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## **Going Shopping**

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**Practice Makes Perfect.** Parents who find it difficult to go shopping with their children usually avoid taking them to the store. It is better to shop more often, so that the children can learn how to behave appropriately in the store.

**Keep It Simple.** It is best to start with a very short list of things to buy at the store and build from there. Parents who have a long list of groceries are stacking the odds against a successful shopping experience. It is better to go and buy 3 items than to get halfway through a list of 15 or 20 items and then have problems develop. We want to start off with very short outings that are more likely to be successful.

**Keep 'Em Busy.** ADHD children do better when they have things to keep them busy. They can mark items off the shopping list, punch amounts into a calculator, search for particular items or pull-out coupons. Some parents find it helpful to bring a Walkman or Game Boy along to occupy the children.

**Focus on the Positive.** Let the children know when they are doing well, instead of focusing on their misbehavior. Point out the rules that they are following and how that saves you time or makes the shopping trip enjoyable.

**First Things First.** If you do plan to offer a small treat, make sure that it is discussed when the shopping is done. ADHD children have a hard time waiting for what they want, and you may find yourself drained by your child's nagging or whining.

**Set a Goal.** It works best if there is a clear and reasonable shopping goal. Let your children know how many items will be bought and how long you expect the shopping to take. Use a timer and number your list. If you and your children can complete the shopping trip smoothly and get done sooner, "bank" the time saved towards some fun family outing.

**Weave In Interests.** ADHD children focus and behave best when they are interested in what they are doing. Your children will behave best when shopping for items that are interesting to them (e.g., breakfast cereal).

**Establish a Strength.** It is often helpful for the children to develop a shopping expertise. One child can learn about the different beverage prices while another can be in charge of cereal purchases. Children who feel they are making a contribution respond much better in the store.

**Have a Clear Bottom Line.** Shopping trips often involve numerous threats of punishment or having to leave the store. Instead of warning, establish a clear bottom line that involves leaving the store if specific rules are broken. With a short shopping list of nonessential items, leaving the store abruptly is easier. The children will later miss out on something that involves your time, since you had to waste time on an aborted shopping trip.

**Plan Ahead.** Choose a small store with a friendly manager or owner. Pick a time of day that is not so busy. You are going to the store to teach the children how to behave while shopping, so choose items that are simple to find and quick to purchase.

**Make a Connection.** Children who do well grocery shopping are going to notice that their parents are more willing to go toy shopping. A quick and smooth shopping trip leaves time for frozen yogurt later. When the children find sale items and use coupons, there is extra money for something fun. Create connections that teach the children why following rules and contributing while shopping is important. Children who don't help their parents finish shopping will see that their favorite foods are missing at the evening meal or that they will have to return to shop at a time that is less convenient for them (e.g., during a favorite TV. show or instead of playing with a friend).