

Taming Toddler TANTRUMS...



Toddler tantrums can test any parent's patience!

If your toddler is having tantrums, you're not alone - nearly all toddlers have tantrums at some time.

Tantrums happen when toddlers get upset, angry, frustrated and stressed – often because there are so many things that they want to do but can't yet.

Sometimes toddlers have a tantrum when they feel jealous, scared, unwanted, insecure or unloved.

It's never helpful to punish or hit a child to try to stop a tantrum.

Little tantrums... only last a short time and your child's feelings are not totally out of control.

Your toddler is still too little to be able to cope with stress and frustration very well. He does not always have the words to say what he needs or wants. It can feel like his world is full of bigger people telling him what to do and what not to do.

Sometimes toddlers learn that busy parents are likely to give in to what they want if they 'carry on' long enough, so they whinge and whine and have little tantrums.

If you give in easily, your toddler learns that tantrums work, for example, she gets something if she pesters long enough.

If little tantrums happen often and seem to be about 'something small', it's usually because the 'something small'

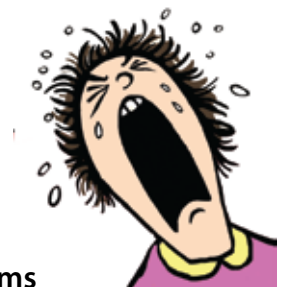
has come on top of a lot of other stresses or frustration in your child's life, so it becomes the thing that tips him into a tantrum. Have a think about whether your child:

- ❖ is frustrated from not being able to have or do something
- ❖ needs attention
- ❖ is tired, hungry or unwell
- ❖ is stressed about starting childcare or a new baby in the house
- ❖ has seen you and your partner fighting or upset. Remember your moods and behaviours affect your child.

Mean what you say!

- ❖ Don't give in to your child who has a tantrum because he wants something. If the tantrum is small you might try saying "No" and giving a reason once. For example "No, you can't have a biscuit because it is almost dinner time".

- ❖ Try to distract your child by giving him something else to do. Let him help you cook dinner, choose a snack that you approve of or do something fun. Warm baths sometime help calm toddlers who are having 'little tantrums'.
- ❖ Sometimes you can just ignore little tantrums. Sometimes being busy and doing something will help tantrums blow over.



Big tantrums

Big tantrums are the 'boil over' kind where children can no longer control their feelings. This kind of tantrum is very frightening for children, as well as for many parents.

When your child has this kind of tantrum she can't listen to reason. Punishments such as consequences or time-out don't work. Ignoring this kind of tantrum can be frightening for your child, because when she is out of control she needs to learn that feelings can be controlled. She needs to know that you are in control.

Try to prevent little tantrums becoming big tantrums by spending lots of relaxed time with your child, giving him plenty of room to move and explore and praising all the good things about him.



Shopping centre tantrums

Tantrums in public are hard to cope with. Most parents feel embarrassed or worry about others watching how they handle the situation. If they happen often, consider leaving your children with someone else when you go on long shopping trips.



If you do take them to the shops make sure they are not tired when you go. Take a snack for them to eat, make sure they have been to the toilet and try not to be too long. Let them help by getting things from the supermarket shelf for you.

Chatting to other adults can result in young children getting bored, irritable and restless. Make the shopping trip a treat for everyone by having a drink or a little time in the park afterwards.

If a tantrum does happen you need to be strong enough to leave the shopping basket where it is and take your child somewhere quiet until the tantrum is over.

When your child copes well tell her you are pleased that she behaved so well – reward good behaviour!

Plan to avoid tantrums – if possible

Here are some handy tips:

- ✦ make sure there are lots of good things in your child's day
- ✦ go on outings after sleeps and meals not when your child is hungry or tired
- ✦ distract her "Look what I have got here"
- ✦ keep a diary for a few days - when the tantrums happen, note what time of day, and what you and your child are doing when it happens. If it always happens around tea time, try letting your child have her tea earlier, giving her a bath before tea, letting her help you prepare the meal, or having some special time with her at this time of day.

Coping on 'one of those days' ...

Some days are worse than others. If you can see at the beginning of the day that it is going to be 'one of those days' take some time to do something relaxing with your child straight away. Leave whatever you thought you had to do and see if you can make the day a better one.

Some relaxing, fun things to do with your toddler include:

- ✦ a walk in the park, or around the block
- ✦ sitting with your child to watch a video
- ✦ play music or dance, read a story or do some drawing or playdoh.

REMEMBER

having a tantrum yourself doesn't help! Your child will copy you and learn from the way you handle their tantrums.



What parents can do when tantrums happen!

The most important thing is to stay calm and let your child know that you are in control, that you can keep him safe and you will not punish or leave him. ***It is important for him to learn to manage his own feelings.***

- ✦ Don't try to reason with your child at this time, he won't be able to 'hear' you.
- ✦ Stay with your child during the tantrum. Hold him if you can, if not, stay nearby where he can come to you when the worst of the storm is over.
- ✦ Talk to your child gently but firmly about how he feels and what is happening to him. You could say "You are feeling really upset and I will stay with you until you feel better. It's alright to cry when you feel upset, but I won't let you hit/kick etc." You might have to hold your child to prevent this.
- ✦ It is important not to give in to whatever your child was wanting which started the tantrum – even though this may be difficult to do!
- ✦ When the tantrum is over, suggest something for him to

do that you are happy with, giving both of you time to wind down.

- ✦ When you manage the tantrum you teach your child that angry feelings don't have to take over, and they can be managed and expressed in helpful ways. You are also teaching that however bad things are, you will not let him down.
- ✦ Do not threaten – threatening to leave will make him feel even more frustrated.
- ✦ If you are unable to stay near because your own feelings are in danger of getting out of control and it is unsafe, tell your child that you will be leaving for a short time but will be back soon to look after him. Make sure he is safe and get someone else to stay with him.

