

Traveling with a Child with Asperger's Syndrome

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Traveling with a child can be a challenge. That challenge is multiplied when traveling with a child with Asperger's Syndrome. Planning is the key to preventing, or at the very least reducing, the child's level of stress. Here are a few ways of decreasing the stress and anxiety related to travel:

1. Prepare a book with pictures of each step of the trip. Include a short explanation with each picture. This allows the child to read the book like a story and also helps ensure that every person who reads the book with the child uses the same language and presents the same details.
 - Review this book frequently before the trip.
2. Navigate your destination's Website so the child can 'see' where they will be going.
3. Clearly communicate the beginning and ending of each activity (e.g. the flight, meals, performances, etc.)
 - Use different methods for illustrating the length of an activity. For example: a watch or a timer, the length of a television program or movie, a sand timer, etc.
4. Review the daily schedule every morning and allow the child to ask questions. This is a great opportunity to inform the child not only about the day's activities, but also the order in which they will be occurring.
5. Bring along food the child likes, especially if traveling to places where the food is different.
6. Maintain a certain daily routine.
 - Time for meals, rest and bed.
7. Allow the child to bring an item that provides security or a few games or activity books.
 - Make sure the items chosen are permitted on board if traveling by plane.

The number of pictures to include in the book will depend on the activity, the level of detail the child needs and the amount of information they are able to process. If necessary, a book can be created for each part of the trip. This allows the child to review one part of the trip at a time, and for multiple reviews, as needed.

The following are examples of pictures to include in the book:

- The airport: waiting area, baggage area, security procedures, and washrooms.
- The plane and the flight schedule: seats, security procedures, and activities such as movies, music, snacks or meals that will be served.
 - Means of transportation once you arrive at your destination: bus, taxi, and shuttle service.

- The hotel: lobby, elevators, and room.
- The local area and activities: dining room, restaurant, beach, theatre, and pool.
- Details about the return trip.

It's understandable that a trip can cause anxiety for a child with Asperger's Syndrome but it is important to provide the child opportunities to live new experiences. In planning for a trip, it is imperative that the child knows as much as possible about the upcoming adventure.

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