



VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Errands and Outings

Families living with autism spectrum disorder often look for tips on how to handle the many different challenges that may arise. “Real life tips for kids with autism” is a series of practical videos and resources presented by the experts at Children’s Specialized Hospital.

I think that when you are doing errands with children on the spectrum, it’s a gamble. There’s a chance of non compliance, there’s a chance that the event will go off track. You never quite know how things are going to shake out and I think that’s really stressful for parents because they have things that they need to get done in the community and things that they want to do, sometimes things that are very enjoyable and it’s always unpredictable.

When I think about grocery shopping, preparation comes to mind and one thing that a parent can do is explain the task to the child in a developmentally appropriate way. So you want to talk about where you’re going, what you’re going to be doing, what are the expectations for the trip and one thing that I think is really helpful is to give the child some tasks to do. I think kids like to be helpful and you could tell them certain products you want them to pick out and bring to the cart, anything, anything where they could really take part in the activity. I think something else that’s tough about grocery shopping is you have to continue to use your consequences, you have to continue with behavior management and if that means leaving a cart half full at shop rite, that’s what you’re going to have to do.

It’s a great idea to go to the same place over and over and to be in a relationship with some staff there or maybe the owner or the manager so they could better understand and meet your needs. I think businesses are eager to do that, but we as parents have to let them know.

Even though you may not be going to a fast food restaurant, it’s still good to keep a steady pace with the child with autism. So I would think about the food orders maybe on the drive or on the walk to the restaurant. I would talk about them, I would get them ready and I would order on the way in if I could because you want to get that food to the table as quickly as possible. Another thing that you could do to keep the pace going would be to have them bring the bill as soon as possible. You want to keep it going. You want to be in control of the time management. It’s worthwhile to go to a restaurant that you know well and you might have a favorite table that keeps down the distractions and keeps down the sensory input and I think it’s in your right to take things off the table if there are distractions.

I think it could be kind of difficult for families when they go out in the community. There are observers, onlookers who have their own opinions on situations. They can be helpful or less than helpful. I think it's worthwhile to think ahead of time about how you want to handle comments, observations, funny looks that you may be getting because the child's behavior is different. It's an individual parent's decision. You might want to disclose, you might look at this as an opportunity for education or you might just want to settle in because you have a right to be there as much as anybody else.

Everybody loves the mall, there's a lot of important errands to do at the mall, but it can be really challenging if you're the parent of a child with an autism spectrum disorder. I think the thing to do is to build a relationship to the mall and to go there sometimes just for short trips and to get to know what's going on there. There's a lot of sensory stimulation at the mall. There's a lot of things going on. I think you could build up your trips overtime. Don't go there for the first time with a big errand.

I'm absolutely for leveraging your child's interest. If there is a special interest in animals, the zoo is the place to go, or the aquarium. You want to find some place that's going to be a really good match for your child's interests and if it doesn't work out the first time, keep going, keep trying again. I think there are a lot of resources where you can get tips about how to make the most of your outings. It's worth going out there and trying to enjoy.

You can always talk to other parents about local venues. They're really knowledgeable if they have been there before. Most places have websites that you can check out and figure out what will be the best way to enjoy the day.

When I go out with my kids, I like to go with other families. I like to keep as many adult hands as possible so that you can get the help that you need to enjoy the day. An adult with you, that's an ally.

I encourage parents to go out and have a great time. These are special times that can't be revisited. Sometimes it's tough, but keep going. It's going to be a wonderful time with your child.



Through a partnership with Kohl's Cares, Children's Specialized Hospital is improving access to care for children with special health care needs.



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