



GOING OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

A PARENT RESOURCE TOOL

Setting Yourself up for Success

Families of a child with ASD often experience challenges going out in the community. As a result, many families report experiencing isolation and that they quit doing things that they once found meaningful. Whether you are going out to eat, going to church, or joining in family functions, this guide is intended to help you experience success as you get back to doing the things you want or need to do, in the places you want to do them, and with the people you enjoy.

Included in this resource:

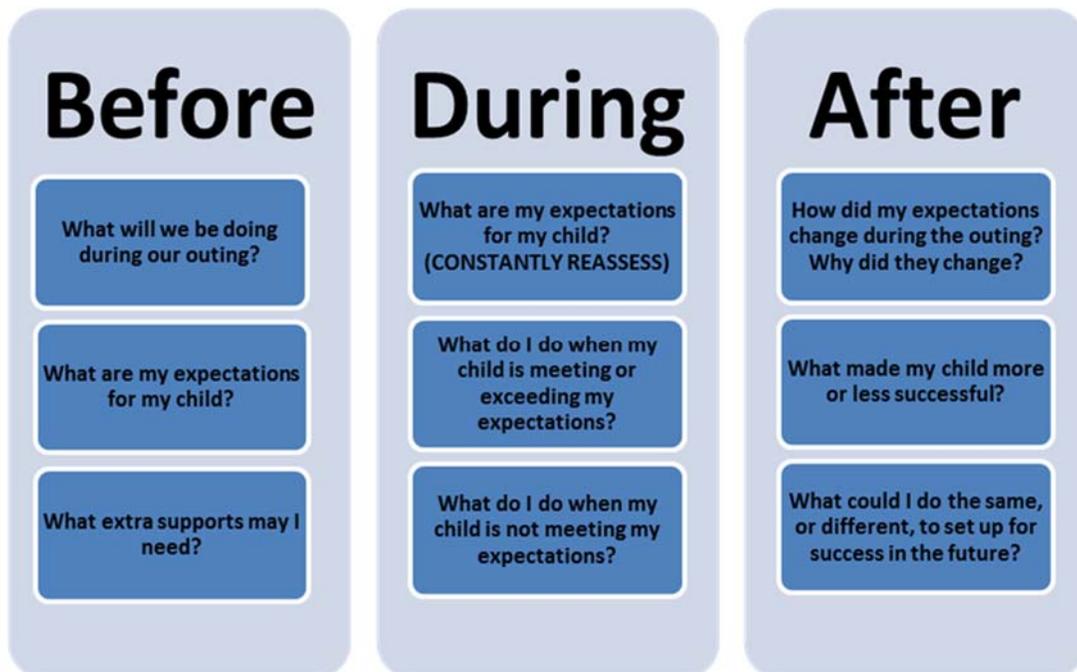
- Questions to guide making your plan for going out in the community
- Identify ways to prepare before going out in the community
- Identify expectations for your child, and how you will respond when they meet those expectations
- Ways to reflect, review, and revise your plans as needed for the next outing
- Additional considerations to experience the most success going out into the community

The content included is general information and is not specific medical or behavioral advice. The information provided may not work for every child with autism or their family. We recommend working closely with your child's doctor(s), therapist(s), and/or educator to discuss how the ideas shared may be individualized to meet your child's needs. If you have an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

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ASK YOURSELF

Here are some questions you will want to ask yourself as you create your plan. The next pages of this toolkit will take a closer look at what you can consider as you work through each of these questions for the following time frames: before your outing, during your outing, and after your outing.



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WHAT CAN I BE THINKING ABOUT BEFORE GOING OUT

Start making a plan by answering the questions related to before going out. If another person will be joining you, these questions can help everyone get on the same page and have clear expectations.

Questions for Before

What will we be doing during our outing?

- Is this something we have ever done before?
- What will the environment look like?
- How busy will the environment be?

What are my expectations for my child? What would I like to see my child do?

- What skills are needed for my child to be able to do this? Does my child currently have the skills needed to meet my expectations? Are any of these skills new or more difficult for my child?
 - Keep in mind the number of expectations you are placing on your child
 - Provide a higher rate of reinforcement and bring items you know your child will work for/ is motivated by
 - What are other ways I can support my child so (s)/he can be more successful? (i.e., limiting distractions, using visual supports, setting clearer expectations)?
- Is this a skill my child has been more successful with in similar situations?
 - How can I lessen my support and still make sure my child is successful?

What extra supports may I need?

- Is this a skill my child has been more successful with in similar situations?
 - What level of support did my child need the last time we worked on this skill?
 - What has/has not been effective in the past?

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WHAT WILL IT LOOK LIKE DURING OUR OUTING?

Here are some questions and tips to consider during your outing. Look at these questions before your outing will help further develop your plan.

What are my expectations for my child?

You will want to *CONSTANTLY REASSESS* this as you are out in the community, and as you see how your child is responding.

What do I do when my child is meeting or exceeding my expectations?

- Let your child know!!!! For example, giving specific praise, provide access to preferred items/ activities
- Consider increasing your expectations- Be careful: Don't get greedy! Pace the interaction, see how your child is responding to the increased expectation and reassess.

What do I do when my child is not meeting my expectations?

Identify any potential barriers.

- Is something interfering? If so, what is it?
- Is it possible to rearrange the environment to make my child successful?
- What types of supports can I use to help my child be successful?
- How could I alter my expectations to keep my child successful?
- What is my plan if I am unable to arrange learning opportunities?

AFTER GOING OUT: REVIEW HOW IT WENT

These questions can help guide you as you review your level of success going out in the community.

Did my expectations change during the outing? How did they change? Why did they change?

What made my child more, or less successful?

- Identify supports that did or didn't work and why.

What could I do the same, or different, to set up for success in the future?

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ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

KNOWING WHEN TO MODIFY YOUR EXPECTATIONS

You planned and prepared, but when will you know it is time to increase or decrease your expectations? The following are general questions to ask yourself before changing your expectations.

- Is my child remaining successful with the level of support I am providing?
 - Is my child displaying desirable behavior a majority of the time?
 - Is my child showing any signs of distress or escalation that are cause for concern?
 - If necessary, can I arrange the environment to increase my expectations and still provide the necessary supports?
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OTHER WAYS TO PLAN & PREPARE

Take time to plan and prepare. Here are some additional considerations to help further develop your plan before your outing.

Know where you are going.

- If you are unfamiliar with the place you are going, get online or call ahead to find out information that may help you plan your outing.
- Find out times of day that are slower so you can plan your visit when the place you are going is less crowded.
- Arriving when a place first opens may be a way to avoid larger crowds and wait times

Consider the time of day for your outing. If certain times of day are better for your child try to schedule outings during those times if possible.

Take preferred items with you.

- Take your child's desired snacks
- Take one or two highly preferred toys or other items that your child can have only when you are out. Be mindful that highly preferred items can change over time, so you may have to occasionally change items to make sure they are still interesting to your child.

When possible, make time to practice the skill(s) you will be targeting.

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LINKS & RESOURCES FOR PREPARING

Use visual supports or social stories to both prepare your child for the outing and to help your child know what to expect while you are out. Resources for visual supports include:

- First/Then Visual Schedule available on iTunes for \$9.99
- Autism Speaks Visual Supports Toolkit
 - <http://www.autismspeaks.org/science/resources-programs/autism-treatment-network/tools-you-can-use/visual-supports>
- Kohl's Autism Awareness Community Hub – provides tips, resources, and visual support examples for going out to various community locations
 - Real Life Tips for Kids with Autism: Errands and Outings <https://www.childrens-specialized.org/programs-and-services/outpatient-programs/autism-program/real-life-tips-for-kids-with-autism>
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMs70nz_foM&feature=youtu.be
- Do2Learn offers resources for visual supports, including printable icons and schedules
 - <http://www.do2learn.com/picturecards/overview.htm>
- She Knows Blog – Taking your Child with Autism to a Restaurant
 - <http://www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/804475/taking-your-autistic-child-to-a-restaurant-tips-on-dining-out-for-families-living-with-autism>

EXPERIENCE MORE SUCCESS

TEACHING NEW SKILLS TO MAKE OUTINGS MORE SUCCESSFUL

Each child will likely need to learn new skills to allow for a successful experience. Some outings, like going in to a fast food restaurant to get take out, may not be as difficult and require as much preplanning. However, you may have visions of other family outings that will require more intentional teaching for your child to develop the skills to be successful. For example, going out to eat at a sit down restaurant will require practice and experience for your child to learn to sit quietly, wait for food, and stay seated while other family members finish eating once he is done.

If you have a goal for something your family would like to be able to do, that is currently not attainable for your child, make a plan to take small steps toward the end goal. Break down the outing into smaller steps and teach each step to your child one at a time, building on success until the goal is achieved. An example is provided on the next page breaking down the goal of eating at a sit down restaurant.

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GOAL EXAMPLE: BREAKING DOWN THE EXPECTATION

Goal: Going out to eat at a sit down restaurant with the family.	
Target behavior	Strategy & Practice
Waiting to be seated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Start by going at off times of day when the restaurant is not as busy and wait time will be shorter. ▪ Use a timer to help your child understand the amount of time to wait until being seated. ▪ Use visual supports to help your child understand what is expected during this time (e.g., sit quietly). ▪ Deliver praise and preferred items when your child is meeting your expectations ▪ If appropriate walk outside to help pass the time for waiting.
Sitting appropriately at the table	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Request a booth where an adult can sit in the outside seat to help your child remain seated. ▪ Use visuals to help your child understand what is expected. ▪ Use the highly preferred item if needed to occupy your child while you wait. ▪ Deliver praise and preferred items when your child is meeting your expectations ▪ Initially require your child to sit for short periods (e.g., 3-5 min) and gradually increase the time as you're seeing success. ▪ Order an appetizer if appropriate or bring a small snack for your child to eat while waiting for the main meal.
Keeping hands to self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If possible have your child sit where decorative and other items are out of reach. • Teach 'hands down' or a similar phrase to help your child learn he can't touch certain items. • Use visual supports to help your child understand he can't touch certain items. • Provide praise and preferred item(s) when your child keeps hands down • Bring fidgets to keep your child's hands busy.
Waiting until everyone is finished eating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use visual supports to help your child understand that he needs to continue sitting quietly. • If appropriate use a timer to help your child understand how long it will be before you are finished and will leave. • Provide access to a highly preferred item <u>if</u> your child is waiting as expected.

