



FAQ for the Sensory Friendly/Relaxed Performances

What type of accommodations will be made to make this a “sensory friendly/relaxed” performance?

Children’s Theater of Madison (CTM) has worked with the play’s artistic staff to adjust certain sensory elements to be less intense for people who are sensitive to lights and sounds. For example, the house lights (lights in the audience, as opposed to lights on stage) will be kept on at a low level throughout the performance. Music and sound effect levels will be lowered. Feel free to bring headphones or earplugs if your child is very sensitive to sound.

In addition to sensory adjustments on stage, sensory friendly accommodations in the lobbies will be made including:

- Activity area / Quiet Area staffed by trained volunteers
- Specially trained ushers and theater staff
- Gluten free snacks available
- Coloring books, fidgets, and other items available

The main goal of a sensory friendly/relaxed performance is to create a space where youth and their families feel comfortable, supported, and free to be themselves.

Who is this performance for?

Sensory-friendly/relaxed performances are for youth on the autism spectrum or for those with sensory or communication needs.

Where is this performance?

CTM mainstage shows perform at either MYArts (1055 East Mifflin St, Madison) or Overture Center (201 State Street, Madison). Please double check the location of the show prior to coming!

If no one in my group requires sensory accommodations, should I still attend?

Yes! We welcome all audience members and strive to create a judgment-free zone for everyone in attendance.

What if my child talks or makes noise during the performance?

It is understood that some audience members will make noise during the show. Your child may not be the only one who talks or makes noise during the performance. If the noise gets to be too much, you are welcome to step out of the theater for a little while so your child can settle, but this is not necessary. Use your own judgment. The actors have had training about what they can expect in terms of noise or movement in the audience, and they are excited and happy to be part of an initiative that helps children and adults with autism or sensory/communication needs experience live theater.

If my child cannot sit through the entire show, can we go in and out of the theater during the performance (or leave the show early)?

Yes. Our volunteers and ushers will help you find your way out of the theater. There will be a quiet area available where your child can regulate before returning to the theater. Coloring books, fidgets, and other items will be made available to allow your child a chance to relax. Your child can return to the theater whenever they are ready. You may leave the performance at any time for any reason. We understand that every child has different needs, and that for some children, 15 minutes of a performance can be a fulfilling and meaningful experience, while others will want to enjoy the full show.

Will the staff at the performance be trained in assisting individuals with autism or sensory/communication needs?

Yes. Many of the volunteers at the show will be trained specialists and area therapy providers. Feel free to ask them for help or information at any time.

What can I do to familiarize my child with the story and the experience in advance?

There is a Social Story on the CTM website. This outlines the experience of attending a play and includes photos of the lobby, restrooms, theater, and ushers. These social stories are printable so you can edit or add to them as appropriate for your child. (Please note that the production photos are copyrighted and should not be shared or distributed in any way).

Are there snacks available at the theater? Can I bring my own?

Yes. There will be snacks available to those who need them including several gluten free options. You are welcome to bring your own snacks and drinks as well. Snacks and drinks can be consumed in the lobby, but not in the theater itself.

Are service animals welcome?

Yes. We want to accommodate your child in whatever way is necessary. If you plan to bring a service animal, please make sure to let us know. It would be better and safer for the animal and the owner to be seated in rows where there is room for the animal on the end of that aisle.

Will there be more sensory friendly/relaxed performances like this?

Yes! CTM offers two sensory friendly performances per season. First Stage in Milwaukee and Chicago Children's Theater both also offer sensory friendly, live theater opportunities.