



The Basics of Caring for Children In Your Home

TEMPER TANTRUMS

WHAT STARTS TANTRUMS?

The children were having a great time playing outside for nearly an hour. It was getting close to lunch time, so I called to everyone to put away the toys and get ready for lunch. I heard stomping and screams, then saw a ball fly by me. Tonya was having another temper tantrum.

A NORMAL PART OF GROWING UP

Many young children have temper tantrums because they don't know how to handle strong feelings, like anger and disappointment. They don't know how to talk about their feelings, so they let off steam by screaming, crying, and stomping their feet.

Even though this is normal behavior for young children, adults often have a hard time dealing with it. It isn't a lot of fun to be around a child who throws himself on the floor and lays there kicking and screaming because you gave him the blue cup instead of the red one! Children need to learn there are better ways to show their emotions.

Check your local library for a book to read to the children about having temper tantrums.

Children have temper tantrums for a number of reasons. The best way to help a child who has temper tantrums is to understand what happens before the tantrum begins. That way you can try to stop tantrums before they happen. Think about a child in your care who often has temper tantrums.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Does this child have a tantrum because she is trying to do something that is too hard for her?

Children want to do things for themselves. Children may become angry when they find they can't do something on their own.

How to help: Make sure there are different activities on many levels for children to choose from.

Help children choose activities that they can do. You might say, "Let's choose a book with thick pages, so you can turn them yourself."

Watch for when children start to get upset with an activity. Tell them it's okay to ask for help.

2. Does this child have tantrums more often when she is sick, tired, or hungry?

Many adults find it hard to cope when they are sick, tired, or hungry. Children find these times even harder.

How to help: Talk with the child's parents every day. Ask if she slept well, had breakfast, and how she's doing that day.

**Plan ways
to stop tantrums before
they happen.**

Be ready to change your schedule to add a rest or snack when a child seems tired or hungry.

Late afternoon and times just before nap and lunch are often the hardest times for children. Plan calm, quiet activities to help children relax during these hard times of the day.

Children who are tired, sick, or hungry may want to play alone. Make sure you have a place where a child may play away from the other children.

3. Does the child throw a tantrum when you ask him to do something he doesn't want to, such as picking up toys?

How to help: Tell children a few minutes before you change an activity. "In five minutes we will need to clean up the toys, then we will go have lunch."

Set up your room so children can get reach the toys, books, art supplies, etc. without asking for help.

Give children choices when you can, such as, "Do you want apple slices or orange slices for snack?" Make sure you can live with any choice you allow a child to make.

4. Does the child have a tantrum when she doesn't get something she wants?

Some children believe that screaming and kicking will help them get what they want.

How to help: Do not give in when the child has the tantrum. Move away and ignore her kicking and screaming.

HOW TO HANDLE A TANTRUM

- Try to stay calm. Yelling at the child will make the tantrum worse. When you stay calm, you show children how they should act when they are upset.
- Try to get her interested in something else. A book, toy, or different activity may be all she needs to stop the tantrum and move on to something else.
- Take the child to a quiet place, away from the other children. Don't try to talk or reason with a screaming child. Stay near to keep him safe until he calms down.
- Make sure the child will not hurt himself by banging his head, hitting things, etc.
- Some children find it is calming to have an adult hold them. You might say, "I can see you are angry right now. I'm going to hold you until you calm down. I won't let you hurt me or anyone else."
- Some older children will sometimes throw tantrums to get your attention. Try to ignore the tantrum and go on with what you were doing.
- After the child calms down, talk about the behavior. Teach children to ask for help and talk about their feelings, rather than hitting, kicking, and screaming. You might say, "I know you wanted to play outside some more. You can use your words to tell me that you don't want to go inside, instead of kicking and screaming."
- Tantrums may scare children. Tell the child who had the tantrum, "I don't like the kicking and screaming, but I still like you." Tell the other children, "John is having a hard time right now. I'll keep you safe while he works out this problem."



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