

Dealing With Temper Tantrums



What's Happening

Two- and 3-year-olds have many skills, but controlling their tempers is not one of them. Tantrums are common at this age because toddlers are becoming independent and developing their own wants, needs, and ideas. However, they are not yet able to express their wants and feelings with words. Take comfort in the fact that most children outgrow tantrums by age 4.

What You Might Be Seeing

Most toddlers:

- Love to say “No!” “Mine!” and “Do it myself!”
- Test rules over and over to see how parents will react
- Are not yet ready to share
- Need lots of fun activities, play times, and opportunities to explore the world
- Respond well to a routine for sleeping and eating (a regular schedule)
- Like to imitate grownups and to “help” mom and dad

Remember: When your child is having a floor-thumping tantrum, the most important thing you can do is remain calm and wait it out. Do not let your child’s behavior cause you to lose control, too.

What You Can Do

It is often easier to prevent tantrums than to deal with them after they get going. Try these tips:

- Direct your child’s attention to something else. (“Wow, look at that fire engine!”)
- Give your child a choice in small matters. (“Do you want to eat peas or carrots?”)
- Stick to a daily routine that balances fun activities with enough rest and healthful food.
- Anticipate when your child will be disappointed. (“We are going to buy groceries for dinner. We won’t be buying cookies, but you can help me pick out some fruit for later.”)
- Praise your child when he or she shows self-control and expresses feelings with words.

If you cannot prevent the tantrum, here are some tips for dealing with it:

- Say what you expect from your child and have confidence that your child will behave.
- Remain calm. You are a role model for your child.
- Holding your child during a tantrum may help a younger child feel more secure and calm down more quickly.
- Take your child to a quiet place where he or she can calm down safely. Speak softly or play soft music.
- Some children throw tantrums to seek attention. Try ignoring the tantrum, but pay attention to your child after he or she calms down.
- Resist overreacting to tantrums, and try to keep your sense of humor.

Parenting Your School-Age Child



What's Happening

Children ages 6 to 12 go through big changes. As they spend more time at school and away from home, they are working to develop an identity of their own. Their bodies are growing stronger and changing quickly, a process that will continue through puberty and the teen years. They are learning to control their feelings, use reason, and solve problems. Yet children in this age group still need rules and structure and, most of all, their parents' love and support.

What You Might Be Seeing

Normal school-age children:

- Mature unevenly. Their bodies may be growing, but they are still capable of having temper tantrums and need reminders to take baths and brush their teeth.
- See things in black and white. They are concerned about fairness and rules.
- Are capable of doing chores and homework more independently but may need you to remind and teach them (not do it for them).
- Get distracted easily and may lack organizational skills.
- Develop deeper relationships with peers and care deeply about "fitting in."

Remember: Talk to your children, and listen to what they have to say. School-age children may sometimes act like they don't care what their parents say, but they still want your love, attention, and guidance!

What You Can Do

- **Model the behavior you want to see.** Your children are watching and learning from you. Meet your responsibilities, follow house rules, and communicate with respect.
- **Make a few important rules and enforce them every time.** Remember, children want freedom, so give them choices in smaller matters (e.g., clothing, room decorations).
- **Talk to children about what you expect.** Post rules and routines where everyone can see them. Fewer "grey areas" mean less to argue about.
- **Support their growing bodies.** Children this age still need nutritious meals (especially breakfast) and 10 hours of sleep each night.
- **Limit time spent watching TV, playing video games, or using the computer.** Monitor Internet use for safety, and encourage your children to participate in hobbies and sports.
- **Be involved with your children's school.** Talk to their teachers and attend parents' night and school conferences. Show that school is important to you by providing a quiet space for homework, volunteering in your child's school, and celebrating your child's hard work.
- **Offer support and understanding when your child has problems with peers.** Explore ways to resolve conflicts, but do not interfere. If your child is being bullied at school, alert school staff and work with them to keep your child safe.
- **Don't wait for your children to learn about sex, alcohol, and drugs from peers.** Educate yourself and talk to your children about your values. Help them practice ways to resist peer pressure.

Connecting With Your Teen



What's Happening

Many teens spend less time with their families than they did as younger children. As they become more independent and learn to think for themselves, relationships with friends become very important. Sometimes it may feel like your teen doesn't need you anymore. But teens still need their parents' love, support, and guidance.

What You Might Be Seeing

Normal teens:

- Crave independence
- Question rules and authority
- Test limits
- Can be impulsive
- Make mature decisions at times, and childish ones at other times

What You Can Do

Simple, everyday activities can reinforce the connection between you and your teen. Make room in your schedule for special times as often as you can, but also take advantage of routine activities to show that you care.

Remember: Your words and actions help your teen feel secure. Don't forget to say and show how much you love your teen!

Tips to Keep In Mind

- **Have family meals.** If it's impossible to do every night, schedule a regular weekly family dinner night that accommodates your child's schedule.
- **Share "ordinary" time.** Look for everyday opportunities to bond with your teen. Even times spent driving or walking the dog together offer chances for your teen to talk about what's on his or her mind.
- **Get involved, be involved, and stay involved.** Go to games and practices when you can. Ask about homework and school projects. Learn about your teen's favorite websites and apps. Look for chances to join in your teen's latest hobby.
- **Get to know your child's friends.** Knowing your child's friends is an important way to connect with your teen. Make your home a welcoming place for your teen and his or her friends.
- **Be interested.** Make it clear that you care about your teen's ideas, feelings, and experiences. If you listen to what he or she is saying, you'll get a better sense of the guidance and support needed. Get to know your teen's friends and their parents, too, when possible.
- **Set clear limits.** Teens still need your guidance, but you can involve your teen in setting rules and consequences. Make sure consequences are related to the behavior, and be consistent in following through. Choose your battles. Try to provide choices in the matters that are less important.