Coping with Tantrums

A ‘tantrum’ usually begins when babies develop into toddlers, for some children they may be more frequent or rare with others. Children find new ways to test boundaries and express themselves when they become dysregulated. This frustration may be shown with screaming, crying or even kicking, hitting and biting themselves or others. This is a part of development children experience as they begin to learn about their emotions and feelings.

There are many situations that can lead children to becoming dysregulated, and these are hard to predict when they will happen.

Try to find out why the tantrum is happening-

• Your child may be feeling frustrated as they’re tired or hungry.

• They may be trying to talk but you are not able to understand their needs at the time.

• Your child may need time, attention and love to regulate.

• They may feel overwhelmed in their environment e.g. in supermarkets or social events where its loud and busy

• Your child may not understand why they’re not able to do certain things

Any situation that leads your child to feel frustrated or upset can lead to a tantrum, and triggers will be different for every child. You know your child best and what will make them feel calm again, here are some tips you could read on how to support them-

• Have a certain time of day to play with your child, this can allow them to express how they’re feeling

• Keeping them safe by moving things away to make sure they don’t cause harm to themselves, or others.

• Allow your child to express their emotion in a safe place, some may calm with cuddles where as others may need time and the reassurance of you being there when they are ready to regulate.

• If your child is frustrated due to you not allowing them to do something, set clear rules and explain why you are not allowing them to do that e.g. it’s unsafe.

• Practice deep breathing techniques to calm them

• Create a distraction using something like a book.

• Keeping calm as children respond to how we react, waiting for your child to express their emotions as losing your temper or shouting back will prolong the outburst

• Discuss emotions with them throughout the day; whether this is happy, sad, excited or angry it's a way your child can begin to understand how they are feeling.

• Offer choices when you can- Try to offer simple and harmless choices to give your child a sense of independence. For example, you might let them choose between two t-shirts to wear.

• Show affection; forms of affection can help children feel cared for, loved and build their confidence.

• Praise good behaviour- If you praise the behaviour you want, your child is more likely to repeat this.

When your child has become dysregulated it can be overwhelming as a parent to deal with this, it is ok to feel embarrassed and not know how to handle this when in public too as it can come at an unexpected time. Taking care of yourself is being a good role model of how to deal with emotions when you're feeling overwhelmed. Try to find time to let yourself unwind or do something that you enjoy. It's difficult to respond in a calm and relaxed way if you're stressed, tired or anxious.

Please find attached 'A quick guide to dealing with tantrums' as this has some more advice you could read. If you would like further support please speak to me, the best way to contact me is by email- cbrown@norcot.reading.sch.uk or phone- 07483368773

I hope you all have a lovely Christmas break and I look forwarded to seeing you in the New Year!