

Toddler Tantrum Tips for Parents

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If we haven't witnessed them first-hand, we have all heard of the "terrible twos", that period of time when toddlers are prone to throwing temper tantrums. In actuality, and unfortunately for parents and caregivers, tantrums don't start the day a toddler turns two and end the day they turn three. Tantrums usually occur as children are going through normal developmental phases between the ages of 18 months to four years.

A tantrum should not be viewed as a negative thing, although it's easy to feel that way in the moment. Toddlers aren't intentionally trying to push our buttons. ***When a child throws a tantrum, he or she is actually creating or expressing their own individuality, and demonstrating that they can think for themselves.*** They don't have the skills to express themselves differently at that age, which is where parents and caregivers need to both meet the child's needs and help them learn how to cope with problems differently in the future.

Why Toddlers Have Tantrums?

Temper tantrums in toddlers can stem from many different things:

- Feeling like they can't control their environment
- Having too many limits
- Having too few limits
- A need to assert independence
- Frustration because of their inability to communicate effectively
- Being overtired
- Feeling bored
- Being overstimulated
- Hunger

Tips for Handling or Avoiding Tantrums

1. **Plan Ahead.** The last four causes on the list above, being overtired, overstimulated, hungry or feeling bored, are the easiest to plan for and to avoid. Whenever you can control your toddler's schedule, don't plan activities or outings during naptime, and plan for snacks to keep hunger at bay. Bringing a favorite book or toy on an outing is a great way to stave off feelings of boredom. Understand your toddler's limits when it comes to feeling overstimulated, and respect those limits as best you can.
2. **Set (and use) Boundaries.** Boundaries are important for children at any stage of development, but they are especially important for toddlers. When children know what is expected of them, and when those expectations are enforced consistently, they will feel calmer. As any caregiver will tell you, this can be rough, especially in the beginning, and toddlers will push back on those boundaries to learn where they really are. Parents and caregivers need to have consistent messaging about boundaries and be fair and patient while still being fair.
3. **Build Relationship with Toddler.** This one really comes down to getting to know the child better. When you know their emotions well, you'll be in the best position to identify when they are close to feeling overstimulated, or overtired or simply frustrated. Some caregivers and parents have found keeping a journal to be beneficial, recording and documenting the situation, environment and circumstances present when the tantrum occurred, as well as details about the time period leading up to the tantrum. By doing this,

often certain patterns emerge which can be helpful in avoiding repeat tantrums. On the flipside, instead of just paying attention to the tantrums, it is equally important to pay attention to what the child is doing well. [Praising good behavior will help toddlers](#) start to make connections about what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

4. **Stand Your Ground.** When a toddler is in the midst of a tantrum, all of the planning and journaling in the world cannot help you in that moment. The trick is to stand your ground and remain as calm as possible. For example, if your toddler pitches a fit when you won't give him a cookie right before dinner, your response should be to repeat the rule, over and over: "We don't eat cookies before dinner. We don't eat cookies before dinner." The trick is to be as consistent and as calm as possible. Keep your voice even and your face neutral. The toddler will understand that you mean business, and see that they can't get a rise — or a cookie — out of you before dinner.

When you refuse to be pulled into the tantrum, your child will see that you're not wavering and that his or her activities aren't getting them anywhere.

Toddler Tantrum Help in Utah at Pathways Real Life Recovery

If your child throws frequent tantrums (twice or more each day), if his or her tantrums are accompanied by intense anger or sadness, or are followed by extreme separation anxiety, aggression or sleep-related problems, talk to your child's doctor. Toddler tantrums generally end by age four, so consult your doctor if your child continues to throw regular tantrums after that age.

You should also talk to either your child's doctor or to your own doctor if you're feeling unable to cope with tantrums. Feeling overwhelmed and helpless during your child's tantrums is normal; but know, that you don't need to go it alone.