

A Clinical Treatment Guide to 10 Common Pediatric Behavioral Problems

Car Trips



**The Cipani Tolerance
Training Method**

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Car trips

(The Cipani Tolerance Training Method)

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Car trips (The Cipani Tolerance Training Method)

1. Develop child tolerance of car trips gradually and progressively.

Especially for young children, relatively lengthy car trips are often not fun. Additionally, being required to be in a child-safety seat (or seat belt) adds additional burden to the aversive nature of car trips. If your child has extreme difficulty staying in his/her seat belt during car trips of varying lengths of time, it might be necessary to gradually develop his/her tolerance gradually. I would suggest having a one to two week training program to teach your child how to ride in the car in his or her car seat. Start with short trips. For example, conduct a car trip around the block. Short and sweet, right? But have several of these trips a day even though there is no purpose to the trip, other than a practice session. By conducting practice sessions, your child has the frequent opportunity to begin to tolerate the situations inherent in car trips, albeit for a short duration. Going back to a preferred play activity following a successful practice session is a good idea.

2. Gradually increase length of car trips.

As your child gets better at tolerating trips that last a few minutes, you can progressively expand the length of the trip by increasing the distance driven. Do this gradually over the two week training phase of the program. Don't jump from a two-minute car trip to half an hour! Once your child is capable of car trips involving 10 or 15 minutes, or longer, you and your child will have a more pleasant experience traveling about during your weekly community activities.

3. Have an alternative activity available to reduce periods of boredom.

Even during training sessions, bring entertaining materials and activities for your child to engage in. Doing something entertaining and distracting during car trips can be of extreme help when longer trips are necessary. If the child is kept busy, the likelihood of problem behavior during the trip is less.

4. Be Patient.

Realize that not every child responds in the same time frame to these suggestions. I suggest that during the training program (first two weeks), several short car trips occur each

day. Subsequent to the training program use these suggestions during “real” car trips. Once the child is capable of tolerating reasonable car trips, (i.e., the length of your usual trips), you can fade out the training program. Remember, right now, your children would have a tough time with two-hour car trips irrespective of the training program you have. But with progressive tolerance training, your child can become more manageable with your usual trips to the store, park, Laundromat, etc. Good luck!