



From our Mid-Summer, 2010 Newsletter:

Family outings can be wonderful. For maximum enjoyment of family time, it helps to think



about how everyone in the family can enjoy different kinds of activities. There are many sensory-related choices to consider when planning activities: loud or quiet, wet or dry, active or still, messy or neat, indoor or outdoor, large crowds or more open space, fast-paced or calm.

When going somewhere new with a "sensory sensitive" child (or adult) it is always a great idea to limit the duration of the experience and to "preview" experiences that are going to be repeated.

"Previewing" may be a brief visit to the location at a very quiet time when you can calmly show your child where the bathrooms are,

where to find a water fountain, where you will be and so forth. In this way your child will be able to focus on the experience and not on their worries when participating as part of a larger group.

In a family where most folks love amusement parks, it may be hard for some to understand a child who finds amusement parks overwhelming. Talk about this as a family ahead of time to find a way to make the activity fun for all. It may require that you pre-plan time and events that you will participate in to ensure that everyone has a great day. You will all have a better time if everyone's preferences are respected. Nobody (no matter what age) should be made to feel like there's something wrong with them if they don't enjoy a certain activity.

Once you decide on an activity, try to make it as sensory-friendly as possible for everyone. If you're going to the beach, bring umbrellas, sunglasses, and canopy chairs for anyone who prefers shade to the hot sun, and maybe some frozen water bottles as well! Plan breaks from the noise and crowds a few times a day if you are going to an amusement park with someone who is not a huge fan. A trip to the library will last longer if you scout out a nearby playground where you can take an active child to run and climb halfway through the visit. Making these kinds of sensory accommodations helps everyone in the family have a great time.

FAMILY TRIP TIPS:

Our therapists and families recommend these great places for family trips: the newly renovated [Turtle Back Zoo](#) in West Orange, [Valley Shepherd Creamery](#) (farm and cheesemaking in Long Valley), Summit's [Reeves-Reed Arboretum](#), and the state of the art indoor-outdoor [Children's Adventure Garden at the New York Botanical Gardens](#).

And for a really different family outing: [Factory Tours USA](#) provides details (listed by state or industry) on more than 500 tours of factories that manufacture thousands of American products from cookies to cars!