



Shopping for Clothes For an Individual with Autism

Going clothing shopping can be a stressful time for an individual with autism and the rest of the family. This FAQ sheet will give information that may be helpful with understanding some of the difficulties families have during a day of shopping.

Finding appropriate clothing

Individuals with autism who are sensitive to touch may have problems wearing certain fabrics. People who wear a heavy winter coat in the summer may do this because he or she feels positive sensory feedback from the fabric or weight of the clothing.

- Positive Sensory Feedback: a pleasant experience from things experienced by the senses: touch, taste, smell, sight, etc.

Consider catalogue shopping, purchasing items in stores that allow returns or consignment/Goodwill shops. Worn clothing is usually already softened due to repeated washing and therefore, less likely to be rejected by individuals with sensory issues.

Trying on clothing

Some individuals with autism may not understand why we try clothing on during shopping. They may not understand why they are told to not take off their clothes at school or at home but while shopping it is okay to take clothes off in a dressing room.

The store environment

Lighting, objects, or displays

- Individuals with autism may become visually overloaded due to fluorescent lighting or the amount or clothing items in the store may be overwhelming.

Smell

- Many stores sell perfumes. These perfumes may cause sensory overload to an individual with autism. Many different scents can be even more overwhelming.

Crowds

- A store with many other customers can become confusing or frightening for an individual with autism.

This information sheet was developed by the Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (ASERT).

For more information, please contact ASERT at 877-231-4244 or info@PAautism.org

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