

Toddlers are great fun Tantrums are not

Most parents can tell a story or two about toddler tantrums. And while it's sometimes hard to cope with changes in your toddler's behaviour, there are things you can do to handle tantrums more successfully. Understanding why tantrums are so common in this age group will also help you to relax and not let your toddler's tantrums control your life.

Tantrums are a normal part of growing up. Toddlers aren't being bad when they are having a tantrum; they are just acting their age. Almost all children between the ages of one and three have temper tantrums – with most of them having between five and nine tantrums per week. As they start to discover their own individuality, a tantrum every now and then is nothing to worry about.

Toddlers start to discover their own individuality

Your toddler is on the move! They have the whole world to explore. This is a time of many changes for them and most toddlers struggle to cope with their newfound individuality. So it is quite normal, not naughty, for your child to say "no", get cross, throw tantrums and rebel sometimes. All this is saying is that they are an individual person.

Tantrums often happen for a reason

Many toddler tantrums are, to a certain extent, avoidable. Your toddler might be tired or hungry. They might be feeling overwhelmed, frustrated or needing your attention.

While there is no guaranteed way of stopping every tantrum, taking the time to find out what triggers your toddler's tantrums and avoiding these triggers will reduce the number of tantrums that happen.

It might help to keep a diary for a few days – note what time of day tantrums happen, what you are doing when it happens and what your child is doing. If it always happens at the same time or after the same situation – change the routine. It's always worth avoiding tantrums if you can.

Hitting, punching or striking your child is unacceptable and won't solve the problem.

Sometimes it feels as if your child is deliberately stirring you up, but this is not true! Toddler's might be testing their independence, or wanting your attention; or they might resort to a tantrum because they aren't able to express their feelings. None of this is done deliberately to annoy you.

The key to staying in control of a tantrum situation is for you to stay calm. DoCS toddler tantrum comic booklet depicts some common tantrum scenarios and gives examples of ways of coping.

Hitting, punching or striking your child is unacceptable. It won't solve the problem or help the situation. Above all, it will teach your child that violence is a solution to conflict. So stay calm! If you feel like you might be losing control, try counting to five, or walking out of the room (if you know your toddler is safe). Swearing or calling your toddler bad names only makes the situation worse as it reinforces the bad things that are happening for your toddler.

When tantrums happen, remember the positives about your child and know that this is a phase that will pass.



Your toddler will get bigger, stronger and more able to manage things better

Sometimes it also helps to realise that your toddler is simply going through a phase. Time is on your side. A lot of the emotional turbulence will have settled down by the time your toddler grows into a preschool child. That means they will meet less extreme frustration in their everyday life. Remember to praise your child when they cope well with frustration.

In addition, your toddler will learn to express their feelings. With the help of language they start to distinguish between fantasy and reality. Once your toddler reaches that stage they will at last be able to understand most of the demands and restrictions you place on them.

Enjoy your fun-loving toddler

Finally, child care is not a scientific experiment and you don't have to act dead serious all the time. Cuddle and hug your child, or use humour – do a funny dance or pull a funny face. It is okay to relax the rules, to trust your intuition and to enjoy your fun-loving toddler.

Remember to hug your child often and to praise them when they manage frustration well.