

MY SUPERMARKET VISIT

AN AUTISTIC CHILD'S WORKBOOK



Prepare • Notice • Choose • Recover

A gentle resource for making shopping feel safer and more predictable

BEFORE WE GO

A little preparation can make the visit easier to understand.



Today I am going to the supermarket. There may be bright lights, noises, smells, people, signs and lots of choices. I can take my time and use support.

My plan

Who is coming with me?

What are we buying?

What can help me feel comfortable?

Things I could take

☐ Headphones or ear defenders

☐ A familiar toy or comfort item

☐ A drink or safe snack

☐ A short picture or written list

☐ Something to hold, squeeze or fidget with

☐ A plan for a break or an early exit

NOTICE THE SUPERMARKET

There is no right way to experience a busy shop.



I might notice:

- lights above me
- trolleys moving
- voices and beeps
- different smells
- busy shelves
- my body needing movement

My body check-in

My ears feel...

My eyes feel...

My body feels...

I need...

CHOOSING AND HELPING

Children can join in without having to do everything.



Ways I might join in:

- ☐ hold or point to the list
- ☐ find one familiar item
- ☐ choose between two options
- ☐ place something in the trolley
- ☐ count items or notice colours
- ☐ help in my own way

My shopping mission

One thing I would like to find:

Something I noticed:

A choice I made or communicated:

CHECKOUT AND LEAVING

The last part can be noisy and tiring. Support still counts.



At the checkout I may hear beeps, see people waiting and watch items move. I can stay close to my trusted adult and use my comfort tools.

My adult can:

- tell me what happens next
- keep language short and calm
- let me move or look away
- avoid rushing me
- leave if I become overwhelmed

My leaving plan

When the shopping is finished, I will...

On the way home, I may need...

A helpful thing my adult can say is...

GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Support the child, not an idea of how shopping should look.

PREPARE

Use pictures, a short list or a simple first-and-then plan. Choose a quieter time when possible and agree how the child can ask to pause or leave.

COMMUNICATE

Use short, concrete language. Allow extra processing time. Accept pointing, gestures, AAC, signs, movement and behaviour as meaningful communication.

SUPPORT SENSORY NEEDS

Offer ear defenders, comfort items, movement, sunglasses or breaks without making the child earn them. Reduce demands when sensory load rises.

NOTICE DISTRESS

Changes in movement, speech, breathing, posture, attention or connection may be early signs of overload. Respond before the child reaches crisis.

LEAVE WITHOUT BLAME

Finishing early is not failure. Safety and regulation matter more than completing the list. Another adult can finish, or the shopping can wait.

PLAN RECOVERY

Expect tiredness or delayed distress afterwards. Provide low demand time, familiar food or drink, quiet, movement or closeness according to the child's preference.

Remember: an autistic child's distress is communication. Co-regulation, flexibility and respect are more helpful than pressure or punishment.



AFTER THE SUPERMARKET

Recovery is part of the activity, not a reward for coping.

My gentle recovery menu

QUIET less talking, softer light or a calm space

MOVEMENT stretching, rocking, walking or jumping

COMFORT a familiar programme, object, food or drink

CONNECTION sitting near somebody without needing to talk

My supermarket reflection

Something that went well...

Something that was difficult...

Something I want adults to understand...

Next time, it may help to...
