THE RELAY RACE
WHAT ARE SOME ACTIVITIES THAT YOU REALLY ENJOY DOING?
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD SOMEONE SAY THAT CERTAIN ACTIVITIES ARE ONLY FOR SOME KIDS AND NOT FOR OTHER KIDS?

Thinking that things should only be for some groups of people, and not for others, can happen because of stereotypes or assumptions—something accepted as true without proof—about what people are like. Everyone has different interests, and it is important for people to be able to choose what they like and what they want to do.

In this story, a group of kids face a situation in which people plan activities for some kids and not for others, based on stereotypes.

As you listen to the story, think about how it would feel if you were told that you shouldn’t or couldn’t do some of the fun activities you mentioned earlier.
Annie stood on her tiptoes and tried to look over the heads of the kids standing in front of her. “I still can’t see the team lists,” she said, turning back to her friends Max, Maddie, and Gabriel.

It was the week before the annual Harmony Street Block Party, and teams for the big relay race had just been posted at the community center in the park. Everyone was eager to see their team assignments.
“I’ve never been in a relay race,” said Max. “What’s it like?”

“A relay race has a bunch of different challenges,” explained Annie. “Each person on the team gets to do a different one of the challenges, and the first team to complete all of them, and get to the finish line is the winner.”
Annual Relay Race

Boys
1. Count Backwards
2. Finish

Girls
1. Sing Happy Birthday
2. Jump Rope
3. Ribbon Braiding
4. Cartwheel
5. Finish
When the kids finally made their way to the front of the group they were very surprised.

“Look,” exclaimed Annie, pointing at the sign. “There’s a boys’ race and a girls’ race this year. It’s never been like that before.”

Gabriel frowned. “Aw, now we can’t all be on the same team.”
Boys

1. Ball Toss
2. Count Backwards
3. Hurdle Jump
4. Scooter Race
Max and Gabriel had been paired together on one of the boys’ teams.

“See what Annie meant about the different challenges?” said Gabriel, pointing to the map of the boys’ relay race. “Someone on our team will go to the first station and throw three balls into a basket, and then the next person runs to the second station and counts backwards from 50 as fast as he can. Then, someone has to jump over a hurdle, and then the last person on the team has to get on a scooter and race to the finish line.”
“So how do we figure out who is going to do which challenge?” asked Max.

“Well,” said Gabriel. “I play catch with my parents a lot, so I could do the ball challenge pretty well. What do you want to do?”

“I’m not sure,” answered Max. “But I wish Annie was on our team, too. She’s faster on a scooter than either of us.”
Girls

1. Jump Rope

2. Sing Happy Birthday

3. Ribbon Braiding

4. Cartwheel
“Hey, Maddie, you and I are on a team together too,” said Annie, as she looked at the map for the girls’ race. “Let’s see, for our race you have to jump rope ten times at the first station. Then at the next one you sing Happy Birthday twice in a row. After that you have to braid three long ribbons together, and then cartwheel to the finish line.”
Annie wrinkled her nose as she turned to Maddie. “I really wanted to ride my scooter in the race,” she said. “Well, I hope you know how to braid because I sure don’t.”

“No way,” answered Maddie. “When I try to braid my own hair it looks like my cat did it. I always have to ask my brother to do it for me—Max is really good at braiding.”
“So what do you think about the relay races this year?” asked Gabriel, as he and Max came over to their friends.

Annie sighed. “I don’t know why there are separate races this time. Relay races should be for everyone. Besides, it would be so much more fun to do it together.”

“I think so, too,” agreed Max. “We’d be able to try all of the challenges instead of just some of them.”
As the kids were talking, Ms. Denny, the school principal, walked by on her way to the community center. “Is everything okay?” she asked.

“There are going to be separate girl and boy relay races this year at the block party,” explained Maddie. “That’s not going to be as much fun, and it isn’t fair either. There aren’t boys’ things and girls’ things—all kids should be able to do the same things if they want.”

“Well, why do you think they might have decided to have the races this way?” asked Ms. Denny.
“Hmm,” said Annie, “Maybe they thought we wouldn’t want to be on teams together.”

“They might have thought that boys and girls wouldn’t like to do the same kinds of things,” suggested Max.

“Or, did they think that we’re good at different things?” wondered Gabriel.
“Okay,” said Ms. Denny, “So what do you think about that kind of thinking?”

“Well,” said Maddie, “I don’t think those things are true. I think all kids are different and the same in a lot of ways, and I have fun with all my friends.” The other kids agreed.

“So,” continued Ms. Denny, “What are you going to do about this?”
The kids decided to talk to the director of the community center. Ms. Denny went with them, and they explained that separate relay races wouldn’t be fair or fun. The director said that he hadn’t thought about it like that, and he was very glad that the kids had spoken up.

“Everything should be for everyone,” he agreed.
The director put up a new relay race sign and announced that now there would only be one race that included everyone.

The next week at the block party, all the kids in the neighborhood gathered for the race at the starting line. Annie, Gabriel, Maddie, and Max had joined together to make one big team.
“You’ve got your hair in braids today, Maddie,” noticed Gabriel.

Max grinned at him. “I needed some extra practice for the braiding challenge.”

Annie zoomed back and forth on her scooter and Maddie did some quick cartwheels as they waited for their team to be called for the race.

“Good luck, kids!” called Ms. Denny from the sidelines. “No matter how you finish the race, you all make a great team together.”

The kids smiled at one another. “We sure do.”