

S.K.I.P.

Strategies with Kids | Information for Parents

Tantrums



Most children between the ages of one and four have tantrums. They are not caused by bad parents or naughty children - they are a natural part of growing up.

“They can find waiting for things hard.”

They all do it

Tantrums are caused by frustration and stress that children can't deal with. Often they happen because children can't express themselves using words.

Tantrums are more likely when children are tired, hungry, uncomfortable, bored or over-stimulated. They can also happen when children are jealous or if they have a feeling of not being wanted.

Children have to learn to manage their feelings. You can help them do this by ignoring tantrums and not giving in to demands your child might be making. Try directing their attention to something else.

“ Try and stay calm, getting angry yourself doesn't help.”



They all do it

It is almost impossible to stop a tantrum once it gets going, but sometimes you might be able to stop it before it happens by trying not to rush things, not giving too many choices, or doing something relaxing like going for a walk or watching a video together.



**“Be
consistent”**

Letting your child know that there is going to be a change coming up also helps prevent frustration that can trigger a tantrum. For example you could tell them it's almost time to go home.


When they're in full flight

You can't stop a tantrum. Make sure your child is safe, stay near and carry on with other things. Don't try and talk to them, reason with them or discipline them. It's hard, but don't pay any attention to them.

Show that you're not upset. Although you might be feeling really angry, try not to show it.

If they are in danger of hurting themselves, move them to a safer place. If you're in a shop, leave the shopping and go outside to a quiet place.

When they calm down, comfort them but don't give in to the demands they were making before they had the tantrum. Praise them for calming down.



“When my daughter starts losing it, I just sit out the next half hour while she lets off steam. I find somewhere to sit where I can be near her if she needs me, but I just wait them out.”



Ways to avoid tantrums

“Walk away, ignore them, do something else”

Think about when they happen. Is it just before dinner?

Your child might be hungry, or they might be tired and want reassurance – just when you're busy with something else.

If the supermarket is a really difficult time try to change the time you go, think about shopping without your child, or buy a bread roll or apple that they can chew on as you go. If they're being good, tell them and give them a little treat at the end.

Practice turning a no into a yes. Instead of saying "no you can't have that" say "yes you can have that once we get home".

Give choices that are realistic – don't ask them which shirt they want to wear, give them a choice of two.



Remember

Tantrums aren't bad behaviour, they're small child overload. Most children have them, many children have one a week, and some have one a day.

Talk to other people who know your child well, or who have experienced similar problems with their children. This could be a friend, someone from your child's early childhood centre or another parent.



**“Take
big deep
breaths”**

Both parents need to be consistent about managing behaviour. Talk about what's happening and agree on how you will both manage tantrums.

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Skip supports parents and caregivers to raise their children in a positive way.

For more information go to:

www.familyservices.govt.nz/skip/

Email: **skipinfo@msd.govt.nz**

or phone: **04 916 3300**

For more information on support for parents go to

www.familyservices.govt.nz

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