



Hunsbury Park Primary School

A Parent's Guide  
To  
Understanding Temper  
Tantrums

## **Understanding and dealing with tantrums**

Children have tantrums because they can't express themselves, so they cry, scream, kick and shout and even bite. It usually happens when they are 2-3 years old but can happen at any age and can feel very embarrassing for you as a parent. Tantrums happen for all sorts of reasons – being tired or hungry, wanting something they can't have, or another child took a toy from them. It may also be a way of getting your attention so look for good behaviour and praise them as often as you can.

## **Staying calm**

It's really important that you stay calm when your child is having a tantrum. This can be very hard to do but if you become stressed too your child will pick up on it. Keeping calm and in control shows your toddler that you are not overwhelmed by his or her emotions and while he or she feels out of control, you are in control. During her tantrum he or she may not be able to hear you but sometimes by speaking slowly and quietly, you can help calm the situation. Try to avoid worrying about what other people will think if you're out in public – if you stay calm even if your child is screaming the place down they will more likely carry on by as you are dealing with the situation. Many of them will have had children themselves and know what you are going through.

## **Distract your child**

Help your child calm down by distracting them with something else, such as reading a book, or something else to look at where they are like a bus going past. If you do something like giving them treats in the hope of calming them down, this may be quick fix but in can end up with your child thinking that a tantrum will be rewarded. Have a drink or snack with you in case a child is genuinely hungry or thirsty. If you want to try distracting him or her before the full blown tantrum, you may want to have or toy or something handy.

## **Give them a hug**

Sometimes a child having a tantrum may just want your attention and giving the child a hug might help. However, this will not work if the child has already too far gone in the tantrum. Sometimes this can make the situation worse. A hug may not stop a tantrum, but holding a child firmly and gently while talking to him or her in a clear voice may help the child understand that you are not giving in to the tantrum. You and your child may enjoy a loving cuddle after the tantrum has subsided. You may need to explain that you know she was angry but still the behaviour was not acceptable. Let him or her know what they can do next time when they are feeling frightened or angry. Give your child the words to let you know how he or she feels.

## **When it becomes too overwhelming**

Sometimes it can be really hard to stay calm when your toddler is having a tantrum and if you really feel like you can't and if your child is in a safe place, just move away for a moment until you feel calmer. Top tantrum tips:

- Stay calm
- Distract your child – with a book or song, or anything else going on nearby
- If you find you can't calm down and your child is safe, move away for a while until you feel better.

## **Asking for help**

If you feel like you just can't cope, wherever possible, it is better to ask for help than to keep everything bottled up and suffer alone. This will help to alleviate your own distress and will help you feel more able to deal with your toddler. Try give yourself a break sometimes:

- go for a walk or swim
- sit down with a cuppa
- read the paper
- watch your favourite TV programme

These suggestions will give you a chance to recharge batteries.

## **For further help and support:**

School

Your GP / health visitor

[www.familylives.org](http://www.familylives.org).

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

[www.nspcc.org](http://www.nspcc.org)