

TIPS FOR PARENTS

How To Stop Temper Tantrums

Many young children show their angry feelings by screaming, kicking, throwing themselves on the floor, or banging their arms. These are temper tantrums; they are no fun for you or your child.

The following suggestions should help you curb your child's temper tantrums.

At Home

1. After making sure your child cannot hurt him/herself, someone else, or objects around him/her, ignore the temper tantrum. Do not talk to your child during the tantrum.
2. Walk away from your child if you are having trouble ignoring the tantrum.
3. If your child follows you, close yourself in a bedroom or bathroom until the tantrum ends.
4. When the tantrum is over, tell your child, "I like being with you when you are (smiling or sitting quietly or playing with your sister, etc.)." Say nothing about the tantrum.
5. Don't give in to a tantrum. That is, do not give your child what he/she wants to make him/her stop screaming.
6. If the tantrum is over something your child does

not want to do, wait until the tantrum is over, then calmly but firmly say, "Now it is time to do _____." Say nothing about the tantrum.

With Company

It is often difficult and embarrassing if your child has a temper tantrum when you have company or are visiting. At these times, it might seem easier to give in to your child. However, if you give in to tantrums only when company is present, you may teach your child that temper tantrums work when company is around. It is best to respond as consistently as possible to tantrums whenever they occur. When possible, use the six steps listed earlier, and alert your visitors to your plan. If you are unable to carry out this plan when company is around, you might try the following suggestions.

1. If you or your guest(s) are unable to ignore the tantrum, lead or carry your child to his/her room saying, "Your behavior is not okay. You may come out when you are finished".
2. If your child comes out of his/her room before the tantrum has stopped, lead him/her back to the room



without saying anything. If your child leaves his/her room repeatedly and you are uncomfortable leaving your guests, try to ignore the tantrum as much as possible. When your company leaves, you can then lead your child back to his/her room.

3. Once the tantrum is over, let your child leave his/her room saying, "Would you like to join us?" or "I like the way you are behaving." Say nothing about the tantrum.

4. In some cases, you may not be able to allow your child to "scream it out." If your child is starting to throw a tantrum in front of company, you might try distracting him/her. Another approach is to give your child a choice other than what he/she is demanding. For example, if your child is demanding a drink of soda, you might offer him/her juice or milk instead.

5. Sometimes it is difficult for young children to share their parents' attention, particularly if they are used to being with them much of the day. You may be able to prevent tantrums for your attention if you spend a few minutes helping your child become acquainted with your company and by giving your child a little special attention during the visit.

In Public

Some children seem to wait until they are in public places before they throw temper tantrums. Not only is this behavior highly embarrassing, but also many parents don't like to let their children scream in public because they are afraid of what people

might think. Again it is important that you not give in to tantrums in public unless you want your child to learn that tantrums sometimes work.

The following suggestions should help you stop your child's public tantrums.

1. In some cases, you may be able to end tantrums quickly by saying nothing and/or walking out of your child's eyesight but staying where you can see your child. Although it is difficult for most parents to be comfortable with this technique, it is highly effective for many children.

2. If you cannot ignore the tantrum or comfortably walk away, lead or carry your child to the car saying, "Your behavior tells me you do not want to be in (the store, the mall, McDonald's, etc.). You can try again (tomorrow or the next day)."

3. If you have taken your child home because of a tantrum, be sure to give him/her another chance within a day or two.

4. If your child throws a lot of tantrums in public, start out with very short (15 to 20 minutes) trips close to home. As the tantrums occur less and less, you can go out more often and for longer periods of time.

5. It often helps children to control their behavior if you include something they enjoy as part of your outing. For example, when going to the mall, you can stop at the pet store; or after shopping for shoes, you could go to the playground.

Notes