my parents, if I want them to pay for something, I don't even think that my parents remember that I have dyslexia, especially today. As you grow up it doesn't have as much meaning, it's more of a shining light when you're in school. I don't get 100 at university. At least I have my husband that helps me. It's hard for me, but I'm happy that I'm getting over the fear. Don't get me wrong it's not easy to be in university when you have to read three articles for every paper. I don't live at home, it's not an issue towards them. I want to prove myself, because of the dyslexia. I want to prove that you can be the best you can in something that isn't like

everyone in my family, like doctors, lawyers, psychologists. Like psychology is something that I would never be able to study because the acceptance exam is too difficult, and the amount of reading articles is a lot. There is not a chance that I would have been able to do that. Any word that I don't have in my memory, it makes it even harder for me to remember. It's a struggle

I gave up things that I wanted to do in advance. I didn't go to university for my first degree because I knew that it would be too hard for me. When I tried to get into physical therapy I applied and waited to hear if I got accepted, and I didn't get any answer. I called and they said we didn't receive your psychometric score and that's why you didn't receive an answer, and I told them that I got a special exam and they asked why, and I said because I have dyslexia and they said "Oh you wouldn't get accepted anyways, the last LD person we had didn't survive the first semester and left in the middle." It was so degrading, I got accepted to nursing school but I was in fertility treatments so I declined my acceptance because I didn't want to give shots to patients and to myself at the same time.



Figure 46. *Feelings towards my parents (Annie).*

Drawing #4- Feelings towards Herself

Anything I want is like a distant dream and I feel that the dyslexia made it that way. Things I want are out of my reach. It's still there and still difficult and even when I have to read books to my kids, if I'm tired I can't focus and read. There are a lot of dreams that I am not able to do. I don't always have the strength to fight with myself to reach what I want, it's a wall. I'm not who I wanted to be because of the dyslexia.

If I was living my dreaming without the dyslexia, I would have been so happy with a huge smiley face. It's a daily struggle. I don't even read the news, it's too long for me to read. People post ideas on Facebook, but I have no patience to read everything, but I would have loved to.

I'm not living my dream right now; it really is stopping me from everything. My husband is the most knowledgeable person, I always feel like I don't know enough and I never have anything to add in these conversations, and I feel left out. Sometimes I'm angry at myself and I think maybe if I tried harder it would be easier for me. Maybe if I was trying harder, it also connects to my parent's anger, that they didn't have the time to be there for me. So that's why I may have been angry at myself.



Figure 47. *Feelings towards myself (Annie).*

Participant #9: Rina-Inclusive Classroom

Rina is 18.3 years old. She is newly married of six months and doesn't have children. She identifies as Ultra- orthodox Breslov and she wants to work as a preschool teacher so that kids will not grow up the way she did. She was born in Israel and speaks Yiddish as her mother

tongue. Her strength is that her belief is strong and she doesn't have a weakness. She likes to be with kids and does not want to watch them get hurt. She feels that her father forces her to do things and she doesn't like it. She wanted to add that she feels that she does not need to take Ritalin, and that they should get diagnosed by a professional rather than her rabbi telling her parents she needed to have Ritalin. She remembers that there was an entire week where she was home before she would take the pill and that now she can do it without a problem. She was scared that she was not going to get married because of her story.

Drawing #1- Feelings towards her Teachers

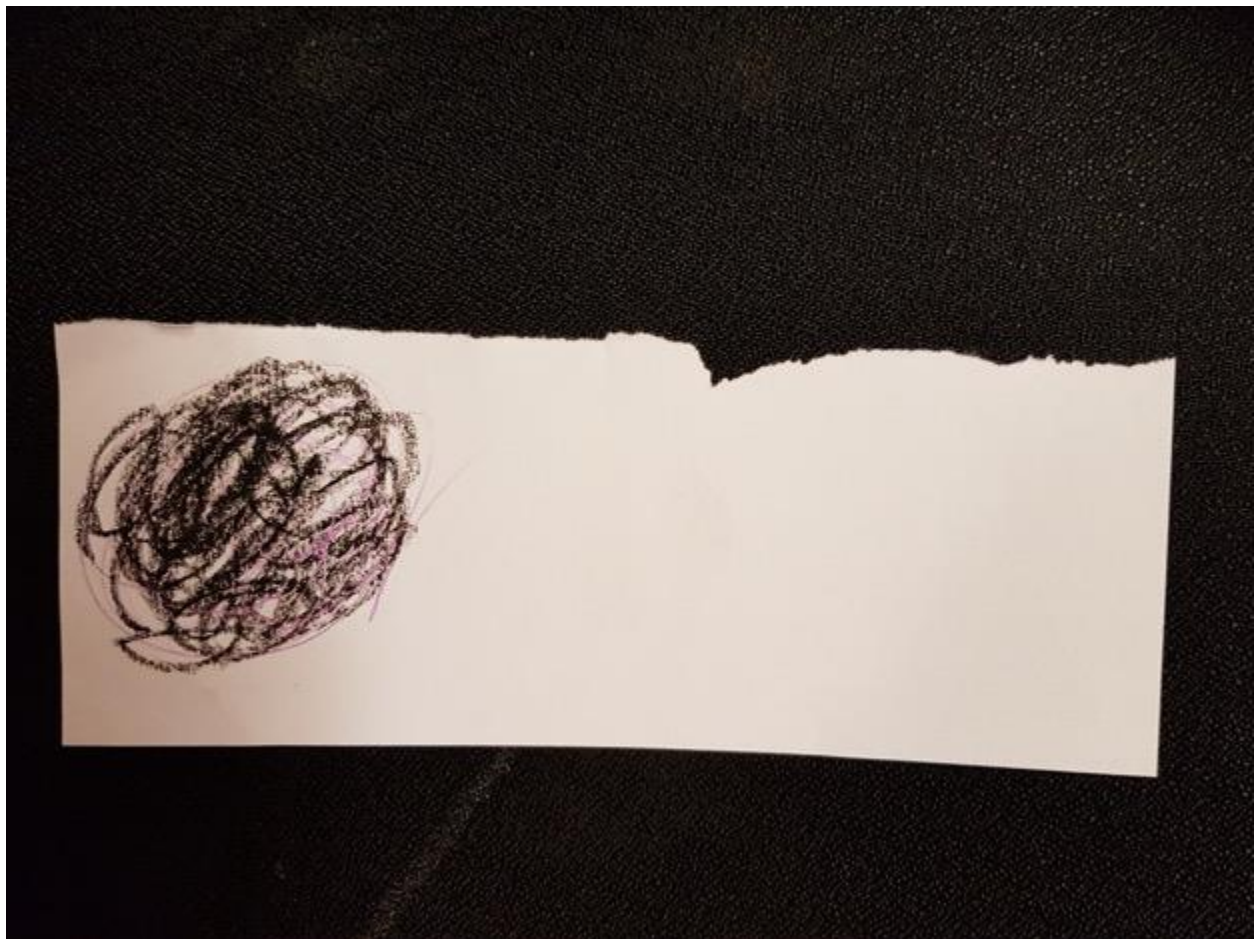


Figure 48. *Feelings towards my teachers (Rina).*

I drew that they ruined my life. They didn't listen to me; they didn't try to understand me. They put me on the side. I could talk and talk and they didn't hear me, they didn't want to hear me and ignored me. This is the style of the teachers I've had. I drew this because it is the most hurtful. I thought that they would hear me more. I tried that they would hear me but in the end I threw cornflakes on them, so they would realize my existence and hear me. When I was about 4, the teachers didn't let me explain; a girl pulled my hair and I slapped the girl so I got punished and they put me in the room, it drove me crazy. When I didn't behave they would put me in a room and tie my hands with a rope and my legs to the chair, and rap my mouth with toilet paper. They didn't hit me but they grabbed me, and it hurt, I didn't really do anything to that girl.

I couldn't talk because of the tissue. They took off my shoes and hung them high up. They wanted to calm me down and give me a punishment. It's known as a great school; the teachers there need to leave the school. On Rosh Hashanah before I got married this year I called my teacher and told her that I can't forgive her. I thought that you would understand me and try to talk to me, instead of understanding me you put me in a room and made me feel ashamed in front of everyone in the class; everyone came to watch me. She did it on purpose to embarrass me in front of everyone. I told her listen, I'm getting married and I want you to know that you ruined me. The teacher answered and what do you want me to say? I answered that I want her to say sorry at least and that you'll never do it again to anyone. Do something about it. You ruined my life. She said sorry and I forgive her, I gave her the benefit of the doubt, maybe she was in trouble or in a fight with her husband. But I told her please don't ever do this to any other girl in the school, don't take out your anger on them. I didn't want them to ever put another girl in a room. I was very mischievous as a child.

Kids in our schools were not allowed to be this way. I was this way also because I had difficulty and also because I had problems with my parents at home. Today I know that if a child behaves this way, I know that it's because something is bad at home, and that you don't just punish the child in a room, you try to talk to them and listen to them. I have a friend that I met only in eighth grade. Until then I was alone against everyone. Even at home no one believed me when I told them what happened.

The teacher didn't tell anyone, and no one understood me. I cut them out of my life. They closed me in a small dark room with no windows or light. And I had such a hard time getting married, you know why? Because we do it (sex) in a dark room and every time it was dark it would bring me back to that moment, with their faces and girls in school. Now I go speak to this lady once a week, and talk about my traumas.

Drawing # 2- Feelings towards her Friends



Figure 49. *Feelings towards my friends (Rina).*

This is me here on the side. I thought that they would help me but they didn't, I was on the outside.

My friend helped me, she got closer to me and helped everyone see the true me. I knew the same girls from the age of 3 until you get married, it's the same seminary all those years and then you get married at 18. When I was in seminary everyone noticed me, I became the center and everyone was around me, with support.

A lot of prayers made everything change but they also saw who I really am. From age 3 because I got hit by my mother every hit I got at school I couldn't handle it. Because at home my mother would always hit me, I would protect everyone in my family and get beat up for it. The teachers I thought would understand me, without explaining to them what my situation was at home, because it was a secret.

I have learned that you just need to see that the child isn't listening or behaving and you know that something is wrong, he is suffering. I couldn't tell them because they would say that I'm lying and it's my dreams and not real. I want to be a preschool teacher because I went through it and I want to help other kids not to ever feel this way, and to give them the listening space.

They called me the stick of the class, because its known that the stick is the one that hurts the most, I'll never forget it. If they would have known what was going on at home and my difficulty in school things would have been different. I knew that if I'd tell my parents any of this they would never believe me. My father tried to put me against my mother and made himself the righteous one. He was closer to my sister rather than me. We are three brothers and three sisters. Each one connected to a different parent or sibling. Now that my parents are divorced I'm more connected to my mother, because she understands me more.

When I was younger my mother would hit me. I wasn't behaving, and these are kids. I told my father that he didn't accept me for who I was as a child, now as an adult. I was the one that supported and protected my little sister, when my mother wanted to hit her, I would tell her to run under the table and would be hit instead of her. I supported all of my siblings and protected them. My mother would hit all of us when my father wasn't home, I told my father when I was 10 please come home more because our mother is hitting us, he didn't believe me, and no one wanted to talk about it in my house. When my mom was mad her reaction was so scary. Today I understand my mother, she didn't get any attention from my father, and she didn't have her space to say what she needed to. My father would go work in America for six months at a time working as a physical therapist and leave her alone with six kids that all have ADHD, and the house was chaos. We always listened to him, whatever he said, that's what we did.

I am the fifth child, I was so connected to my brother and the day before he got married I told him, now I won't have you here anymore to talk to every night. He was in the same situation as me. We each spoke about our difficulties and we strengthened each other. Sometimes he gave me a hug, which is not allowed at all in our community between boys and girls, not even siblings, but I needed it, I needed a hug from someone. My parents didn't give kisses to me just to my older siblings. I didn't get any because I was the bad one. I was the one that opened her mouth against my mother. My brother begged me not to do that. And I said that I had to. You know with what she would hit us? (she said a word in Yiddish) a belt, pulled our hair, locked us in the bathroom, it was violent. She was desperate; I got most of the lashes. But thank G-d my sister went with a boyfriend (it's not appropriate at all to walk around with a boyfriend) she got married under 17 because she wanted to run away. I also wanted to run away. Once I even sat by the window and wanted to commit suicide and someone yelled from below and said don't do it,

and I didn't. I had to go through this, now thank G-d with my husband it's still hard because he can remind me of my mother, he says sentences that bring it back and I see the story again. I remember how I was hit, everything I say reminds you of the past. What strengthened me is only my friends, I couldn't even talk to G-d. Even during specific religious practices, I had such a hard time talking to G-d. I had a hard childhood, and now I passed it. My husband is better than everything that anything happened to me, he understands me and he has so much emotion. I didn't tell him any of this, after six months of being married I still didn't tell him. He said we don't need to always talk about the past, now we focus on the future. He really understands me.

We met and on the first date after 30 minutes we decided to get married. That's how we do it. I knew that was it. He was the only boy I went out with. My aunt set us up, everyone wanted to date me, I dealt with so much. And then we met again after we broke the plate, which means that we were engaged. We didn't meet until the wedding half a year later, usually it's a year to be engaged so the boy can learn and become a man. At the wedding we met for five minutes, we spoke and that's it. Now slowly I'm telling him. He doesn't have to know everything that I've been through. I didn't have to take Ritalin and I'm against it.

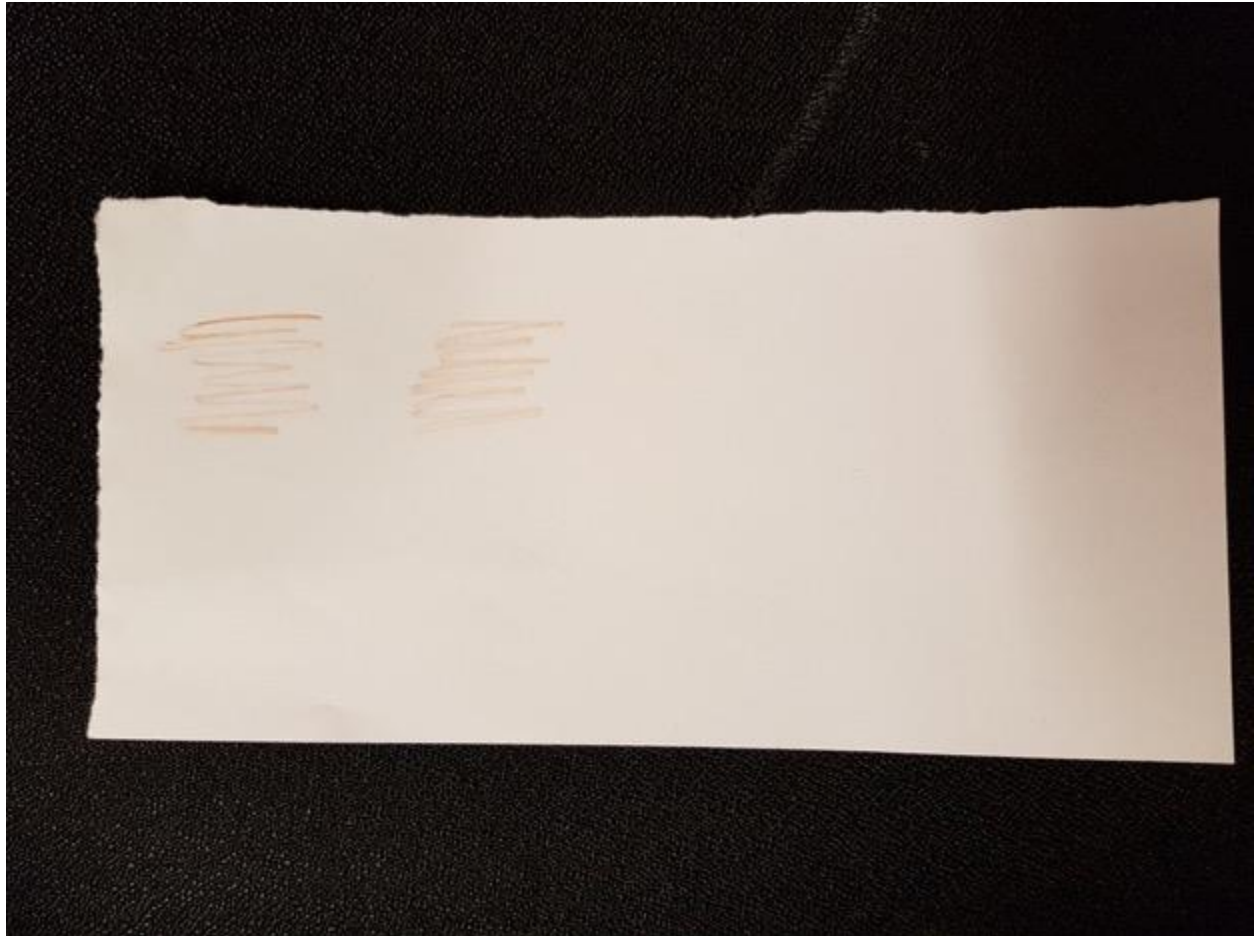
Drawing #3- Feelings towards Parents

Figure 50. *Feelings towards parents (Rina).*

Rina said her feeling are split in Half and half. I wasn't here or there, once like this once like that. Sometimes they were good and sometimes they were bad. They didn't believe me, they thought that I was talking nonsense. I expected more from them, that they would support me and give me attention. I expected my father to work less, and I wanted him to come home. Because I knew that when he was there my mother wouldn't hit us. I would always say to him why are you leaving us? Where are you going? He would always say why are you asking? And then I told him about my mother hitting us.

There are two siblings that I don't get along with, and one brother that didn't like me at all. They were more to themselves, they were the nice ones. If my mom locked them inside, I would open the door. I begged her not to do this. We would pray come save us. My mother was from Russia she was like a Nazi, no emotion and I hope that for my kids I will protect them and keep them safe. I told my husband that I'm not ready to be a mom, I want to first work on myself (it's not something that is accepted in my community). I know that I can be like my mom and take my anger out on other people. I told my husband that you will have to hit my children, I'll be in the kitchen and you go to the room and hit. My husband also got hit if he did something bad. My husband says seeing your mother cry hurts more than being hit. I knew that I would get hit (zipp-yiddish word) because I ran away.

Drawing #4- Feelings towards Herself

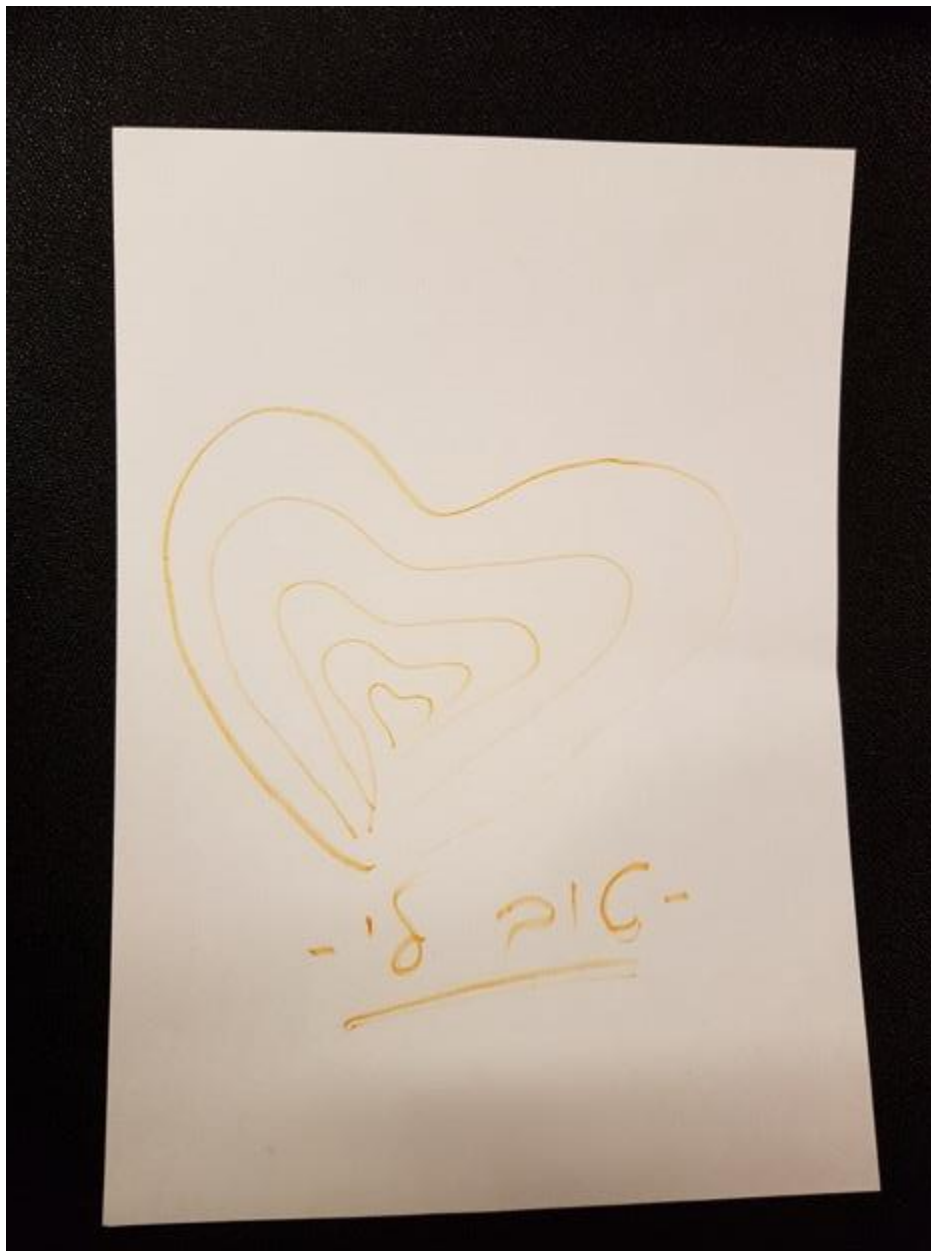


Figure 51. *Feelings towards myself* In the drawing it says: *I'm good (tov lee)* (Rina).

“Beseder,” okay great. Everyone is around me; all the hearts are around me. I am changing a lot, because of my guts in trying to fix it. I did the right thing and I’m good and I’m taking care of my sister and trying to give them what they are missing because they don’t have parents, they are divorced. I have a hard life.

Participant #10: Benny-Inclusive Education

Benny, who is 29.5 years old, is married and has two children. He associates himself as Ultra Orthodox *Chriedi*. He currently works as both a paramedic and a horseback riding instructor. Benny attended an inclusive class while growing up. He feels emotional feelings are high and knows the feelings below the surface. He was born in Israel and speaks Hebrew at home. Benny says that his strengths are human relations, management organization, and he is a good riding teacher. His weakness is learning to read; he has read three books his entire life. His sister gave him money for each book he read. Everything that he writes he gives to someone to proofread. However, Benny feels that he is in a good place overall. He likes to ride his motorcycles, watch sports, ride horses, sit with friends, be with his wife, play with his kids, and laugh with friends. He dislikes learning. Benny takes Serenade, a medication for panic attacks, and has never taken Ritalin. He has dyslexia and can't stand reading.

Drawing # 1- Feelings towards his Friends

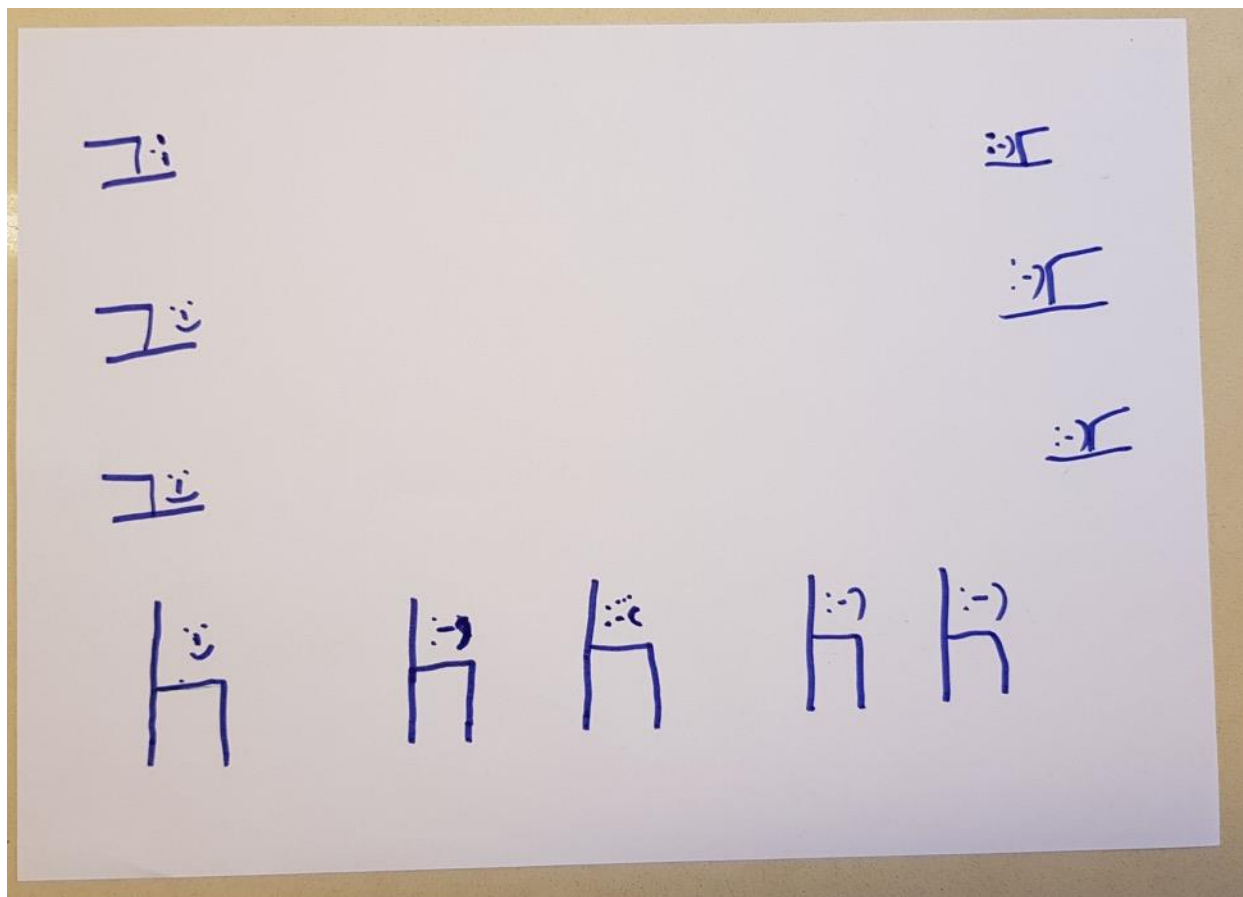


Figure 52. *Feelings towards friends (Benny).*

I have a picture in my head but I can't draw it. In this drawing these are chairs; they are all listening and are happy. The chair in the top left corner is sleeping. This chair is one of those genius people who succeeds on any test. As a result, he doesn't need to listen and is also very annoying. All of the chairs are listening and paying attention. I first thought of the course that I took to become a paramedic, but I then started thinking more. It has been this way my entire life in every place. There was a classroom with a teacher and everyone was listening and understood the content. A young man sits here on the "crying" chair, who is trying and pretending to understand, but just doesn't. Why am I bringing up the ambulance course? This was something that I really wanted. I remember a part of the class where the teacher was there and I said I still didn't understand. After he already explained it the second time, the teacher made this common

hand gesture, and threw the chalk at the board. He got mad, and said, “what don't you understand?” Everyone else understood. He didn't understand my difficulties; this is something that I always deal with. My ambulance course was almost two years ago. The last time I sat in a classroom setting was 10 years ago. I was in a regular classroom. The tears are not actual tears but tears that sense sadness. I have a diagnosis, but my mom never cared what it was. It was always important to her that I have a good experience. Before I came today, I asked my mother the name of the diagnosis. When I try to read, the letters start jumping because I have dyslexia. I also have emotional difficulties from the way my teachers treated me. I would describe how I feel as unimportant and becoming invisible. Also, because I have a younger sibling who has Down Syndrome, my parents neglected me. Out of my 11 siblings, I'm number nine. I have a younger sister who's married and then my sibling with Down Syndrome. My sister actually enjoys having the perks of Down Syndrome because she's a girl. Everything that one sibling got to do, the other did, too. They were always together so she still received the attention she needed. In Down Syndrome, I disappeared in the whole story. That's how I feel with my parents' attitude. This story is from my childhood. Today I can tell you that I've overcome it.

The interruptions I made as a child in my family could have contributed to the concentration aspect of my schooling and restlessness. I wanted them to see me and they didn't. In school, I was (אוי ווי) the worst student in the class. I got punished, beat up, and slapped on both the cheek and the butt. When you're 10 years old and you get slapped in front of 40 kids, it's the biggest humiliation that you can receive as a child. I had a teacher who I remembered until today; I remember him as a good person. It was fun in his class, but when I didn't behave, he didn't punish me in front of everyone. Instead, he would take me out and give me a slap on the butt. This aspect of the education was very important to him. Today I think about how it's really

nice compared to what they would do in the past, which was to not embarrass you in front of everyone. Today I don't think that any violence is accepted.

I, of course, had many friends. I don't think that I knew that I even had dyslexia, but they all saw that I was the first one to leave the class. However, I was the first one to come out of the class. I was always friendly, sometimes even the class clown. It's not the best feeling but I always had people surrounding me, and never felt alone.

Drawing #2- Feelings towards his Teachers



Figure 53. *Feelings towards teachers (Benny).*

I stink at drawing, but can you understand that I tried to draw a chair? There is a teacher behind me who comes and pulls both of my ears and picks me up by my ears to punish me. I didn't even

make a sound. I was in the *Cheder* (a preschool and early elementary school where young boys learn almost exclusively Judaic studies). I remember crying from the pain and embarrassment. I remember these classes because I looked at my watch and just begged the time to go by. It's my daily routine, which resembles a woman being beat up by her husband. I was so mad at my parents and attended therapy for several years. Today, when I think about it, my parents went above and beyond and helped me. I always had tutors helping me. When my tutor came, I would be waiting for him. He would help me understand the material. When it was individualized, I remember understanding the material. They would do all these special deals so I would win prizes and help me stay motivated. I have another picture in my head when I was 14 years old. I prayed and there is a part) that you ask please give me the courage to learn and to have the wisdom. I remember myself crying because it was a hard moment. When you start a *yeshiva ketana* (a *chareidi* middle school and high school, where the focus is almost exclusively on *Judaic studies*), it's a big deal because it's not *Cheder*. The rabbi (the principal) stood on the side and saw me and understood especially with *charideim*. The school wasn't A-rated and not meant for people who excel. It was for delinquent *ashkenazim* and *sepharadim* who didn't get accepted to the *yeshivot*.) *Yeshiva* is a Jewish institution for higher learning) , and they were the good kids. From that day forward he called me to make sure that I woke up, and said that every morning we'd sit together and eat. I didn't last there for a long time. But thanks to him I think I had fun. He was a good principal and made school a relatively bearable experience. He said these tears won't go away empty (שדמעות אף פעם לא שבות ריקם). My school experience was very difficult. I remember crying because I thought that it would be a new experience for me. The first and second week of school went by and I saw that I couldn't study and I didn't understand; I had an explosion and fell towards G-d. Today, when I pray it's still really hard for me to connect. Some

prayers it's just me and G-d and I feel the most connected in the world. It's so hard to pray and to learn from the *gemara*, it's the hardest thing to do in the world. I don't remember myself studying or learning. When I see someone learning *gemara* it drives me crazy. How can he really understand? *Charidem* go on a *shidduch*, [blind date set up parents or other community members] and this one father wanted me to meet with him before I met with his daughter to see my level of learning about the *gemara*. I told him that was a very good yeshiva there and there will always be someone to learn with; everyone wants to learn with me. I don't have to learn by myself. I wanted to come out of his question in a good way, so I twisted the answer. I went on one date with her and it was over. My wife and I went out four times and I went out with eight girls total. My wife wowed me on our first date. It was a *schidduah* by my brother-in-law. Two weeks later we got engaged. When I want something I go for it.

Drawing #3- Feelings towards Parents

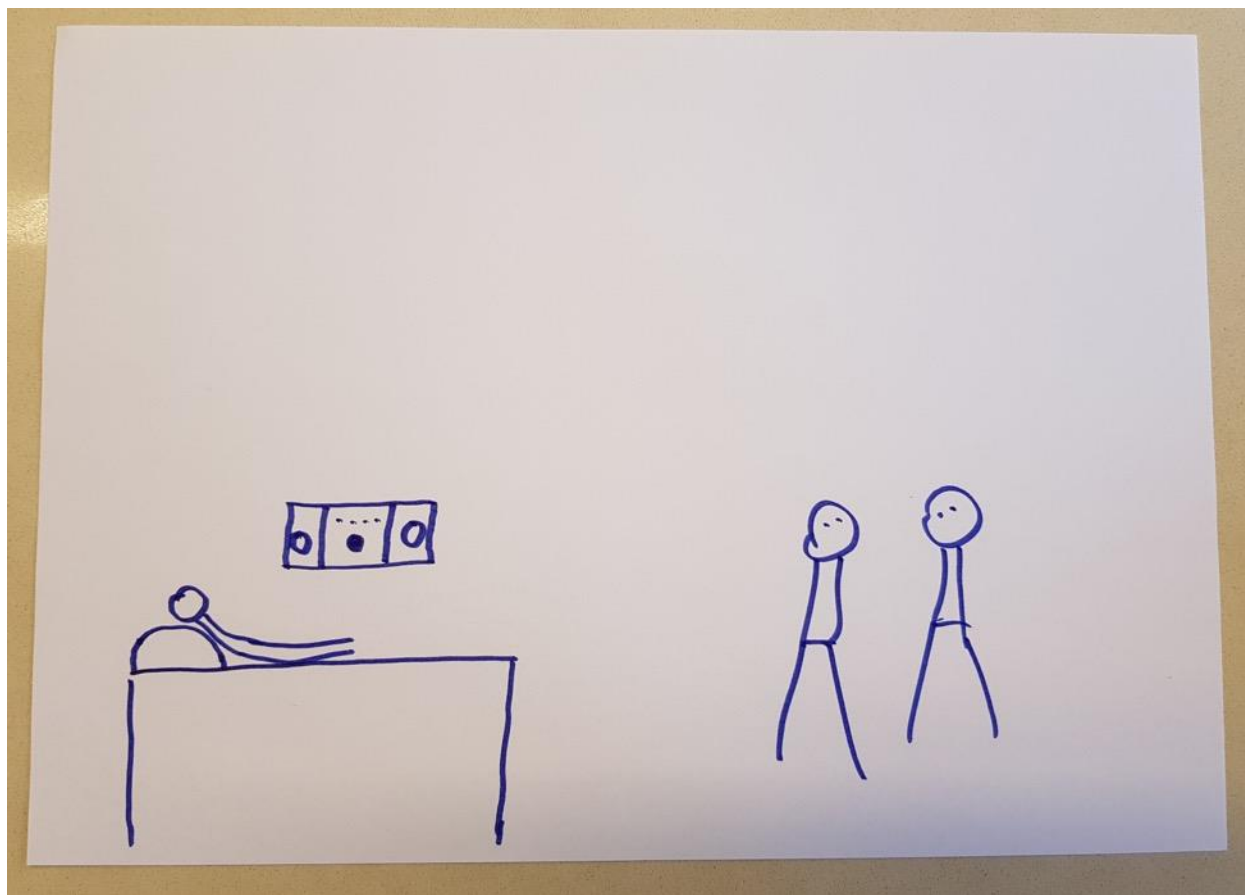


Figure 54. *Feelings towards parents (Benny).*

When I was 14 years old, I was angry. But beside that, I remember going after school to my room and listening to the radio because I was bored. In *yeshiva* I didn't go in the afternoon because the rabbi didn't allow me to be there. There was much distance and disconnect between my parents and I. They didn't understand what I'm going through. However, they always tried. Today when I think about it, they were good parents all the time; they tried to take care of me and money was never a factor in helping me by using tutors. My parents always wanted me to succeed. After two years of being in this *yeshiva*, they switched me to a school where everyone was like me. I didn't learn a word of *gemara* but I had friends, company, and I went horseback riding. That's where I felt that I was home. The rabbi gave out Ritalin to everyone every morning and to anyone who wanted it. I mostly felt disconnected. I remember that there was a time that I

overheard my mother tell my father that 5 minutes before sunset I (Benny) put on his *tifilin* [“a small leather box containing Hebrew texts on vellum, worn by Jewish men at morning prayer as a reminder to keep the law” (Dictionary.com, 2018)] and took them off (something that you would usually do in the morning). They were interested in noticing that he had put in on early but they didn’t do anything about it. There was a lot going on.

Then I went to a *yeshiva* called Yeshivat Rashi, which is a *yeshiva* for people who are dropouts. I never felt at home there and I got the title of being the driver. While there, I was given the choice, you don't have to sit and learn, if you don't want to pray then you don't have to pray. When you want to come, come. Today I want to pray, but *Shacharit* (the first prayer of the morning) is very long. I usually cut in the middle before שמונה עשרה (a central prayer recited during each of the daily prayer services) *Mincha* (prayer during the middle of the day) but I don't always have time. During *Shabbat* I pray all the prayers and I sit and pray and enjoy them. Today it’s not hard to deal with the dyslexia because G-d created me this way.

Drawing #4- Feelings towards Himself



Figure 55. *Feelings towards himself (Benny).*

How I feel towards myself today. Now I'll show you what I drew in my phone (showed me a picture of himself giving a speech in front of hundreds of men (שירות אזרחי) (*Sheirut ezrachi*; in Israel army service is mandatory. religious women are able to fulfill their service requirement doing *shreut leumi*, or national service for *charidim* the requirement can be fulfilled by *Shreut ezrachi*, a form of national community service). In my opinion, I won because I finished this course and other organizations wanted me. I'm also one of the best students in the paramedic course. I'm the course organizer and I'm also the best. I'm sure that I won. I had no idea that I would succeed, I know my abilities. My sister wrote my speech, I'm not perfect. In my family we got divided into the smart and the not smart ones. My oldest brother for sure has problems similar to mine, but he is way over 40. My sister has a catering company. I have a

sister that is the head of a division in the Ministry of Education, another brother that is an electrical engineer, and a sister that is an interior designer.

Participant #11: Jacob Inclusive Education

Jacob, is 25 years old, is married and doesn't have children. He associates himself as Modern Orthodox. Jacob was in an inclusive classroom growing up. He works as a computer technician at a help desk. Jacob was born in Israel and speaks Hebrew at home. Jacob describes his strengths as having a tangible and visual memory. If you show me, I'll remember it really well. Jacob describes his weaknesses as something that is not visual. I have difficulty explaining myself in words, and explaining what it is. For example, I have difficulty remembering places on a map. I also do not remember names. Jacob likes to be with the family, loves nature, animals, and bicycles. Jacob dislikes being in crowded places and he does not connect to the idea of going to the mall. He doesn't take any medications. Jacob also had a hard time connecting to the art. He has dyslexia and dysgraphia. He hates reading.

Drawing # 1- Feelings towards his Friends

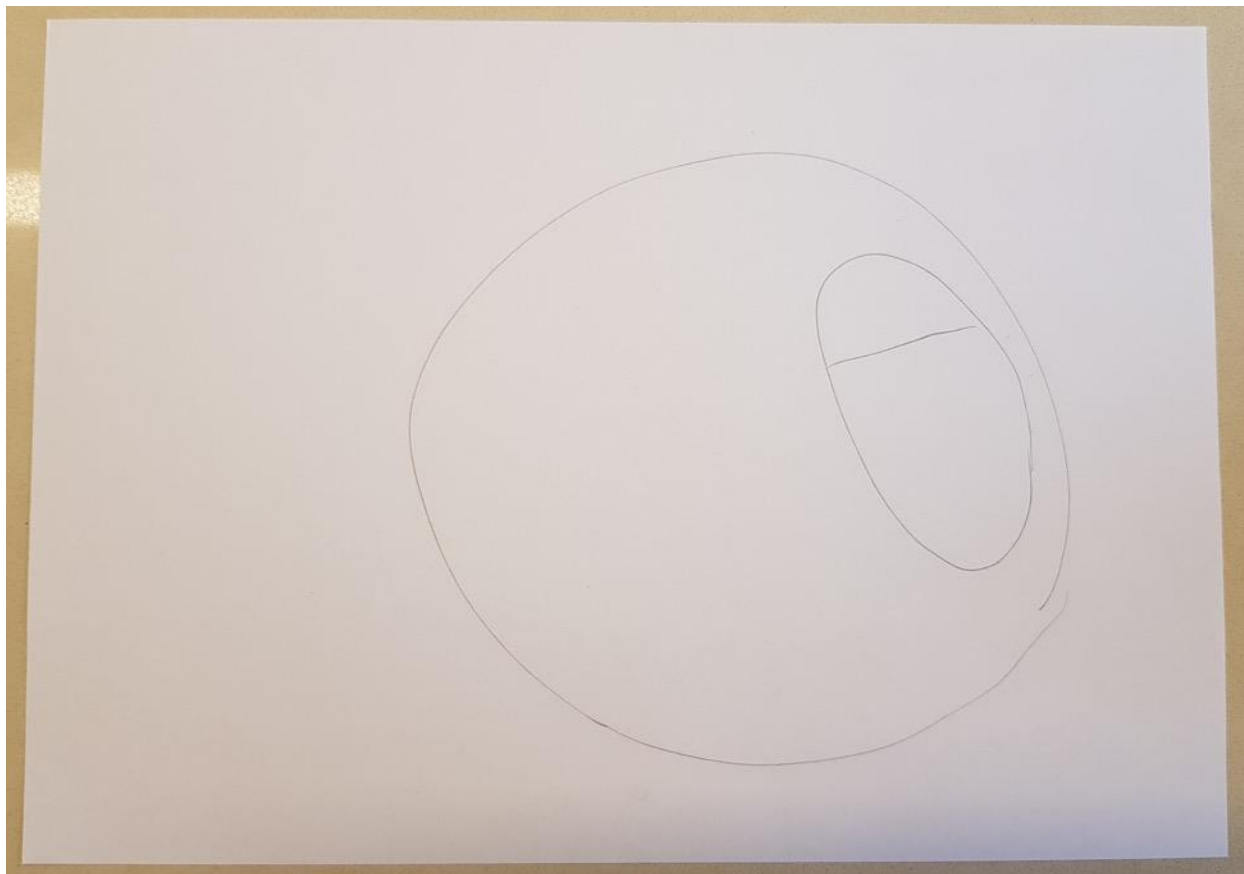


Figure 56. *Feelings towards friends (Jacob).*

Description of Drawing. The outermost circle in this picture represents the class as a whole and everybody in it. The next smallest circle is the group of the friends represents his group. Within that group, he drew a scale to represent that he felt closer to and fit in more with the quieter kids. The other side of the circle represents the "super active" people. He used the line through the inner circle to represent himself and where he felt his place was within the group.

I don't know how I feel, or how to draw it. This is a classroom and there are all the kids in the class. The class was split into groups, and I was active as part of this group. When I speak in a group, I tend to get cut off. The group navigates the conversation without me, and that makes me feel as though what I have to say is not as interesting. I was part of the *Chevre*; I was loved by them and played with them but when I was talking in a group conversation, it would stop me

and cut me off. I don't think any of my friends noticed. It's annoying, because you're coming to tell your friends something. Suddenly he bursts out and everyone listens only to him. There is the entire class as an example, the big group which I am part of.

I'm relatively active, but because of the speech I'm pretty quiet. He placed himself on a line (not too much on the side as a super active person but somewhat in the middle) after school. When I was 15 years old, I was more closed off. I have my bike and my computer games. I was no longer hanging out with friends, or going out with them to town. When I was little, I was always with friends; we were a little group and from 6:00am-8:00pm we were always together. We would play, fight, and laugh- nothing too specific just hanging out.

Drawing #2- Feelings towards his Teachers

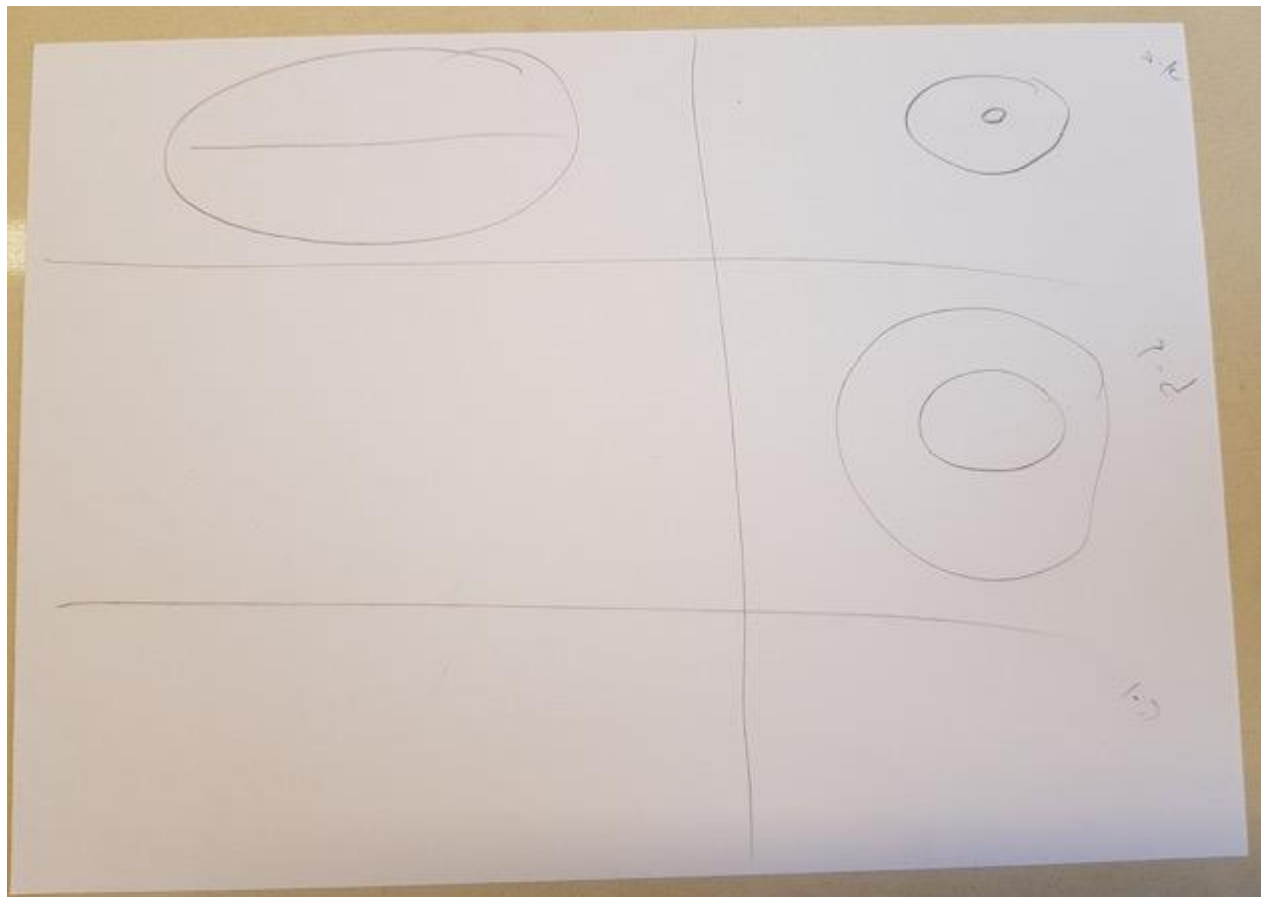


Figure 57. *Feelings towards my teachers (Jacob).*

Description of Drawing

The paper is divided up into a few parts of school. Each circle represents the class as a whole and the teacher in it. The top right is first and second grade. Below that is third and fourth and next smallest circle is his group of friends. The line through the inner circle is to represent himself and where he felt his place was within the group. The line also indicates where he felt his place was in the class.

There were teachers that really gave of themselves and gave a feeling of there were teachers that didn't accept my difficulties. I have dyslexia and dysgraphia; I hate reading. At my job, if anything over 6 lines, I don't even look at it. Starting in fifth grade, I got a male teacher who didn't have any emotion. It was an all-boys school. He didn't really care about my difficulties; he didn't accept my dyslexia. I think that I'm one of the first ones in my area who is acknowledged with dyslexia and dysgraphia because my mom fought with the school to help me get what I needed. The principal in my school wanted to kick me out because of my difficulties. My parents hid it from me all these years, because I brought down the level of the class and the name of the school. My dad got really angry with the principal, and told him that, "there is no way that he is leaving." My parents fought with the school principal to recognize my difficulties.

They organized a private tutor for me and she took me out of classes to help me, it didn't bother me that we worked on reading and I felt part of the class. I'd rather speak about it, than draw it. It continued until the end of school and I never felt different. I remember that from elementary school when we had to read and write, it became really difficult for me. I missed all of the basic things. I had a black hole by the end of the year because I didn't know any of the material that they learned. When I moved to seventh grade, the school was bigger and there were less eyes on me. I had extra time for tests but I didn't use it because I couldn't sit for so long. I

felt equal between all my friends but with the school work, I felt dumb. I had low grades but I didn't care. The elementary school experience was awful. The schoolwork was awful and at least I had friends there with me; I tried to enjoy that part of school.

Drawing #3- Feelings towards Parents

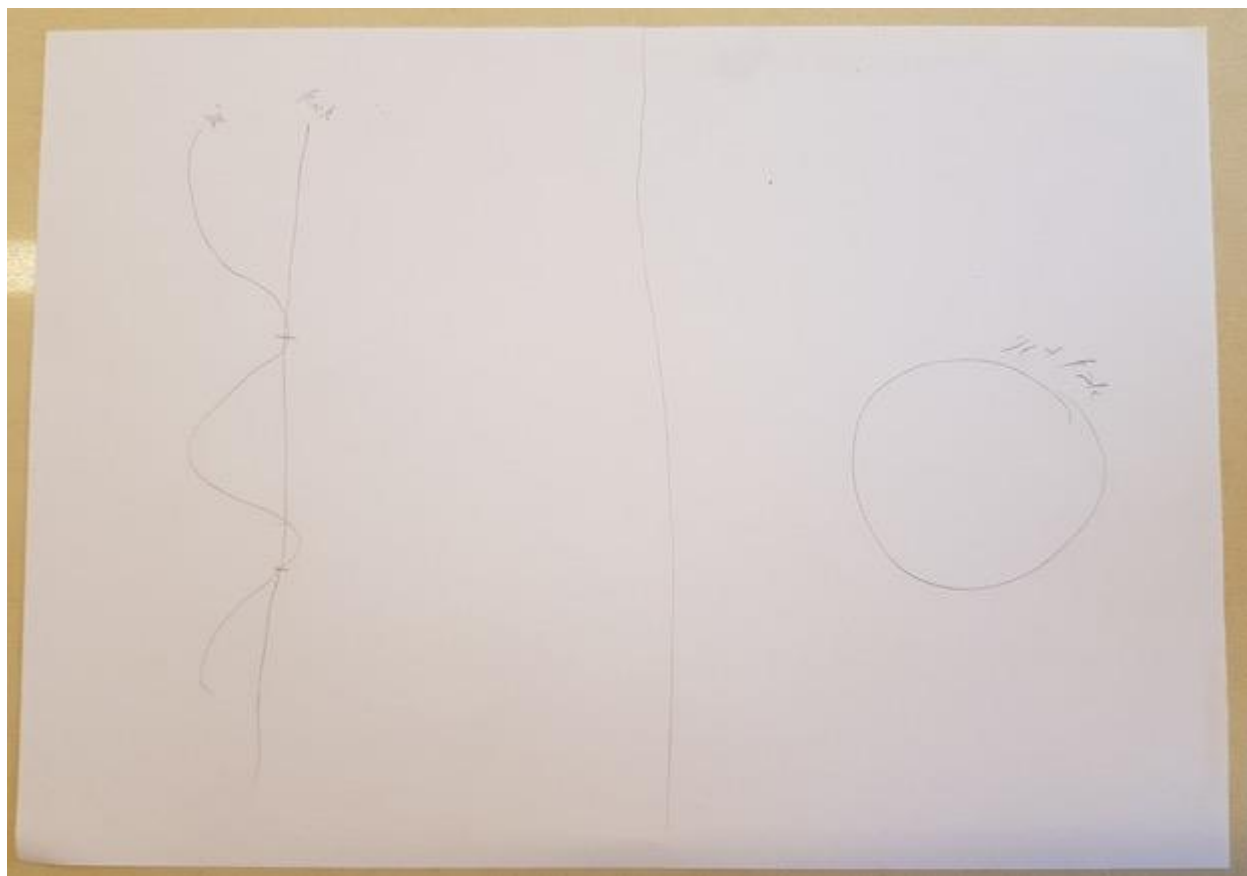


Figure 58. *Feelings towards my parents (Jacob).*

Description of Drawing

The paper is divided up into two parts: one is my mother and the other is my father. I have up and down feelings towards my mother, sometimes we're connected where the dots are; many times I ran away and tried to not show my grades or be interested in my school work. My father is the circle.

I had a hard time because I hated homework and always fought with my parents. It was harder to be with my mom; she demanded a lot from me with regard to schoolwork; and my father was always working and came home late. My mother made sure that we sat and completed homework. I hated it, this was the worst part of my day.

In school you can still turn a blind eye. But here my mother demands and there is nowhere to hide or run. I escaped and became frustrated. In order to finish high school, you have to pass the high school exams. My father worked with me on *Gemara*, Torah (Jewish studies) and my mother helped with me with math. I don't remember much from my father but my mother got more on my nerves with school issues. My feeling towards my mother is ups and downs. Sometimes we're connected where the dots are, but many times I ran away and tried to not show my grades or express disinterest in my school work. I accepted her feelings so that there wasn't stress in the house. She doesn't annoy me more. I'm already bad at school. Everything with my mother was in conflict. So, when I took exams, I pushed them into my bag and hoped they would not be seen. My father brought everything in a fun, less serious way.

Drawing #4- Feelings towards Himself

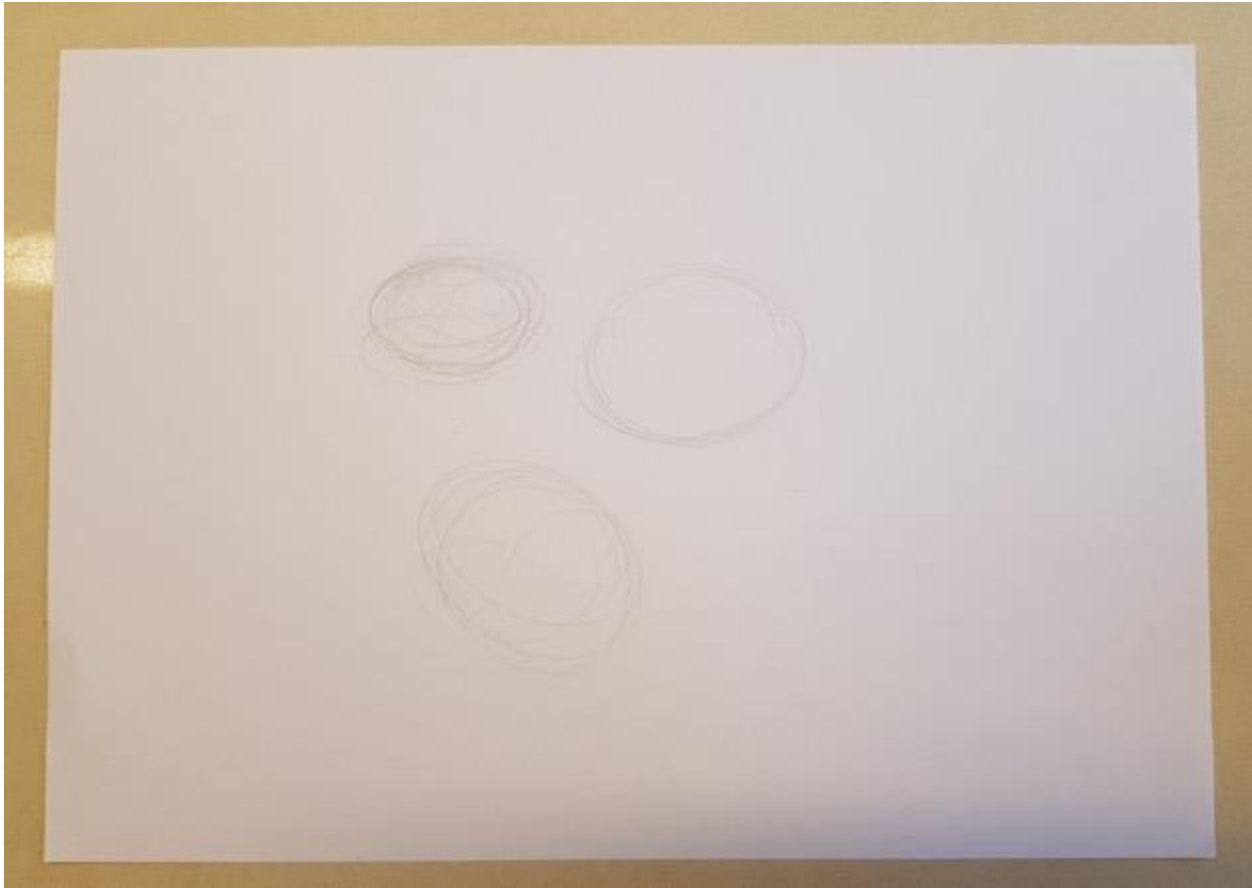


Figure 59. *Feelings towards myself (Jacob).*

Description of Drawing

The circles in this picture represent friends, work, and how they compare to him. He used the circles to represent himself within the group. He said he needed to add in more color and used a gray colored pencil.

There are calmer days in life, and there are periods when the days are calm. And there are those that eat at you from the inside for important things; it is kind of a mess. Everything is relative to scale, depending on the day of life. In elementary school, I had more friends; developing friendships was easier for me. At school, maintaining my friendships was easy but learning was difficult. The essence of the circles helped me learn how to deal with difficult situations and I grew up. It gave me the tools to deal with my challenges. Concentration is also

hard for me. When it interests me, I can pull myself together and try. I lose my strength, especially when endlessly forgetting names.

I took Ritalin but it made me more withdrawn into myself for a while. I did not like to take it because it depressed me. However, it helped me concentrate and remember exactly where something was tested. I wanted to try and succeed in my high school exams, so I took the Ritalin; I think it helped.

Participant #12- Roei- Inclusive Education

Roei, is 27, single and doesn't have kids. Roei is Modern Orthodox. Roei was in an inclusive classroom throughout his childhood. He is studying visual communication at university. He was born in Jerusalem, Israel. He speaks Hebrew and English but speaks English at home. His strengths are working hard and being ambitious. He describes his weakness as being very open and not being secretive. He has a learning disability and it's hard for him to type. Roei describes himself as a space cadet. Roei enjoys creating 3D models, developing video games, drawing, origami, hanging out with friends, and exercising. Roei does not like to pray when reading the prayer is long, go on blind dates, or trust other people to arrange the date.

Drawing #1- Feelings towards his Teachers

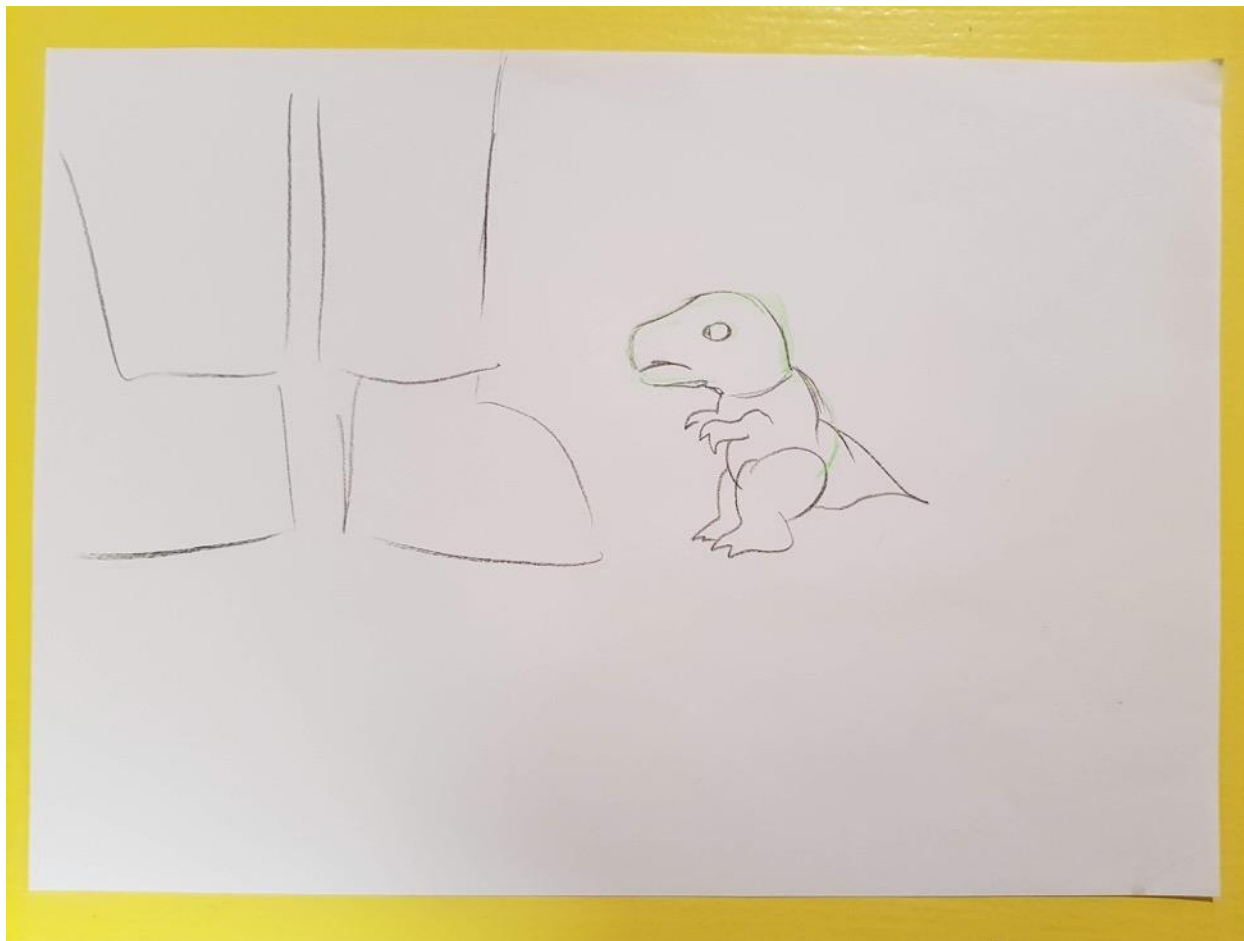


Figure 60. *Feelings towards my teachers (Roei).*

I don't really draw anymore. I drew something when I was in the regular class, but from preschool, they knew that I had problems with language, reading, and writing. I had an aid that would take me out of the classroom for academic support. I also received occupational therapy and speech therapy.

I went to school for the social aspect and I really enjoyed it. My mom wrote all of my papers. I had private teachers for almost everything, anything I could, I did orally. (He described his dinosaur as not human.) They don't know that they don't even understand me as a different creature from what I would be in drawing classes. I love dinosaurs; my fourth grade teacher took

my notebook and pencil box and put it on the side. There was a closet in the classroom and the teacher put them on the side. (He said, “this is the area that belongs to Roei.”) The teacher didn’t even comprehend what I wanted him to be, so I drew something that’s little and insecure. Nobody understands I have dyslexia, dysgraphia, ADHD, and different language barriers. I remember that when I wanted to ask a question, I would start stuttering like crazy. During class at those moments, I wanted the ground to swallow me, I was so ashamed of myself. But, students were learning something, because I was concentrating and I was slow, I didn’t understand. Many times, I was too scared to ask so I just started stuttering and it felt terrible. That’s my recollection from high school and elementary school. I was so scared to say something wrong. In my drawing, everything is dark and scary. I put my head inside the ground so that I would just disappear. It’s terrible feeling ashamed and embarrassed. It felt like hell on Earth and it was

terrible; I was weakened, little, and hopeless.

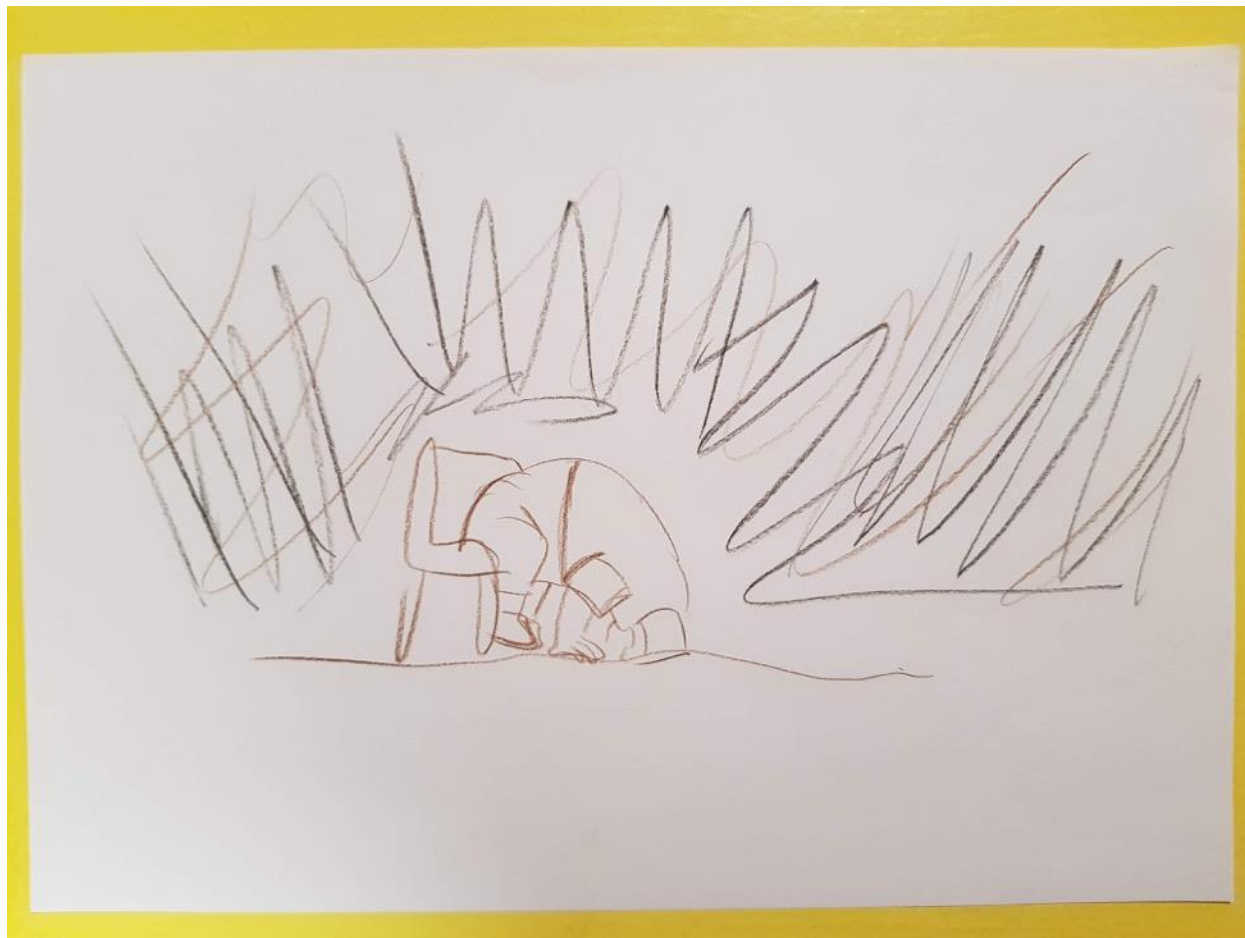


Figure 61. *Feelings towards my teachers (Roei).*

Drawing # 2- Feelings towards his Friends

Socially I had friends but I wasn't the most popular. I was, however, definitely part of the group. I was normal so people liked me. I remember I stood up for an obese kid because I believe in doing the right thing. People love me, so I always have friends. In 5th grade, I switched from this academic school to a different school. I made friends right away; making friends was never a problem for me. I also went to art therapy where she helped me with social skills and building my self-confidence. During the break, however, I always felt like I had friends and I felt like I was part of the *Chevre* (group of friends) and we were all together.



Figure 62. *Feelings towards my friends (Roei).*

Drawing #3- Feelings towards Parents

My mother always believed in me. My father was a career officer; he was never home. He told me that, “what was in front of him didn't have too much future.” He was like, “you're not going to do well and you're going to fail.” He didn't believe in me but my mother always did. I don't blame my father because he grew up in a difficult house. My grandparents were really tough with him but I love him. I like drawing myself as a dinosaur because it's easier to express myself when my dad is out of the picture. My dad is irrelevant to my growing up. He's irrelevant

because he's far away. In my drawing, he's walking away. He's not part of the bond I have with my mom. He took me on car rides and told me how terrible I was until I was 22 years old. I felt terrible and I felt like a loser, because I wasn't good in school, not any *yeshiva*. I was bad at school and my dad never thought my drawings were the best. He always thought I was mediocre and he told me I should just give up, so, I felt bad in every aspect. It's fine because today I feel much better.

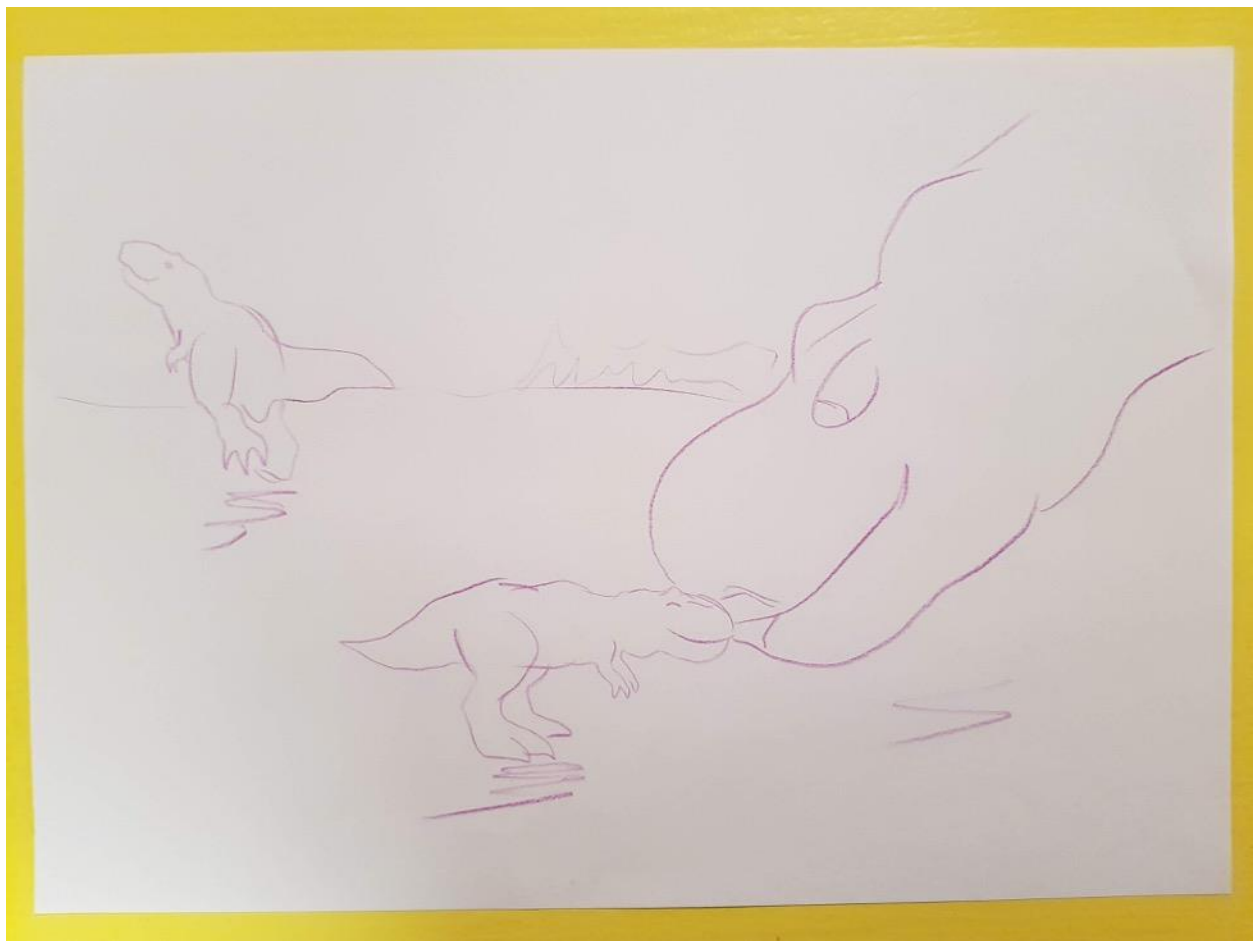


Figure 63. *Feelings towards my parents (Roey).*

Drawing #4- Feelings towards Himself

I drew a picture of a beast because he's working hard. I felt proud of myself. I felt strong and I wanted everyone to hear me still working hard. If you don't work hard then you start to sink. You always have to work hard to get better at what you do. Life's hard, every day we get closer and closer, we die a little bit. Life is not fun. It's always hard and you just have to keep going. After high school, nobody cares if you have a learning disability. If it's good or not, you just have to prove yourself as a person to show how good you are or not. No one's going to take you to a job interview and say oh, he has a learning disability. He wants to see my work and also wants to see how good I am. Everything only helps you until high school; after that, nobody really cares. I'm building a program now for one of my classes and I know that I have spelling mistakes. But, if no one goes over it then I'm going to fail. So, nobody really cares if I have learning disability now.

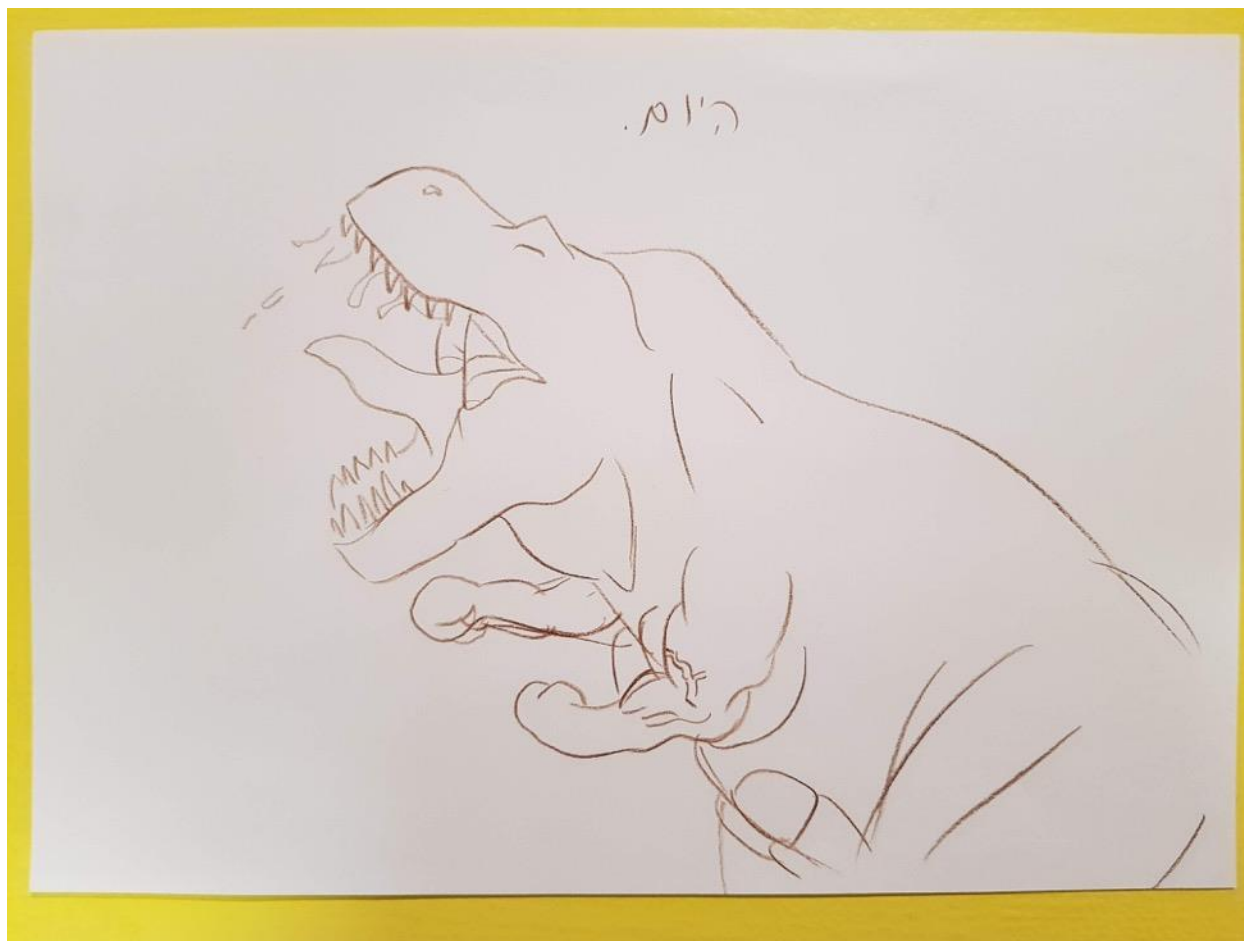


Figure 64. *Feelings towards myself (Roei).*

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