



Pro Tips for Managing Toddler Tantrums



Learning to manage BIG feelings is a BIG part of the toddler years. Here's what you can do to help.

Toddler tantrums are a normal part of your child's development. Knowing that their behavior isn't personal—even if it feels that way sometimes—helps you stay calm and guide your little one to a calmer place too. Learning to manage BIG feelings is a BIG part of the toddler years. Here's what you can do to help:

Build a Strong Foundation

- **Practice prevention by planning ahead.** You already know the rough spots in your family's day, like trying to get out the door in the morning. Plan ahead to make those times easier. Set out clothing and diaper bag supplies, and make lunches the night before.
- **Offer choices.** *Do you want to put on your PJs or do you want Daddy's help?* Choices give your child a sense of control.

- Be silly. Humor can help avoid a tantrum. Toddler doesn't want a diaper change? Use the clean diaper as a puppet: *Pleeeeeease put me on!* Toddler doesn't want to get dressed? Make a funny sound when their head pops through their shirt.
- **Point out all the great things about your child:** *I really liked how you helped me pack the diaper bag.* Let them hear you tell others how great they are: *Hey Aunt Jodi, did you know that Madison built a really tall block tower today?* You can also use bedtime to tell the story of your child's day and share all the ways they brought you joy.

Pro Tips for Responding to Tantrums

- **Practice patience.** Tantrums mean that your child is overwhelmed and cannot cope. If you have a big reaction like getting angry or yelling, your child often gets even *more* upset. Learning to pause and calm yourself first helps you be your child's rock.
- **Remember that your child's behavior is a communication.** Think about what they are trying to tell you. It may not be something you can give, but you can recognize their goal or feeling: *I see that you are sad because it's time to get in the car. You weren't ready.*
- **Help your child name their feelings:** *I see you are really mad.* Give them a way to express those feelings, like jumping up and down, or saying *I'M MAD*. When needed, be clear about limits: *I will stop you from hitting.*
- **Offer distractions.** Sometimes your child needs help to calm down. A distraction—like an interesting object to look at or a peek out the window—can be the perfect reboot.
- **Stay close.** Sometimes children are hard to console in a tantrum. Make sure they're in a safe place and stay close by. Offer a hug, a cuddly, or a favorite story if they'd like. Watching your child's big feelings work themselves out can be hard as a parent. Remember that it's okay if your child feels sad, angry, or disappointed sometimes. Those feelings are part of life too.

And remember: No parent gets it right 100% of the time. Re-connect when you've made a mistake. Take a moment to get down to your child's level, take responsibility, and re-connect with a hug or cuddle: *I'm sorry I yelled. Let's start over and figure out how we can catch the next bus.*