

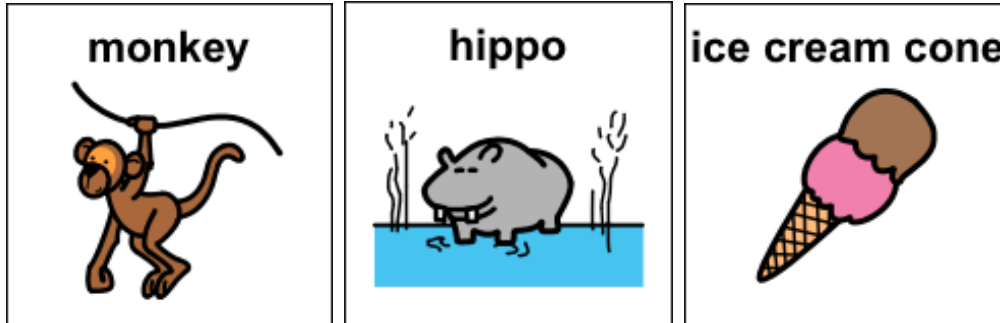
## Planning for Successful Summer Outings

Summer brings the opportunity for trips and outings, including visits to family-friendly community facilities. Outings in the community can be a great challenge for most parents.

- Keep outings short.
- Do what you say you will do in the order you say you will do it.
- Decide on the optimal number of stops.
- Do the most important things first.
- Prepare a visual schedule for your child.
- Offer a reward at the end of the outing for good behavior.

**Structure and preparation** are keys to a successful community outing. The following are suggestions to help make the community outings more enjoyable for the entire family.

- Take pictures of the places you may visit and create an outing book to help with transitions. If you will be visiting the local water park, take pictures of the various slides and places to explore...don't forget the concession stand there may be something delicious to snack on there. Show the book to your child the night before to familiarize them with the activity.
- If going to the zoo, incorporate choice-making into the visit. Show pictures of the giraffes, monkeys, and snakes and have your child choose what they want to see first. Always include a "first, then" if applicable.
- Create a schedule of the activities that you will be doing on your outing:



- If you have a family calendar, put a special picture (like a picture for "zoo") on the day of your special outing and refer to it for several days beforehand.
- Bring along a special bag of familiar items for your son or daughter. Include special snacks, video games, something for comfort, and/or a book. Often individuals with ASD need a break from activities that typical children could do for hours. For example, a typical child they may want to ride on the water slide all day. A child with ASD, however, may try it once or twice and then need a break.
- Use social narratives to prepare your child for an outing. Create stories about frequent places that your family visits. Keep a copy of the stories at home, and also keep one in your car. If you need to make a last-minute stop at the grocery on the way home, pull out the social storybook in your car to explain to your son or daughter where you are going.

- If your son or daughter has a communication system remember to bring it. The system is his/her voice and they need to be able to have it in all environments.

### **Ideas for Activities-Parent to Parent Tips**

A trip to the park or the local playground can be fun. Playground equipment automatically provides opportunity for sensory input (slides, swings, etc.) There are almost always other kids there. Bring a ball or a kite. This provides a perfect opportunity for social interaction.

If your community has a gymnastics center or a YMCA, these facilities sometimes offer indoor play areas with times that are open to the public.

Take advantage of story time at your local library. In addition, most libraries have summer reading programs that often feature music, puppet shows, magicians, etc.

Public pools and water parks offer the opportunity to have fun and be around other families.

A visit to a local farm, nature center, or pet shop can provide an opportunity to learn about animals.

If you have a local riding stable, see if the facility would allow informal visits to give your child an opportunity to pet and feed the horses.

Set up a campfire meal and cook outdoors.

Pack a picnic basket and head for the local park.

Visit a local orchard and pick the fruit that is in season.

Contact a local dairy farm. See if you and your child can visit to see the cows and watch the milking process.

Visit the zoo.

Visit a children's museum. The Louisville Science Center, The Children's Emporium in Lexington, and The Children's Museum of Indianapolis offer interactive adventures for fun and learning.

Purchase a disposable camera. For some kids, getting them into taking pictures could make going anywhere interesting. Potential photo-ops are all around us.

Look in the local paper for outdoor concerts or art fairs. These activities are free and not too confining. There are many things to see and hear, but you can "escape" at any time.

Sometimes if you seek out smaller, independent stores you will have a much better experience than going to Wal-Mart or Target. A trip to a local pet store, like Feeders Supply, will provide the opportunity to look at fish and snakes, or watch people give their dogs a bath. The store may also have some puppies or kittens that are awaiting adoption...these are entertaining to watch.

A local farm offers the opportunity to watch tractors, trucks, and lawnmowers in action.

Take a trip to the local music or video store and look at age-appropriate CDs or DVDs. Follow that up with a drink at a nearby convenience store and practice skills such as paying for things and using a public restroom.

Go to a local ice cream shop for a cone. An advantage to frequent visits to smaller, independent stores is that people will get to know your child and you won't have to worry so much about potential behavior issues.

Some communities have a dog park. Take a hike around the outside perimeter fence and watch the dogs running around inside the fence. This also can provide some good opportunities for people watching using peripheral vision.

Look for any local activity that is free.

Visit a local bath shop (such as Bath and Body Works) and smell the scents of the lotions, or a natural foods store to smell the aromatherapy oils.

Remember, a key for success is not to stay too long—if you experience a little taste, the visit remains interesting. If you have not invested a lot (such as zoo admission or a movie ticket) you won't feel pressured to stay a little longer to get your money's worth. This may trigger a meltdown.

### **At Home**

Have a neighborhood scavenger hunt. Make a list of 20 things to see or activities that go on in your neighborhood. The list could include activities like drinking from a water fountain, standing next to a tree, or throwing a basketball into the net on your driveway. Arm the kids with a Polaroid or digital camera (with young children, Mom or Dad can play photographer). Spend the afternoon finding the objects or performing the tasks on the list and taking pictures of them. Once you have completed all 20, help your child make a keepsake poster of the pictures.

Try backyard bowling. Find household items that will tumble over easily, such as empty cereal boxes, empty soda cans, and small stuffed toys. Align the objects in rows like bowling pins. Using a smaller ball for older kids and a bigger ball for the young ones, have your child roll the ball. Score a point for each object he/she knocks down.

Nurture your child's inner artist by encouraging him/her to create art using supplies with which your child is comfortable: crayons, sidewalk chalk, modeling clay, etc.

Create an outdoor canvas. Hang an old sheet on a clothesline or tape paper to a fence for your budding artist to paint on. Encourage him/her to try painting with different kinds of brushes, grass, leaves, or sticks. Rocks are also considered a suitable object for painting.

For the artistically inclined child, you can create a body outline. Find a piece of large poster board, or large heavy-duty paper (such as a butcher paper) wide enough for your child to lie

down on. Use a dull pencil to trace his/her entire body on the paper from head to toe. Let your child decorate the outline to look like himself/herself. When finished, help cut out the entire shape for proud display.

Host a mini-Olympics. Get all of the kids in the family involved in competing in running and wheelbarrow races, obstacle courses, water balloon tosses, and jumping competitions. Finish off the fun with a mini-Olympic awards ceremony to honor all of the athletes. Buy medals at the local dollar store or make your own with construction paper, colored pencils, and string.

Blow and chase bubbles in the backyard. Along with the exercise that comes from chasing the bubbles, this is an opportunity to practice taking turns with the bubble wand.

Play a board game that matches your child's ability level. Board games can help your child with fine motor skills (moving pieces on the game board) as well as with taking turns and following directions.

Play a game of "I Spy" indoors or in the backyard. Take turns with your child in being the one who "spies" and the one who "finds".

Allow your child to build "castles" with wooden or plastic blocks, toys, plastic bowls...anything that is safe and unbreakable.

Go "exploring" by taking a walk with your child around the neighborhood. Point out those things that may otherwise go unnoticed or take a list of things to look for (a yellow house, a doghouse, a swing set, etc)

Put on a play. Put together simple costumes and use a Dr. Seuss (or similar) book as the "script". Perform for the entire family.

If water is calming to your child, water play can be fun.... pouring from one container to another, guessing which things will float and which will sink, creating sponge "sailboats", etc. Running through the sprinkler and playing on the Slip'n Slide can be fun, too.

Create an obstacle course in the backyard. Set up a course and have activities along the way (hula hoop, something low to step on, something low to jump over, something high to touch, etc.)

Set up a neighborhood lemonade stand. You can use this opportunity to teach not only counting and money concepts, but also this can be a great opportunity to fine-tune social skills.

Make 5-Minute Ice Cream. Mix 1-cup milk, 1-tablespoon sugar, and 1/2-teaspoon vanilla in a 1-quart zipper freezer bag. In a 1-gallon-sized zipper freezer bag, put 1/3-cup salt and ice cubes to fill the bag 3/4 of the way. Place the smaller bag inside the larger bag (make sure the seals are tight!). Shake vigorously for 5 minutes. ENJOY!