

Temper Tantrums

"We can learn many things from children," someone once said. "For instance, how much patience we have."

That's especially true when it comes to temper tantrums. Unfortunately, for the parent of a young child, tantrums are a frustrating fact of life. They can make you feel sad, helpless, embarrassed, exhausted, and sometimes, like your child, out of control.

By understanding temper tantrums and some ways to deal with them, you can develop a plan of action to help you and your child get through these trying times.

What is a Temper Tantrum?

Every child has temper tantrums. Like skinned knees and runny noses, they are a normal part of growing up.

Tantrums are usually the result of a buildup of anger or frustration, occurring when your child is over tired, over stimulated, hungry or doesn't get his own way. The child may kick, scream, cry, throw herself on the floor, bite, hold his breath and throw toys. The truth is, he isn't enjoying this any more than you are.

Tantrums are normal between the ages of 18 months and five years; if they continue beyond the

age of five years, you may want to consult your pediatrician.

How Can You Prevent Tantrums?

That's simple--you **can't**. But there are ways to keep them to a minimum.

- ⇒ Maintain a regular routine of meals, naps and bedtimes. Children like to know what to expect during the day.
- ⇒ Be clear in the messages you give your child. Be sure to use words she knows and understands.
- ⇒ Be realistic in what to expect from a toddler or preschooler. For instance, a small child will find it hard to pick up an entire roomful of toys, but can manage a small area.
- ⇒ Offer your child the opportunity to make some choices. Ask which socks he wants to wear, which cheek to kiss, or which cereal to eat. You can create many "choices."
- ⇒ Most important, listen to your child. Is he happy, sad, lonely, frustrated? It's important to him that you care how he is feeling.

How to Handle a Temper Tantrum

Count to 10 (or 20) before dealing with your child's rage. Practice approaching your child when **you** are calm. A parent's own screaming and hitting is a negative example for the child. Use words to express your own anger. Say something like, "I feel angry when you hit your brother."

Sometimes adults need a separate place to calm down too. Know your own limits. Take a couple of deep breaths. Call a friend. Go to another room. Pound a pillow. Do whatever it takes to calm yourself down.

Remember, tantrums are tough for your child, too. Always praise your child for being able to talk about her feelings. "I'm glad you can tell me about your feeling angry at your sister. Now we can talk about it."

After the tantrum, regain the closeness. After such an emotional experience, both you and your child may be exhausted. When the time is right, get together. Reassure your child that you care about him.

Take Care of Yourself

Temper tantrums can bring out the worst in everyone. Doing a few little things for yourself can make things easier.

- ⇒ Get plenty of rest and eat properly. It's easier to deal with a stressful situation when you feel good.
- ⇒ Make time for things you enjoy. Set aside time for friends, hobbies, some time to yourself. Giving yourself a break will make you a happier parent.

⇒ Take a time out. If you find yourself becoming too angry or frustrated with your child, it's best to put some space between you. Time outs are good for adults as well as children. Go into another room, take a few deep breaths, and relax.

⇒ Reach for the phone instead of your child. If you ever feel like you may hurt your child, call someone. Talk to a friend, family member, minister, or hotline.

This, Too, Shall Pass

Just remember that, as frustrating as they are, dealing with tantrums is part of being a parent. A calm, caring approach will make these difficult times easier.

Fortunately, most children outgrow this behavior by the age of five. While that may seem like forever right now, it will be over before you know it.

And the joy your child will bring you will last a lifetime.

Source:

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