



How to Handle Tantrums Effectively

While every parent tries to prevent tantrums, there will be times when little ones simply lose their cool. When this happens to your child, there's not much you can do -- he simply has to vent. Here's some expert advice on handling these outbursts:

- 1. Keep your cool and deal with the tantrum as calmly as possible.** Remember, you are your child's role model for handling anger. Though it may be tempting to yell at or lecture your child, state your position calmly, he says, and make it short and to the point.
- 2. Walk away from him/her when he/she's having an outburst.** If you don't feel comfortable leaving the scene, stay nearby, but keep busy. Don't make eye contact or start arguing with your child. If she sees her tantrum isn't having an effect on you, she'll most likely stop.
- 3. When your child is having a public tantrum, pick him up and carry him calmly to a safe place.** Take him to your car or a public bathroom, where he can blow off steam. Be careful not to overreact or lash out at your child because you're embarrassed. Once you're in a quieter place, calmly explain your position, and try to ignore the tantrum until it stops. Sometimes just touching or stroking a child will soothe him. If your child continues to scream, place him securely in his car seat and head for home.
- 4. Don't try to reason with a child who's having a tantrum.** He is so emotionally out of control that this won't work.
- 5. In some cases, give in to the tantrum (within reason).** Sometimes this is a smart strategy, while bribery ("I'll give you some ice cream if you stop crying") should never be an option, if you want to have a peaceful car ride, you might give in to your child's request to hear the same tape over and over again.
- 6. Don't ignore aggressive actions.** If your child is behaving aggressively during a tantrum -- kicking, hitting, biting, throwing, or breaking things -- take action. If possible, remove your child from the source of his anger, and give him some time alone to calm down and regain control. For children old enough to understand, a time-out may be effective.

Many children just seem to snap out of a tantrum as quickly and inexplicably as they got into it in the first place. Once the tantrum is over, going to your child, giving him a hug and a kiss, telling him you love him, and moving on. Dwelling on the outburst only makes them feel bad and may even cause the tantrum to start up again.

If you want to have a discussion with your 3- or 4-year-old, talk about the tantrum several hours after it's over. Ask your child to tell you what set off her outburst, and help her think about problem-solving strategies for the future.



How to Handle Tantrums Effectively