

NEWSLETTER

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Toddlers & Tantrums

Tantrums are a common and recognizable part of the toddler's developmental stage because they are beginning to experience the emerging need for independence, and along with independence comes assertiveness – yet **they have not cognitively learned how to appropriately express that assertiveness**. They spend their days testing limits and experimenting with how to manipulate their environment and shape their surroundings. The parental role at this stage is to monitor the reasons for tantrums and respond according to the toddler's needs. There are two scenarios where a parent is going to experience tantrum behavior; one the parent will assist, teach and help – the second the parent needs to ignore.

Imagine your toddler pushing a toy and running into a wall - not knowing how to keep the toy moving forward and being frustrated the toddler will display tantrum-like behaviors. In this scenario, the parent should engage with the toddler and teach the child how to manipulate the toy. You will see that they are able to quickly learn and master new skills. As they gain these skills you will see the tantrum-like behaviors diminish. Throughout this developmental phase, these teaching moments frequently arise, but there is a second scenario where the parent will need to do the exact opposite of engaging and that is to ignore the toddler.



Imagine your toddler wants a cookie and mom says “no.” This is when the parent **must completely ignore any tantrum behaviors**. By ignoring the behavior, the parent sends a clear message that the behavior is unacceptable in this situation. The parent is going to 100% ignore the behavior, **not the child**. While you are ignoring the behavior you stand by to keep both child and property safe. If there comes a need to intervene for safety's sake the parent will step in and protect in silence and once the risk has passed step away again and continue to ignore.

Tantrums that go unaddressed in a child's toddler years will not just vanish as they get older. They will become more intense and severe and a 10-year-old having a tantrum can be very disturbing and ugly. 🍃



Ignoring 100% means **not** moving the child to another location, **not** talking to the child, displaying **no** facial expressions, **not** touching the child, and most importantly – **not** punishing or talking about the behavior when it ends. The parent must behave as though the tantrum never happened and only re-engage with the child once the behavior has ended. **Do not be deceived!** The tantrum has only truly ended when the child's breathing has calmed, there are no remnants of crying or whimpering and the child is moving past the need for the cookie. As quickly as the child learned how to manipulate the push toy – the toddler will learn that this tantrum behavior does not work to get what they cannot have or do.



There have been times when I have found myself in an aisle of a store and encounter a parent actively ignoring a tantrum. Instead of walking away, going around the scene or making the parent feel bad for the behaviors - I go and stand with the parent and lend my support until the tantrum is over; it is a very brave thing to do in public – a parent can use all the support they get.