

SHOPPING WITH YOUR CHILD – TIPS FOR PARENTS/CARERS

Anyone who has shopped at a supermarket or shopping centre with children, especially young children, know the experience can sometimes be trying and highly stressful. Here are some steps that can change potential misery into potential mastery of shopping with kids.

PLAN AHEAD

1. Explain the rules:

Before entering the store make your expectations clear, such as 'Stay close to me', 'Use your quiet voice' and 'No asking for sweets'. 'Select a single word or signal that you can both use to get the immediate attention of the other'. 'Careful' might be such a word. Role play at home how to act when shopping.

2. Agree on rewards for good behaviour:

Keep it simple such as a choice of a favourite snack or a stop at the park. Promise to read a story or play a game at home. 'When we leave, you can select a packet of sweets if you remember the rules'.

3. Pack a treat:

Bring a nutritious snack for the child to eat during the shopping trip (raisins, cut up apples, nuts etc). Bring a story book for the child to look at. Keep a supply of little action figures or small manipulative toys handy. Bring a favourite blanket, toy or book from home to help make the child feel secure. For a small child, tie a favourite soft toy to the handle of the shopping cart or stroller. Bring a pad and pencil or magic markers for the child to use while you are shopping.

4. Check emotions:

Is your child too tired or too hungry to shop? Are you? If yes then postpone your trip or find a sitter for your child(ren). Go when you are rested, as well as when the child is rested. Don't wait until the end of a tiring day.

5. AT THE STORE:

- a. Make a game out of shopping: 'Who can see the bananas?' 'Who can see the potatoes first?' 'Do you remember what animal bacon comes from?' 'Let's count all the tennis shoes we can see on people's feet'. 'Let's see how many B's you can find on signs'. 'Let's guess how much something is going to cost'. Sing songs. Make up a silly one together about spinach or broccoli. Play 'I can see something'. Then ask your child (ren) what it is. Give hints to challenge the imagination. Describe the food in the trolley and have the children guess the food.
- b. More games: Discuss the pictures on the package – what you could make with this, etc. Let the child see how many things once can do with a certain item. 'How many things can you make out of tomato puree?' Find five things inside the trolley with the letter B, that are in red, are in cans, are for eating, are NOT for eating, etc. Have the child help you name all the vegetables in the trolley, all the meats, breads, fruits, milk products, etc. Count how many steps it takes to get from the 'Cheerios' to the 'Weetbix'. Do 'quiet cheers' at the checkout, spelling each child's name (Give me an A (A). Give me an M (M), etc). While waiting in line retell your child's favourite story having the child chime in on the verses he or she knows.
- c. Give your child(ren) some choices: When possible allow your child(ren) to make some decisions. Blue or red socks? Chocolate or vanilla ice cream? Be prepared to bargain or compromise.

- d. Give your child(ren) a responsibility: Help select the hardest apples, find the cheapest green beans, match the coupon with the labels. If the child is old enough, let him or her check the grocery list or see which fruit, cheese, etc is the best bargain or compromise.
- e. Praise your child 'You are being so helpful'. A hug can be reassuring and say more than words at times. Reinforce appropriate behaviour. Talk with the child, play and engage the child in the decision making process. Encourage the child to talk, watch, listen and think.

6. If all else fails:

Remember: kids will be kids; they are not perfect. Of course, neither are we but we are adults. Ignore inappropriate behaviour unless it becomes dangerous, destructive or annoying to others, or truly embarrassing. Don't let the child think that you will allow him or her to misbehave in public.

Remove a child who is out of control. Take him or her to the restroom or out of the store. Tell the child quietly, eye-to-eye that the behaviour is absolutely unacceptable.

Wait saying nothing at all, for the child to calm down. Then ask if he or she is ready to try again.

Go home if the child cannot calm down. If the shopping cannot wait find a sitter and return alone.

Tell the child you will have to leave him or her at home next time then **DO IT**.

Don't ever buy the child a treat when he or she has thrown a fit!

Special thanks to Lyn Fry

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