

Coping with tantrums

Although tantrums are part of daily life with some toddlers, they may be much less frequent or rare with others. However liable your child is to tantrums, though, you can prevent many by organising your toddler's life so that frustration stays within the limits of their tolerance most of the time. It's always worth avoiding tantrums if you can do so without compromising your own limits, because they do no positive good to either of you. When you must force your child to do something unpleasant or forbid something she enjoys, do it as tactfully as you can. When you can see that they are getting angry or upset about something, try to make it easier for them to accept. Of course they must have their coat on if that's what you have said, but perhaps they needn't have the zipper done up yet?

What to do if your toddler has a tantrum

Remember that a toddler's overwhelming rage can terrifies them; so just make sure they do not hurt themselves, or anyone or anything else. If they come out of a tantrum to discover that they have banged their head, scratched your face or broken a vase, they will see the damage as proof of their own horrible power and evidence that when she cannot control herself, you do not have the power to control her and keep her safe, either.

It may be easiest to keep your toddler safe if you hold her, gently, on the floor. As she calms down, she finds herself close to you and she finds, to her amazement, that everything is quite unchanged by the storm. Slowly she relaxes and cuddles into your arms. Her screams subside into sobs; the furious monster becomes a pathetic baby who has screamed herself sick and frightened herself silly. It is comfort time.

A few toddlers cannot bear to be held while they are having tantrums. The physical restriction drives them to fresh heights of anger and makes the whole affair worse. If your child reacts like this, don't insist on overpowering her. Remove anything she is obviously going to break and try to fend her off from physically hurting herself.

 **Don't try to argue or remonstrate with the child.** While the tantrum lasts, she is beyond reason.

 **Don't scream back if you can possibly help it.** Anger is very infectious and you may well find yourself becoming angrier with every yell she utters. Try not to join in. If you do, you are likely to prolong the outburst because just as the toddler was about to calm down, she will become aware of your angry voice and it will start her off again.

 **Don't let the child feel rewarded or punished for a tantrum.** You want her to see that tantrums, which are horrible for her, change nothing, either for or against her. If she threw the tantrum because you would not let her go out into the garden, don't change your mind and let her out now. Equally, if you had been going to take her for a walk before she had the tantrum, you should take her all the same, as soon as she is calm again.



Don't let tantrums embarrass you into kid-glove handling. Many parents dread tantrums in public places but you must not let your toddler sense your concern. If you are reluctant to take her into the corner shop in case she throws a tantrum for sweets, or if you treat her with saccharin sweetness whenever visitors are present in case ordinary handling should provoke an outburst, she will soon realise what is going on. Once your toddler realises that her genuinely uncontrollable tantrums are having an effect on your behaviour towards her, she is bound to learn to use them and to work herself up into the semi-deliberate tantrums which are typical of inappropriately handled four-year-olds.