

## How to Deal With Temper Tantrums

### Key Points to Remember:

- Although it may not always seem this way, *children don't misbehave for the purpose of making you mad*. They misbehave out of need. It is the parent's job to be the detective and figure out whatever that need might be.  
For example, many children have a tantrum at the grocery store when mom won't buy them the candy they requested. They are not having a fit to just to make you angry; they are acting out because they have a need that mom isn't able to meet. The need is not just wanting the candy, but the inability to control the *desire* of all the tempting goodies at the store.
- **PICK YOUR BATTLES!** There are just some battles we cannot win. For example, if your child chooses not to eat their food we cannot force them to chew and swallow. These are simply battles that we need to just let go of rather than engaging our children in arguments.
- If you have not been using any of these suggested techniques before now they will take time before they can become effective.

### Types of Tantrums:

- A.) The Manipulative Tantrum – Used to get what you want, is about control.
- B.) The Temperamental Tantrum – Based in feeling, i.e. when a child is sick or tired.

### Dealing with Tantrums:

- 1.) *Calm yourself*. It is not useful to your child if you are as equally worked up and aroused as they are. If you can keep yourself calm it will increase the chances that they will become calm. Techniques to do this can include taking a deep breath or counting to ten. Show your child you are doing this so they can learn techniques to calm themselves as well.
- 2.) *Create a Power Phrase*. Choose a word or phrase that you can repeat to yourself as a reminder that you are capable of staying calm and handling the situation. For example, "I am strong, I can do this!"
- 3.) *Empathy*. The first step in dealing with your child's tantrum is to reflect back what it is they are feeling. For a manipulative tantrum you may say, "I can see you want that toy, you're sad you can't have it." For a temperamental tantrum you may say, "I know you feel so tired, mommy's here." You can also try speaking "Toddlerese" for younger children, so they can better understand what you are trying to say.
- 4.) *Time-In*. This concept means that parents stay with their child and help them soothe them until they are calm again, rather than sending your child away when they are upset. With time in the parent goes through the fixing the issue with the child. For example, if your child has a tantrum because they did not want to clean up the food they threw on the floor, you will stay near their side and actually help them clean and show them what is expected.
- 5.) *Stay Firm and Follow Through*. Sometimes we need to be the bad guy and the good guy at the same time. The good guy reflects feelings and helps their child find a solution, while the bad guy stays firm and does not give in. If your child is upset about a candy bar they wanted at the grocery store it is okay to reflect that they are feeling upset, but you cannot give in and end up buying the candy bar. This only reinforces the behaviour and teaches children that when they have a tantrum they can get it their way. An example of staying firm is saying, "I know you're upset because you want the candy bar, but we are here to get groceries today, not candy." By saying this, you acknowledged their feelings without giving in. \*Remember – Staying firm happens after the child is calm. While the child is upset you simply want to reflect feelings.
- 6.) *Take Preventative Steps*. Create a plan on your own or with older children that lays out how to prevent future tantrums and place to avoid for a while.