

Parents Are Experts, Too!

Excerpt from *Parents Are Experts, Too!* by René DeLoss

The thought of going into the community can sometimes be nerve-racking, especially after being at home for over a year without opportunities for practice, and *especially* for those on the autism spectrum. There are simple things you can use to help your child communicate, deal with confusion or frustration, learn to wait, and more. You may have seen them at school or are already using them at home. These tools are especially useful in the community.

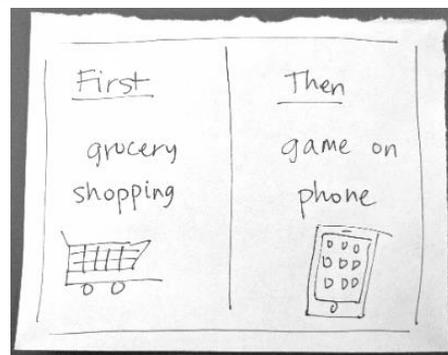
There are a variety of things that are useful for when your child needs support out in the community. These supports are meant to provide structure and clarity to the parts of an outing that may be abstract and cause anxiety for your child. The following is an example of one support you can use during your next excursion.

💡 A **first/then card** shows the first item or activity on the left (labeled “first”) and the second item or activity on the right (labeled “then”). This is used to support a transition from a less preferred activity to a more preferred one. It can be written out or use simple pictures.

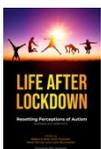
Make a Useful Support on the Spot

With your trusty pen and paper, you can make the tools your child needs! It doesn't have to be complicated; there are simple fixes that require nothing more than your pen and paper. It doesn't have to be fancy either, just useful. Using supports is not only for experts who work in education or in a clinic—remember that you are the expert when it comes to your child and you are just as capable of providing valuable and effective supports.

To make your own **first/then card**, draw two squares, side by side. In the left one write “first” and draw a picture of the item or activity your child will do first. On the right side, write “then” and draw a picture of the item or activity your child will do after the first is completed.



Use this simple but effective strategy to make your next community outing a success!



<https://www.amazon.com/Life-After-Lockdown-Resetting-Perceptions/dp/1956110038>