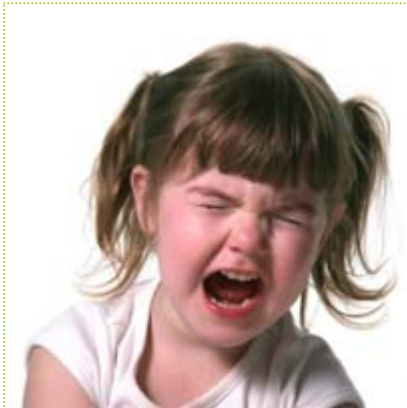




Toddler Temper tantrums



Seemingly bad behaviour and temper tantrums seem to go together. Your delightful child suddenly stomps her feet defiantly if she can't get her own way, or flies into a rage for no apparent reason. Temper tantrums are a necessary and healthy (but difficult) part of growing up.

Toddlers have a low level of frustration – temper is easily triggered when things don't go according to their plan. In younger toddlers (under the age of 3), most tantrums are caused when they become frustrated with their ability to perform certain tasks (such as putting on their own shoes). This is when a helping hand (not punishment) is all that is needed, and the 'tantrum' soon abates. If your 4 year old uses a tantrum to deliberately defy your authority, then something must be done about this. However, it is important to remember that overtiredness and over-stimulation leading to sensory overload, also contribute towards temper tantrums and bad behaviour. It is especially worse in public situations, where unfamiliar people, loud noise, bright lights and different smells are too much for

her to handle. She will also know that she does not have your full attention in a public setting, so will play up in order to get it!

Avoiding Temper Tantrums / Be One Step Ahead

- Be in tune to sensory signals: modulate or remove your child from the stimulatory environment if you see any signs of overload.
- Try to plan outings and activities during your child's awake time to avoid tantrums and tears.
- Be consistent: Try to stick to a routine. Routine is important to your toddler – it gives her boundaries and predictability in her world, which helps her to feel secure.
- Avoid hunger: your toddler needs to eat frequently, so avoid letting her get too hungry – she will become very grumpy.
- Prevent a situation from arising: If you see that your 2 year old is struggling to put her shoes on and is getting frustrated, step in and offer to help her before she loses her temper.
- Offer her choices whenever possible. Instead of saying "eat your beans", rather say "would you like beans or squash?"
- Try to choose your battles – is it really the end of the world if your toddler goes out with two different shoes on?

Tackling Temper Tantrums

- As a parent, it is always important to help your child make sense of what is happening and how she is feeling. This way, your toddler will learn to trust her feelings and solve many of her own problems. Try and get into the habit to always acknowledge how your child is feeling by giving it a name, then to mirror the feeling, then offer some sort of distraction. So when your toddler performs when denied an ice cream, try handling it in a different way. Say "oh dear, are you cross that you can't have an ice cream, I would be too if I were you because you are so tired, but I tell you what, let's go and have a look at the balloons and see if they have a blue one – that's your favourite colour, and then we'll go home for a sleep". This way, your child will get the message from you that whatever she is experiencing is not dangerous, not out of control and can be managed.
- Stay calm in the storm of the tantrum! Your role is to contain her distress, so don't stomp out the room, try not to shout if she shouts, or be angry if she is angry (this will only lead to two toddlers in the room!) If your toddler will allow you to, help her to sort out what it is that is causing her frustration (such as not finding the right hole for the shape she is playing with). If it is too late for that, give her a big, firm and deep hug, and try and keep her close to you in this way until her anger subsides. Try to stay with her even if she won't let you touch her, and offer that cuddle for later when she is calm. The storm of emotion she is going through can be frightening for her, so she needs to know that you are there for her.

- Use 'time out' (if the tantrum warrants it) from the age of 2 years.
- Walk away if you feel that you are losing control – take some deep breaths and count to ten, then return.
- Don't give in to the tantrum – if you do this you will only be re-enforcing the negative or bad behaviour. By conceding, you will only be teaching your child that all she needs to do is have a 'frothy' in order to get what she wants. It is best to ignore the behaviour, and rather focus on the *reason* for the tantrum in the first place. By ignoring the tantrum (this may be difficult to do sometimes, particularly if you are in a public place), you are giving her a message that this behaviour does not move you, and she will most likely stop.
- In the throes of a tantrum, don't plead, beg or negotiate – it will give your child a message that you are anxious and not in control.

Always remember to praise and acknowledge your child when they have handled a difficult situation well, or if they have done as you have asked. This way, you only 'reward' positive behaviour, and largely ignore the negative behaviour. For example if you see that your child is heading towards a tantrum, use some of the above strategies, and if the tantrum is diffused, you could say to her " I could see that you were getting frustrated with those shoelaces, but you managed not to loose it, well done, come here for an extra special hug, I'm proud of you".

Toddler Sense Secret: *By the age of 4 years, most toddlers have learnt that there are other, easier ways of getting what they want, so you will notice that temper tantrums will lessen.*

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