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Article: Public Behavior in Children
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Children gain valuable skills and educational opportunities when parents and caregivers take them to public places. For many of us though, the thought of taking a child out in public is not a pleasant one. A Child may regularly misbehave in public by crying, complaining, running away from you and/or having temper tantrums. Some parents and caregivers feel it is easier to leave a child at home and go out alone when possible. It is embarrassing for parents and caregivers when their child acts out in public and others look on with disapproving eyes. Planning ahead for a successful outing can mean a pleasant experience for both you and your child. Set yourself and your child up for success by keeping the following in mind:

Consider the time of day that you plan to go out. Avoid mealtimes, nap times and the end of the day when perhaps both of you ready to be at home, whenever possible. Consider what time of the day your child is at his best and able to cooperate.

Have realistic expectations of your child so that you are not asking your child to do something he is not capable of. For example a toddler will not likely be able to sit still for an extended period of time in a fancy restaurant. If your child is not expected to say please and thank you regularly at home, he will probably not remember to do so in public settings.

Set the rules before you begin and be prepared to follow through. Let your child know if he will need to hold your hand, use an inside voice, need to stay seated, or is not allowed to touch things without your permission. Next, explain to your child what will happen if he doesn't follow the rules. Use logical and appropriate consequences if needed. If you are not prepared to leave an outing when you are part way through, then avoid using this as a threat.

Take a special bag of toys, coloring sheets, books and healthy snacks along to entertain your child. These take along items should only be available to the child on outings, which will make them even more special.

Include your child in the outing, whenever possible. While grocery shopping, for example, have your child assist in picking out items, reading the grocery list, pointing out colors, shapes and so on.

Praise success by complimenting your child and reinforce appropriate behaviors. As your child is learning the rules of public behavior, re-assure him that you are working together for success.

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