



8 Ways to Make Outings Less Stressful

1. Set expectations - Be sure to let kids know what to expect. Clearly tell kids, "We are going to the doctor. We will wait in the office and then Dr. Klein will see you. I will be with you if you are afraid or have any questions." If you are doing more than one thing, let the child know, "We are going to the store, the post office, and then the park."



Going Places

2. Provide support for the child to be successful - Some children benefit from having information in writing or in a drawing format. Reading stories in advance that discuss what is going to happen can reduce anxiety. Images from stories including Success Stories provide a way for children to see what is expected of them. Use illustrations and/or words during an event to reassure children.

3. Involve kids in planning the day - Often children are told what to do and have little ownership in decisions. Letting kids make a few choices in an outing helps them feel they are a part of the process. For example, let the child pick which errand the family does first.

4. Praise kids for a job well done - As you go through the day, be sure to reinforce kids for listening, following directions, and being kind to others. This shows children they get more attention for following the rules and routines than for breaking them.

5. Update kids on schedule changes - Schedule changes are likely to happen on a regular basis. When changes occur, let kids know what the change is and how it will affect their plans. For example, "James, the library is not open. We will still go to Aunt Jen's but we will go to the library tomorrow."

6. Plan for delays - Rarely do things go exactly as planned. Prepare for basic concerns such as hunger, boredom, and delays by packing snacks and portable activities like games or books. Make sure to have a back up plan if restaurants or stores are busy.

7. Let kids be involved - Children are less likely to break rules if they are busy. When you are shopping have the kids help you locate groceries. If you are in the doctor's office have the child help you fill out the forms by eliciting their responses to simple questions like name, address, etc.

8. Be consistent - If you create a reward system where the child earns something for doing X, Y, and Z or a promise is made for the child to get something after going to the store, be consistent. If you say, "You get to play your game when we get home *if*" be sure to reinforce them *only* if they actually accomplished their goal. When children are given mixed messages about rewards, the inconsistency can lead them to expect rewards when they have not met their end of the deal. Although it may be difficult at first, children will quickly learn you mean what you say if you hold your ground.

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