

# Award-winning Sesame Place wants kids with autism to have fun

By Smithsonian Magazine, adapted by Newsela staff on 04.16.18

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Sesame Street character Abby Cadabby (left) introduces the newest character, Julia (right), who has autism, during a presentation in the Capitol Visitor Center in Washington, D.C., April 4, 2017. Photo By Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

Visiting theme parks can be fun for families. But for kids with autism, the experience can be different. The rides, crowds and noise may be too much for them to handle. They may feel overwhelmed.

Children with autism can look and act very differently from one another. Some can talk, while others cannot. Many of them are uncomfortable with noise. Some kids with autism have trouble looking other people in the eye. Many like to touch different objects to see how they feel.

## More Access For Kids With Autism

That's why Sesame Place in Pennsylvania has become more accessible for children with autism. Its officials want everyone to be able to visit and feel comfortable.

The theme park is inspired by the colorful Muppets of “Sesame Street.” It is the first theme park to become a Certified Autism Center (CAC). The award means that Sesame Place meets the needs of people with autism.

The announcement was made on April 2, which is World Autism Day.

## **Training And Program Planning**

At Sesame Place, all the workers were trained to work with people with autism. The workers learned to understand people with autism and communicate with them by learning about what they need and how to make them feel comfortable. The workers also learned how to plan a program for people with autism. Afterward, they took a test.

## **Sensory Guide Ranks Rides**

Sesame Place will open for the year on April 28. The park will include two quiet rooms with lighting that can be made dimmer. There will also be areas where visitors can take a break from the crowds. The park will also provide noise-canceling headphones for guests to block out loud noises. Families can prepare for their visit by going to Sesame Place's website. They will find a sensory guide ranking how wild and scary every ride is on a scale from 1 to 10.

## **Interacting With Julia**

Sesame is trying to welcome children on the spectrum. Last year, a Muppet named Julia joined the cast of “Sesame Street.” Julia has autism. A Julia character was introduced at Sesame Place last year. The theme park is working on ways that children can interact with her.

Cathy Valeriano is Sesame Place’s president. She said that Sesame Place is proud to be a leader in the theme park business. They are working hard to make the theme park friendly for families with children on the spectrum. The staff does its best to welcome all its guests equally and make sure they all have a lot of fun.

Quiz

1 One MAIN idea of the article is that Sesame Place recently made changes to be more inclusive of children with autism.

What is another MAIN idea of the article?

- (A) World Autism Day is celebrated every year on April 2 to celebrate people with autism.
- (B) Workers at Sesame Place learned how to plan a program for people with autism.
- (C) Opening day this season for Sesame Place theme park is scheduled for April 28th.
- (D) "Sesame Street" has recently introduced a new character who has autism.

2 Which sentence from the article BEST supports the article's central idea?

- (A) But for kids with autism, the experience can be different.
- (B) Some kids with autism have trouble looking other people in the eye.
- (C) That's why Sesame Place in Pennsylvania has become more accessible for children with autism.
- (D) They will find a sensory guide ranking how wild and scary every ride is on a scale from 1 to 10.

3 How will the two quiet rooms help children with autism?

- (A) It will give them a place to play with friends.
- (B) It will give them a place to take a break.
- (C) It will give them a place to wear their noise-canceling headphones.
- (D) It will give them a place to read the park's sensory guide.

4 According to the section "Sensory Guide Ranks Rides," how is Sesame Place helping to accommodate children with autism?

- (A) by providing noise-canceling headphones for guests
- (B) by not allowing children with autism to go on some rides
- (C) by not charging families who have children with autism
- (D) by not letting children with autism enter scarier parts of the park

**Answer Key**

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