FIVE WAYS TO TAME A TANTRUM

Enhance your calm

A tantrum isn’t just about your child. It’s about your state of mind too. If you’re stressed and short of time, if you’re feeling embarrassed or desperate to get out the door, you’re not going to be the sensitive, empathic, warm, considerate parent that you might be otherwise.

The message here is to be organised and plan ahead. Put everything out in advance and don’t try to do too much in one day. Having breathing space will make things easier when the tricky situations arise. By far the most effective way to deal with a tantrum is to never let it get started.

Sidestep confrontation

Many tantrums occur when your child is tired, ill or just not feeling 100 percent. This isn’t the time for a battle of wills. Try to move things along. Do the basic minimum required, while avoiding confrontation. Leave the disciplining for a time when she can properly hear you.

Use distraction

Distraction is a parent’s most effective tool. When things start heading the wrong direction, pick something, anything and redirect her attention. Put on her favourite song, pick up the phone and call granny, suggest a game of hide and seek. If you can get her interested something else, you may just avoid a meltdown.

Explain yourself

Even in the early years, children can appreciate an explanation. If you feel like you’ve said it a hundred times before, she may still need to hear it again. “Sally, please don’t bang your spoon. It makes an awful racket and damages our table. Your brother and sister don’t like it and it spoils the nice feeling we have when we eat together.”

If it’s started, let it run its course

If your child is in full-tantrum mode, leave her to it. Don’t try to appease, make deals, bribes or threats.

Research shows that intervening just prolongs the tantrum. If you’re out and about, put your child in a safe place somewhere she can’t damage any property, herself, or others. Then wait it out. Eventually she will calm down. At this point, you will have a much better chance of being heard and any cuddles offered may be gratefully received.

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How to tame a TANTRUM

Dr Sarah Kuppen on the most effective way to handle a toddler melt-down

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