

# I'm Going to The North Jersey Pride Festival



A Social Story of  
Pride, Community, and Belonging

By  
**Together  
We Bloom**

CONNECTION  COMMUNICATION  COMMUNITY

## **About Social Stories (for the Grown-ups)**

**Social Stories are first-person narratives written to introduce a new, unexpected, or challenging situation with simple language and pictures. They help the reader know what to expect and provide options for support.**

**Anyone can benefit from learning about situations ahead of time but social stories are often particularly helpful for neurodivergent individuals, including Autistic people or people with anxiety.**

**Social stories should be used as a tool to empower and support inclusion and access, not to force compliance with social norms.**

**This Social Story was created by Together We Bloom as part of a partnership with Pride to prioritize and strengthen disability inclusion and accessibility at this year's event. SOMA's diversity is its strength, and this includes neurodiversity and disability. To view accessibility and disability inclusion supports visit:**

**<https://www.northjerseypride.org/accessibility>**

**Together We Bloom is a local 501(c)3 nonprofit with a mission to empower young children with disabilities and their families through equitable access to connection, communication, and community.**

**We advance this mission through two vital strategies: sliding-scale, neurodiversity-affirming speech and language therapy and disability justice, equity, and belonging initiatives to make our community a more inclusive place.**

**To learn more or support our work for inclusivity please visit:**

**[www.TogetherWeBloom.org](http://www.TogetherWeBloom.org)**

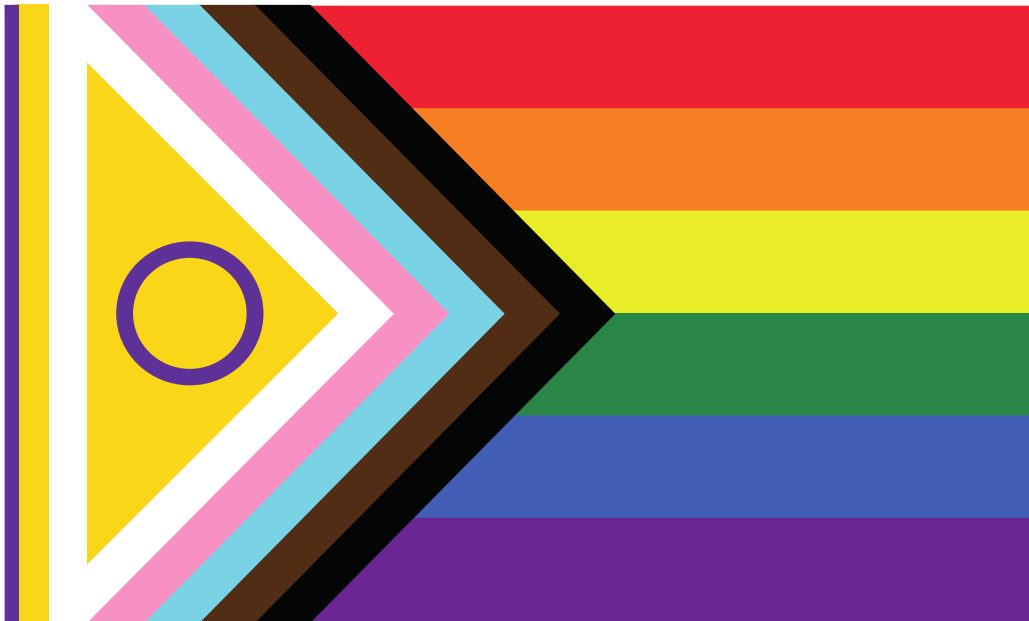
I am going to an event in my community called the Pride Festival. I will go with my grown-up/parent/family/friends.



Pride is a outdoor festival with music, performers, food, and community celebrations in Maplewood, NJ.

Pride is a celebration of the LGBTQ+ community. This stands for Lesbian-Gay-Bi-Trans-Queer. The rainbow flag is the symbol of pride.

The Pride festival celebrates and supports equity, community, and love for everyone.



At THE PRIDE Festival, there is a big stage set up in Maplewood's memorial park. During the festival, musicians, singers and bands take turns performing on the stage while people come to enjoy the music and spend time outside at the park.

See the map at the end of the book to find the location of the stage.





I will hear lots of different types of music at Pride. Some music is fast and loud. Some music is slow and quiet. Some performers sing. Some performers play instruments. Some do both at the same time! I can look at the schedule to find when I can hear the music I like.



There is an American-Sign Language interpreter on stage for the entire festival. They will be standing on the right of the stage when you're looking at it. There is a Deaf Access Area right in front of the interpreter.

See the map at the end of the book to find the location.



There are lots of people who come to celebrate Pride and watch the performers at the Pride Festival. There are often big crowds.



Lots of people wear rainbow colors or clothing with LGBTQ or Trans flags to show their Pride or support. I can choose my clothes to be comfortable and to express myself. I can wear whatever colors or clothing feels right for me and my body.

At the festival, some people dance and sing. Some people jump and flap their hands. Some people talk with friends they came with. Some people meet and talk to new people. Some people walk around.



Some people sit in lawn chairs they bring from home or under tents and listen to the music. Some people eat food or have a picnic.



I can choose to do whatever feels right for me and my body!



There is some food and drinks for sale at the festival in tents and food trucks at the top of the hill in front of the stage. I can bring my own drinks and snacks from home too.

See the map at the end of the book to find the location.



There are also tents where local organizations that are supportive of LGBTQ+ people have information and sometimes items for sale or giveaways.



In the Rainbow Kids' Zone, there are bouncy houses, games, kids shows, and face painting.

See the map at the end of the book to find the location.



At the festival, there is a Neuroqueer Pride Celebration Area to celebrate people who are both neurodivergent and queer. Many neurodivergent people also identify as part of the lgbtq+ community so this area is made to accommodate and celebrate them.

This area is away from the stage and crowded areas, so that it is a less overwhelming experience.

In this area there is a "quiet tent" for people looking for a quieter, reduced activity area to hang out together. There are coloring pages and crayons.

There is also a "Party Tent" for people who like to move around and be more noisy. There are some games and bubbles. There are swings nearby as well.

All Neuroqueer folks and any people who support them are welcome. Kids and adults are welcome.

See the map at the end of the book to find the location.



There is a lot going on at Pride! I might feel excited, happy, overwhelmed, or another feeling or many feelings at once. I can always tell my grown-up how I'm feeling.



If watching the festival feels too loud or  
overwhelming, I can take a break.

Everybody's body and brain are different.  
I can listen to what my body and brain need.



If it is too loud or crowded in front of the stage, I can hang out in the Sensory-Friendly “Quiet tent” in the Neuroqueer Pride Celebration Area. There is a tent for shade and picnic blankets to relax on the grass. There are ear defenders to borrow.

See the map at the end of the book to find the location.



If I need an even quieter, calming space, I can take a break at the sensory activation van which is next to the Neuroqueer Pride area. In the van, it is much quieter. There are soft lights, some sensory toys and books.

See the map at the end of the book to find the location.



If I need to move my body or run around, I can take a break at the the field near the Neuroqueer Pride area  
“Party Zone”

Or I can go to Memorial Playground at the other end of Memorial park from the festival. There are swings, slides, climbers, and a big grassy field.



I can stay at hang out with the people I came with, or I can meet new people at the festival. I can talk to whomever I feel comfortable talking to.

I can stay at the Pride Festival for as long as I want and go home when I feel ready.



**I am an important part of my community.**

**Music and Community are for everyone!**

**Pride is for everyone!**



# NORTH JERSEY PRIDE FESTIVAL MAP



## **Social Story Suggestions and Supports for Parents and Caregivers**

*Social stories can be a wonderful tool to support your child's access to Pride, but **YOU** are their most important support. Here are some suggestions for supporting your child's communication and regulation at Pride.*

- Introduce the social story in advance and offer the book frequently to support their understanding and processing, even if you're not sure your child understands yet.
- Feel free to adjust the words to fit your child's language level, interests, or specific needs.
- Consider that your child may not yet be able to ask for a break (with or without words); many young children need adult support to know when to take a break or how to take a break.
- Be prepared to notice your child's nonverbal communication, which may express that they may be getting dysregulated and need a break. Notice your own regulation needs, too, because "you can't pour from an empty cup."
- Use the event communication board as a visual support for understanding. Try pointing to the pictures on the board as you read the social story and make comments during Pride. *A child should never be required to point to the board, but we can model and provide opportunity.*
- Talk with your child about how we all have different brains and bodies so it's ok if their experience or the way they act is different than other people. We should have discussions about disabilities and neurodivergence even if your child is non-disabled or neurotypical. Disability is an important and beautiful part of human diversity!
- If you are seeking support, empowerment, and connection as a caregiver of a child with disabilities, consider joining the SOMA Peer Support and Action Network group on Facebook.

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**Special thanks to North Jersey Pride for their partnership  
and for making this event more accessible.**

**Photo Credits: Photos from NJ Pride's website  
<https://www.northjerseypride.org/> and Facebook Page**

**For the online version of this social narrative use your phone's  
camera to scan the QR code below:**



**For additional disability inclusion supports and accessibility  
information, visit:**

**<https://www.northjerseypride.org/accessibility>**

