

Welcoming Autistic Kids & Caregivers to Storytimes

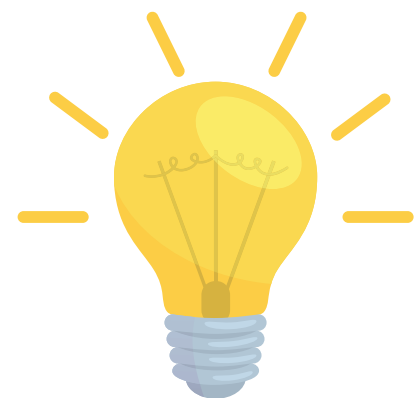
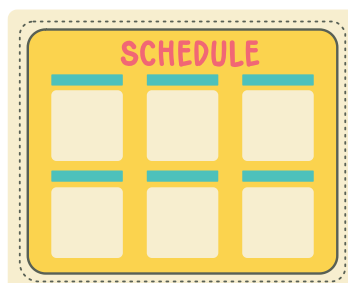


Hello, Goodbye, & In-Between Songs

Hello songs, goodbye songs, and transition songs (such as a song in-between storytime and playtime) can help autistic kids and caregivers move smoothly from one activity to another. Make sure the music is sensory friendly (don't blast the jams) so it's not too loud for those with sound sensitivity or sensory processing differences. Offering ear defenders and ear plugs to storytimers can help normalize their use for kids, caregivers, and library staff. Normalize inclusive options of participating (not solely singing) to include nonverbal and low-verbal kids. All storytimers can benefit by developing their agency, choosing **if** they'd like to join in **and** **how** they'd like to join in (humming, rocking, clapping, hand flapping, head rocking, dancing, listening, etc.)

Visual Schedule

Posting a schedule board can show kids and caregivers what to expect, build routine, and assist with transitioning from one activity to another. Visual timers can help as well for timed activities.

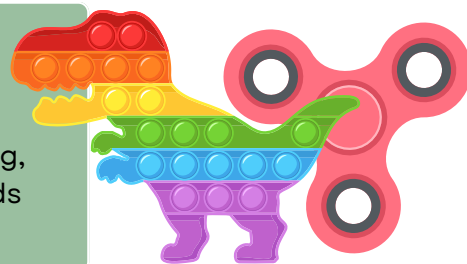


Sensory-Friendly Lighting

If the lights are too bright, neurodivergent storytimers may become overloaded before storytime even starts. Autistic individuals may experience sensitivity to florescent lights, flickering lights, and humming lights. Adjustable lighting can be super helpful for storytimes, so storytime programmers can adjust the light to the needs of their particular storytime crew. Check in with caregivers and kids before and during storytime to see if it's too bright or just right.

Tactile is Practical!

In playtime **and** storytime, offer tactile stims with a variety of textures. Weighted blankets, stuffed animals, fidget toys, rocking-friendly seating, sensory bins, and more can be fantastic for sensory-seeking autistic kids and caregivers (and well loved by both allistic and autistic storytimers!)



Self-Regulation & Autistic Joy :)

The sit-still-and-listen storytime model doesn't often jive with autistic storytimers, since autistic kids and caregivers listen best by listening to their bodies and expressing their autistic needs. If kids need to move, that's great! If kids need a break, that's great! Advocate for kids and caregivers to express themselves, whether through their words or through their bodies. If storytimers aren't in the space for a story, but are in the space for playtime, it's a-okay to raincheck the story for playtime. After all, who doesn't love extra playtime?