

# TANTRUMS

Temper tantrums require an audience – the bigger the better

Temper tantrums are used by children of all ages to get what they want or to demonstrate their disapproval over a changed situation.



There are two types of tantrums that children throw. The first are frustration tantrums, which young children throw when they can't do or say what they want to. This type of tantrum needs to be contained so a hug or some space maybe best here.

The second type of tantrum is a control tantrum. These tantrums are a form of emotional blackmail that is very effective in achieving children's objectives. Control tantrums require an audience – the bigger the better, so supermarkets and other public places make great places where children can throw a 'wobbly'. Children may throw a tantrum in their bedrooms, too, but they are always loud enough for parents to hear.

## TAMING THE CONTROL TANTRUMS

- **Be firm and refuse to be blackmailed by your children's outbursts.** Giving in sends a message that tantrums work if children cry loud and long enough. If a child makes a mess or becomes destructive he or she can clean up the mess or make some type of restitution later.
- **When a tantrum begins, move away.** Don't try and reason with a child in the middle of a tantrum. Go into another room or even outside. If the tantrum is in public, either move away (still close enough for supervision) or quietly remove him or her from the scene. Refuse to be around or even cooperate with a tantrum-thrower.
- **Following a tantrum,** talk about better ways that your child could act to get his or her needs met. Rehearse what they could do next time, even practising what they could say. This type of behaviour rehearsal can be very effective in teaching children more appropriate ways to get attention.

- **If possible, get on top of tantrums before they begin.** As soon as you see the first sign of a 'wobbly', act to prevent it.
- **Provide a safe alternative for children who want to display their anger.** Exercise, hitting a ball or even quiet relaxation can help dissipate anger if this is a problem. Talk about these safe alternatives with your child. Let children know that there are some behaviours that are inappropriate but that there is nothing so bad that they can't talk about it.
- **You may not be able to stop children from displaying their anger** but you can, however, control your own reactions. By remaining calm and refusing to give in to temper tantrums, you are sending a powerful message: 'I will not be blackmailed by such behaviour. I shall respond positively to you when you calm down.'



Parenting *ideas*  
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