

I am a confident parent...but it hasn't always been that way!

"I am a confident parent...but it hasn't always been that way. I used to be the parent in the grocery store with the screaming child and my cart piled with foods I didn't want to buy. I was embarrassed and stuck. But Triple P taught me a few simple things to help me and my child get through these trips. Now, I know that I can handle whatever challenges that come up in stores, restaurants, church and parks". Triple P Parent

Shopping trips can be enjoyable for families. However, children can get bored during long shopping trips, or over stimulated and excited by all the lights, colors, and items. This can result in children displaying behavior that makes it difficult for parents to complete their shopping trip. Common issues that can come up while parents are shopping include touching things without asking permission, running down the aisles, getting lost, having tantrums, or demanding that parents buy them things.

If you are a parent who experiences these challenges with your child, you are not alone! There are several steps that parents can take to make shopping trips go smoothly. **Here are some things you can try right away.**

Taking your child shopping at a time when they are likely to enjoy it will help avoid some of the mentioned problems. If shopping takes place during your child's naptime or mealtime when they are likely to be tired or hungry, they are more likely to act out.

Preparing your child for the trip will get her interested. Let her know where you are going, how long it will take and what you are buying before you leave the house. Encourage and answer any questions your child has about the shopping trip, this allows her to get involved in the process.

Teaching new skills and recognizing your child's accomplishments around shopping will help her in other public settings. Shopping trips present an opportunity for children to learn new skills and to recognize your child's growing competence. *Explain 1-2 skills* that you would like for your child to acquire. These skills should tell your child what to do rather than be rules of what not to do. For example:

- Stay within eye sight of Mom or Dad
- Walk down aisles when helping Mom/Dad find grocery items
- Ask Mom/Dad before taking an item off the shelf to put in the grocery cart

Asking your child to tell you the important skills before beginning the shopping trip will help her remember and follow them. When you see that your child has demonstrated one of these skills, recognize and praise her for it right away. If children are ignored when they are behaving and get attention when they are misbehaving, they are not likely to continue with the positive behavior. Parents may also want to offer rewards for shopping trips that go smoothly. These rewards can be a trip to the park or a special activity after shopping.

Involving your child in the task of shopping will not only help her learn new skills but will keep her busy and less likely to displaying undesirable behavior. Talk to your child about decisions you are making and try some activities that will involve her in the process. Some interesting activities while shopping include:

- Finding items on shelves
- Passing items to you

- Placing items in the grocery cart
- Counting the purchases
- Finding prices
- Finding different colors, shapes and sizes of items

It might be good to set up some practice shopping trips and/or start with shorter shopping trips so that your child can get prepared for the longer trips. It is common for problems to persist during shopping even when parents have tried these strategies. There are several other techniques that can assist your family have smooth shopping trips. Local accredited practitioners can assist in finding the best approach for your family. For more information on Triple P services please visit www.first5scc.org or contact Stephanie Bluford at sbluford@first5scc.org (831) 465-2217.

It takes time and effort for children to learn new skills, but staying consistent will make shopping trips easier and more enjoyable in the future.

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