

TINY BITS (BETTER INFORMED TOGETHER) FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/A/DP
JANUARY 2021 TINY BIT

PREVENTING AND SURVIVING A TANTRUM

Tantrums are a normal part of development. They happen most between ages 1 and 3 years. Many children have more tantrums prior to and around the time they learn to talk. Before children are fully verbal, they can become frustrated when trying to express needs such as hunger, tiredness, or feeling overwhelmed. Tantrums typically improve after the age of 3 but don't go away entirely. That's why it is important to have some survival tips for them!

Tips for Preventing and Surviving a Tantrum

1. **Stay calm and ignore the behavior whenever possible.** Don't give attention for negative behaviors you don't want repeated.
2. **Give your child enough attention and "catch them being good".** Provide specific praise in successful moments.
3. **During a tantrum, give your child control over little things.** Offer small, directed choices with options rather than yes or no questions.
4. **Use distraction.** Try moving to a new room, offering a safer toy or singing a song.
5. **Choose your battles and adjust when you can.** It's OK to sometimes give in a little to settle yourself. What matters is your consistency from day to day.
6. **Know your child's limits.** Some days are harder than others. Sometimes you cannot finish your "to do" list. You may just have to head back home.
7. **Do not ignore certain behaviors such as hitting, kicking, biting or throwing things.** If your child is in danger of hurting themselves or others, stop them immediately and remove them to a safe location. Make it clear that hurting others is not acceptable. Consider holding your child until they calm down.
8. **Set your child up for success.** If tantrums peak when your child is hungry, have a healthy snack with you when you're away from home. If they peak when your child is tired, prioritize sleep/nap time even if you miss things.
9. **Give yourself a break when you need it.** Take turns with another parent, caregiver or friend when your frustration increases.
10. **Reflect on the tantrum.** This is a tip for **after** the tantrum. Use the tantrum as an opportunity to learn and grow as a parent. Was there a point where things could have gone differently? Remember that information for the future.

Excerpted from: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Temper-Tantrums.aspx>

