







Parades

Tips to support autistic and neurodivergent individuals

General Tips:

- ✓ Be proactive in helping an individual prepare for attending a parade by communicating clear expectations
- ✓ Model calming and coping strategies and the use of sensory tools
- ✓ Be accepting of whatever level of participation the individual is comfortable with
- ✓ Have a backup or safety plan in case the individual does not enjoy the parade
- ✓ Create a safety plan to ensure the individual is always supervised

	Why might this be challenging?	Strategies and Supports
 <p>Anticipating a new or unfamiliar experience</p>	<p>Parades can be fun, they also offer a range of experiences, which may be unfamiliar, including marching bands, floats, music, dancing, and more.</p>	<p>Share specific details: what to expect, where you are going, who will be there, what it will look or sound like, and how long you will stay.</p> <p>Create and use visual supports (social narrative, schedule, written information, photos, etc.).</p> <p>Watch videos of parades to become familiar with typical experiences.</p> <p>Look at photos and videos of parades, floats, or marching bands, and discuss what will occur.</p>
 <p>Crowds and loud noises</p>	<p>Celebratory events often include large crowds, loud or unexpected noises, and a variety of sights, which can lead to overstimulation, overwhelm, or fear.</p>	<p>Discuss what sights, sounds, temperature(s), and crowd size to expect.</p> <p>Practice using and bring sensory supports, such as noise-cancelling headphones or fidget items.</p> <p>Ask if quieter spaces are available or if there is an indoor or distant space to view from.</p> <p>Practice how to communicate the need for sensory supports or to leave an overwhelming environment.</p>
 <p>Special treats and merchandise</p>	<p>Some parade events will also have special food or merchandise available. Some individuals may have a strong desire for the food or items offered and may have difficulty if told 'no,' while others may prefer their own food and may not be interested in trying something new.</p>	<p>Be prepared and bring the individual's favorite food and drink. Bring any adaptive utensils, plates, or cups to make eating more accessible and enjoyable.</p> <p>Plan and discuss ahead of time if purchasing food or other items will be permitted or not. If planning to purchase, communicate what or how many items will be purchased.</p> <p>Offer the option to try new food, but do not require them to eat anything unfamiliar.</p> <p>Bring preferred items to engage with; redirect to these if having to say no to buying something at the parade.</p>

	Why might this be challenging?	Strategies and Supports
 New rules and expectations	Watching a parade includes following certain rules and expectations. It can be challenging to resist the urge to run into the parade or touch floats, instruments, vehicles, or other enticing items.	Plan ahead: learn about the event and provide details to the individual ahead of time. Discuss where you will sit, and what you can and cannot do. A social narrative can be helpful if attending an event or location for the first time.
		Establish structure and predictability by creating a visual schedule or checklist to outline the day's activities.
		Bring preferred items and activities to provide something familiar to engage in.
		Look for signs of agitation and dysregulation. Validate their experience and offer calming and sensory supports.
		Acknowledge effort and provide feedback and behavior-specific praise.
 Potential safety risks	The crowds and excitement of a parade can lead to distraction. This increases the likelihood of wandering off or getting lost.	Educate yourself about the parade location and surrounding area ahead of time. Look for nearby areas of interest, such as water sources, playgrounds, stores, or food establishments.
		If attending with a group, discuss who is responsible for what, and communicate clearly with each other.
		Have the individual wear or carry identifying information should they get lost.
		Establish a plan for safe transitions to and from the parade.
 Long days	While parades themselves may not last too long, watching them often requires early arrival, walking, and lots of waiting. This can cause fatigue and disrupt morning, nighttime, and sleep routines.	Learn about the parade route and consider viewing from the beginning, end, or even a more distant location.
		Bring items that can support waiting, such as preferred activities, fidgets, snacks, or something to watch or listen to.
		Understand that tiredness may cause irritability and lead to behavioral challenges.
		Maintain your evening and bedtime routines when arriving home, even after a late night.

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