



Challenging Behavior Tip Sheet: Riding in the Car

“HELP! Every time we drive in the car, my child yells and cries.”

What you can do:

Remember, “Busy Hands are Happy Hands.” Help prevent the yelling and crying by giving them things to do while in the car that they enjoy. Give them options and let them choose. As the parent, you’ll need to do some planning ahead of time. It’ll be worth it!

- If your car has a CD or tape player, go to the library and check out a few tapes or CDs with children’s music. Let your child choose which music to listen to in the car. Here are some ideas: Raffi, Caspar Babypants, The Wiggles, Jim Gill, Disney Soundtracks. Say something like, “Would you like to listen to Raffi or to The Wiggles today?”
- Go to the library and check out a few books that you’ll only keep in the car. Keep them in a bag by their car-seat. When you get in the car, give them a choice of two books to read. Say something like, “Would you like to read *“Going on a Bearhunt”* or *“The Quiet Cricket”* on our way to school today?”
- If you don’t mind your child eating in the car, keep healthy snacks in the car. Sometimes kids are grouchy because they’re just hungry! They may be hungry after a long day running errands with you. Some snack ideas are raisins, bananas, pretzels, or goldfish. Also, keep a water bottle in the car in case they get thirsty.
- Play an “I Spy” game. Ask them to look for a certain type or color of vehicle. Have them look for stop signs or certain types of animals. Or, pick an object in the car, up ahead, or close to the road and only tell the color of the object. Say, “I spy something red. What do you think it is?” Then ask your child to guess what it is. Take turns choosing objects.
- If they start throwing toys in the car, pull over and calmly tell them, “We don’t throw_____. You’re all done with_____.” Then, suggest another activity like playing “I Spy.”