

# Toddler tantrum toolkit



DoCS  
NSW Department of  
Communities Disability  
Services



New South Wales  
Government

# Tillie's little tantrum



## Remember:

- ◆ A little tantrum only lasts a short time and the child's feelings are not totally out of control.
- ◆ They often happen when children learn that busy parents are likely to give in to what they want if the child has a little tantrum.
- ◆ It's important to not give your child what they ask for in a tantrum.
- ◆ First say "no" and explain why your child can't have something. Lillie's mum explains that she already had a biscuit and offers a banana instead. This way, she acknowledges that Tillie is hungry but doesn't give in.
- ◆ A good tip is to distract your child by giving them something else to do like letting them help do the dishes like Tillie's mum. Tillie forgets about the biscuit and the tantrum and will get lunch soon and won't be hungry.
- ◆ If that doesn't help, just ignore little tantrums. Sometimes this helps the tantrum to simply blow over.

# Brian's barney

Brian's father has forgotten to buy milk and he has not finished the washing.



Brian thinks he is big enough to put his coat on by himself but his father doesn't understand what Brian wants.

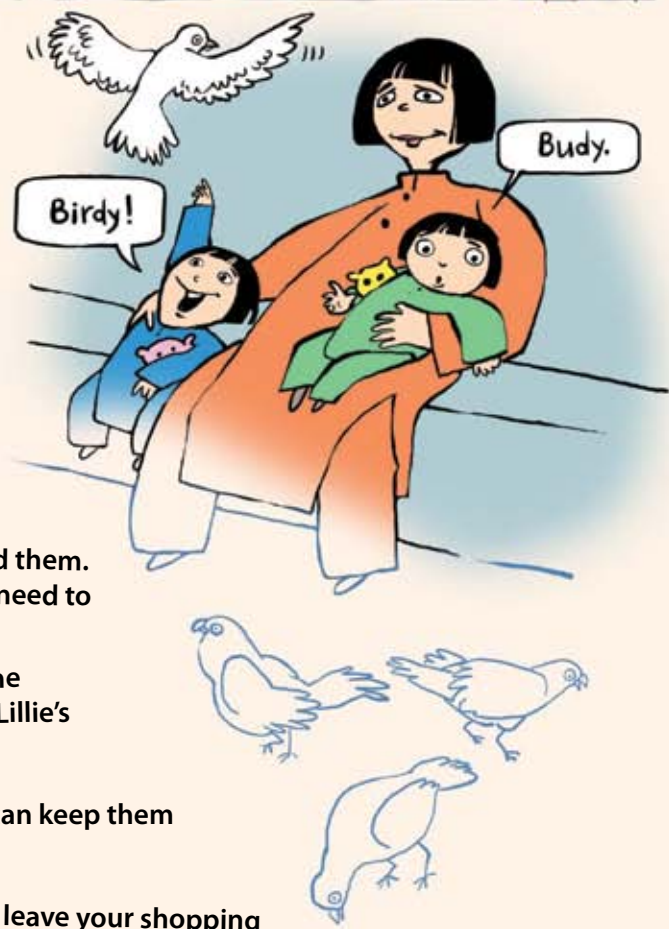


## Remember:

- ▶ Big tantrums often develop from little tantrums - the faster you can intervene or distract your child from a tantrum the better.
- ▶ When a child has a big tantrum, they can't listen to reason. Punishments, consequences and time-out don't work.
- ▶ If you fear you might hurt your child and your feelings are getting out of control put them somewhere safe and walk away for a few minutes the way Brian's father does. Tell your child you won't be far and will be back soon.
- ▶ If you feel that you are getting very angry or upset close your eyes and count to five, or take five deep breaths. This helps Brian's dad to cool down.
- ▶ Make sure that your child is not hungry, tired or irritated. If you can see your child is crotchety, try to leave whatever you had to do until later and avoid things that are difficult for children (like shopping).
- ▶ Once your child has got over the screaming (and kicking) stage, it is important to help them settle. Give your child a big hug like Brian's father.

# Ginny and Lillie make a scene in the Supermarket

Ginny and Lillie's mother does not want her children eating too much sugar and she can't afford fancy chocolates.



## Remember:

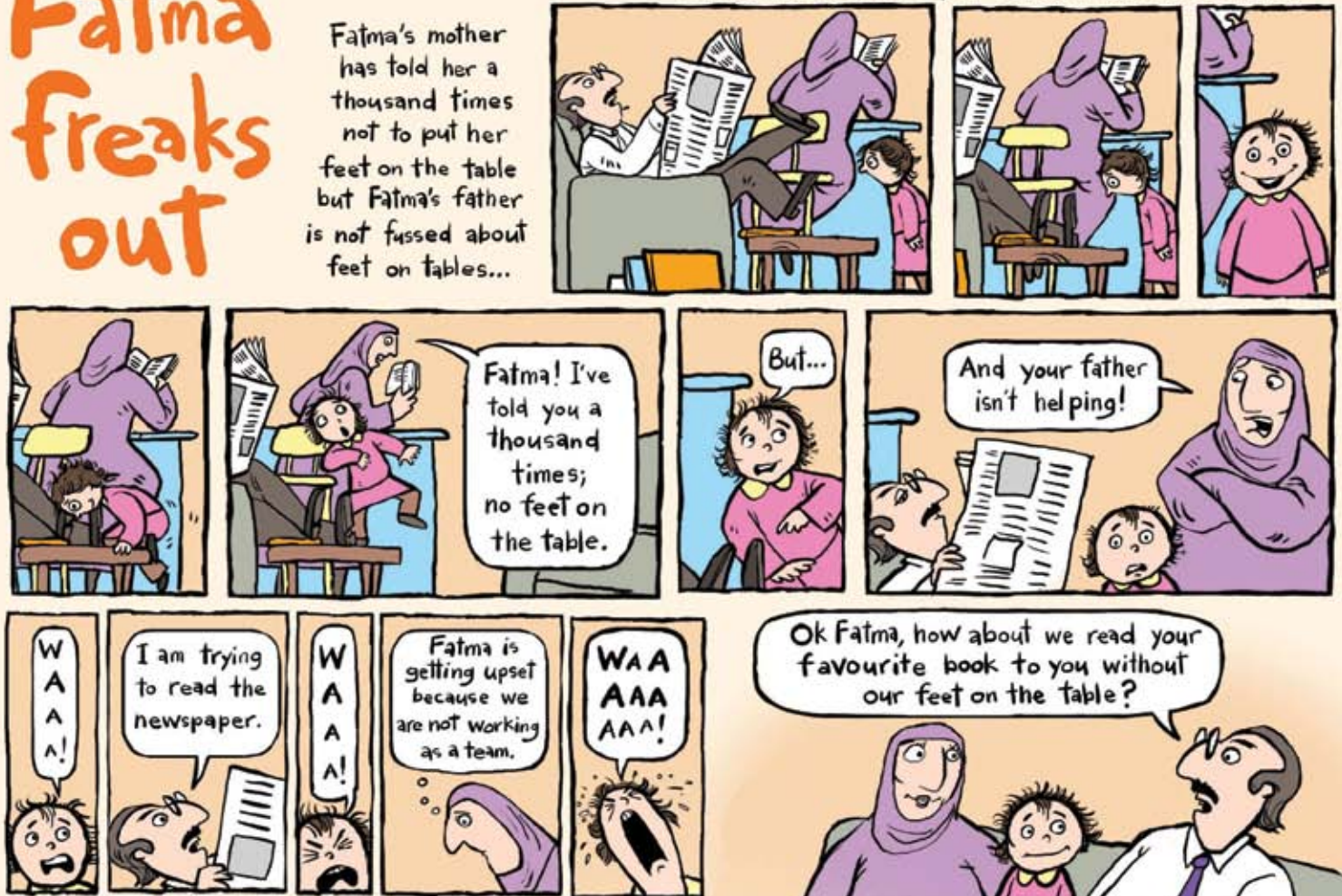
- ▲ If 'supermarket' tantrums happen often, try to plan to avoid them. For example, leave your children with someone else if you need to go for a long shopping trip.
- ▲ Never give in to what they wanted before they started the tantrum. This will encourage more tantrums. Ginny and Lillie's mum does the right thing!
- ▲ Let your child know that you are in control, that you can keep them safe and you will not punish or leave them.
- ▲ If a big tantrum happens you need to be strong to leave your shopping where it is and take your child out to somewhere quiet until it's over like Ginny and Lillie's mum does.
- ▲ Take a snack or a toy for your child and try not to stay too long.
- ▲ Make sure your child is not tired, hungry and has been to the toilet before you go.
- ▲ Having chats to other adults results in young children getting bored, irritable and restless. To them a few minutes can seem like an hour.
- ▲ Make the shopping trip a treat for everyone by having an ice cream or a little time in the park afterwards.

The best thing you can do for tantrums is to try to plan so they don't happen as often!

# Fatma freaks out

Fatma's mother has told her a thousand times not to put her feet on the table but Fatma's father is not fussed about feet on tables...

In fact he sometimes puts his own feet on the table.



## Remember:

- ✓ Think about what is happening in your child's life. Is there anything stressful, and if so, can you change it? If Fatma's parents argue a lot it will put stress on Fatma too.
- ✓ Make sure there are lots of positives in your child's day and don't always say "no". Give encouragement and let them try new things.
  - ✓ Put things your child might want, but cannot have, out of sight.
  - ✓ Plan your day to avoid stressful activities or if they can't be avoided do them when you and your child are less likely to be tired.
- ✓ Toddlers copy what they see. Make sure that you aren't teaching your child bad habits. Fatma's father shouldn't put his feet on the table if his child is not allowed to do it.
- ✓ You and your partner should decide on a common approach to discipline. Your child will feel confused if you are each telling them different things. Fatma's parents should work as a team and teach her the same things.
- ✓ If it has felt like a bad day, make some time for doing something you both enjoy. For example, warm baths often help to settle children who are frazzled. Other fun activities include playing in the park, reading or telling a story, watching a video together or playing music.

# Help with Harry and Hanya

Harry's mother needs to go to the doctor but she knows there will be a long wait in the waiting room. She also knows both Harry and his little sister Hanya get restless and upset in waiting rooms.



Harry's mother makes a call.



Later that day.



## Remember:

- To avoid you and your child getting stressed in the first place, ask a trusted friend, relative or neighbour if they would drop by and mind your child for a short time like Harry's mum asks Auntie. This gives you some 'you' time!
- Get to know other parents at the local playgroup, through the early childhood centre, or at the park – create your own support network.
- Show your spouse, relatives or friends this booklet to explain to them how they can help when your child is having a tantrum and which behaviour is not helpful.
- Make sure your child doesn't get what they wanted in the first place from your partner, a relative or friend if you have said "no". Explain why this is the wrong approach like Harry's mum asks Auntie not to let Harry play with the stereo even if he gets cross.

## Need support and help?

*For immediate support and advice contact:*

### **Parent Line**

132 055

### **Tresillian (Parenting Information and Counselling)**

(02) 9787 0855 or 1800 637 357 (Outside Sydney)

### **Karitane (Parenting Information and Counselling)**

(02) 9794 1852 or 1800 677 961 (Outside Sydney)

### **Playgroup NSW**

1800 171 882

### **Cry LINE**

1800 350 312

### **Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick**

(02) 9382 1111

### **The (New) Children's Hospital at Westmead**

(02) 9845 0000

### **Kidsnet**

(02) 9845 2432

### **Kids Careline (Newcastle area)**

(02) 4921 2800

Your local doctor or paediatrician

Your local Early Childhood Health Centre

Your local Community Services Centre (look in the White Pages under 'COMMUNITY SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF')

To download copies of this comic booklet and other resources to support parents, families and young children go to DoCS website at

**[www.community.nsw.gov.au](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au)** (parenting/caring for babies & toddlers)

For more information about toddler behaviour and routines go to the Raising Children Network's website at

**[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)**

To find out more about how to deal with fussy eaters go to the Westmead Children's Hospital's website at

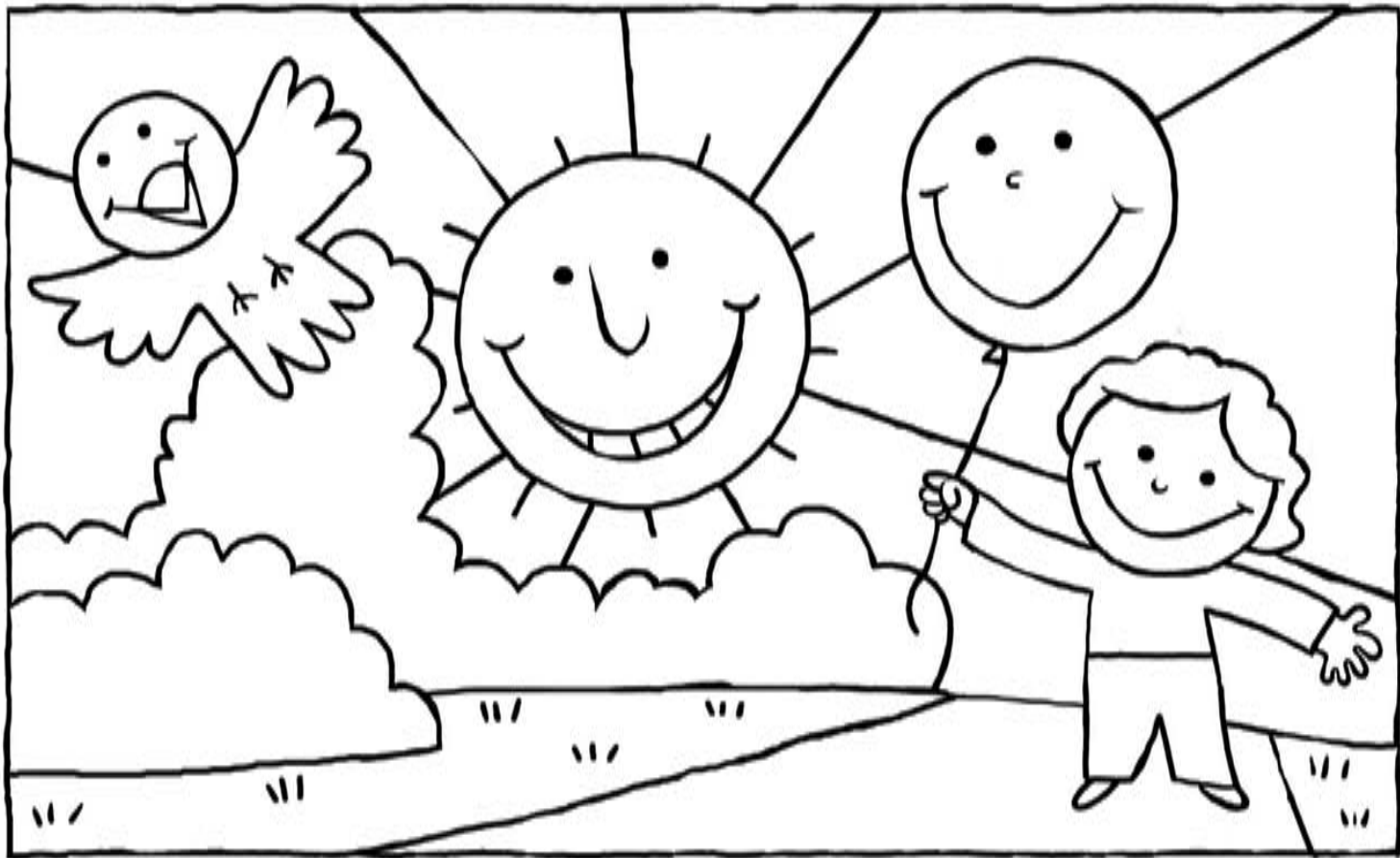
**[www.chw.edu.au](http://www.chw.edu.au)** (parents/fact sheets/tucker without tantrums)

Comic strips by Peter Sheehan ([www.petersheehan.com](http://www.petersheehan.com))

© Copyright NSW Department of Community Services  
September 2007



NSW Department of  
Community Services



Your two-to-three year old toddler won't be able to colour this picture in between the lines, but he or she will love to try, using the crayons to decorate with bright scribble. So join in the fun and personalise your comic booklet together. This booklet will stand up when placed on an even surface, so you can display your artwork.