

## Toolbox Tips #4 - COPING WITH A TEMPER TANTRUM

### What causes a Tantrum?

Children 18 months to 4 years old are prone to having tantrums. Tantrums often happen when a child is tired, hungry, over-stimulated or ignored. Sometimes children have tantrums to test limits or to get their own way.

### Solutions to Tantrums:

- Stay calm.
- If there's possibility of the child being hurt, hold the child from behind.
- Remove the child from public situations.
- After the tantrum is over say, "I'm so glad you're feeling better now."
- Do not give children rewards after tantrums; go back to business as usual.
- Negotiate before the tantrum takes place.
- Praise the child when the tantrum is averted.
- Look for patterns. If a child cries every time you put his/her shoes on, the shoes may be too tight.
- Consult a pediatrician if the tantrums last for more than 15-20 minutes or if the child continually bangs his/her head against a wall or hurts himself/herself in other ways.

**Giving in to tantrum requests is the worst thing you can do. The best way to handle tantrums is to do nothing. Don't pick up, comfort or try to reason with a child during a tantrum.**

### Discipline for Toddlers:

- Provide Structure: Provide a steady routine; toddlers can't handle the pressure of being rushed.
- Use positive commands like, "Please walk to the table" not "Don't run to the table."
- Be Specific: Say, "Please keep the truck on the floor and not on the dining room table." Not, "Watch what you're doing."
- Be Consistent: Do not use idle threats you can't or don't intend to carry out. All caretakers should try to use the same methods of discipline.
- Reward Desirable Behavior: Toddlers need attention and rewards such as hugs, kisses, praise, etc.
- Time-Out: Time-out is a brief period of isolation and an effective method for disciplining toddlers when a child's misbehavior is too extreme to be ignored. Being alone and removed from all sources of attention for even a short time is unpleasant for children.

### Time-Out Tips:

- Use time-out only for serious misbehaviors: tantrums, fighting, intentional destructiveness.
- Choose a time-out location that is dull, but safe and non-frightening.
- One time-out minute for each year of age is a general rule of thumb.
- Don't talk to the child while he/she is in time-out.
- Calmly explain why they are being punished and what behavior will be expected in the future after the time-out is over.
- Make an extra effort to reward good behavior after time-out.
- Use time-out **immediately** after the misbehavior occurs

A toddler's temper tantrum can be frustrating and irritating. Remember you are the adult. Shaking is never a form of discipline. Children as old as 4 years old have been known to suffer from the effects of Shaken Baby Syndrome. No matter how upset you are:

**NEVER, NEVER SHAKE A BABY OR A TODDLER!**

# COPING WITH A CRYING BABY



*Taking care of a crying baby can be frustrating and irritating, but remember; crying is the only way a baby has to communicate. The baby is not trying to make your life miserable; he or she is just trying to inform you of a need. When a baby in your care won't stop crying, try some of the following coping strategies:*

- Meet the baby's basic needs: feed, change, make comfortable, etc.
- Check for signs of illness, like a fever or swollen gums. If signs are present call your physician or administer proper care based on the symptoms.
- Rock, walk or dance with the baby.
- Take the baby for a ride in a stroller, or in a car seat in the car.
- Put the baby in a wind-up swing.
- Swaddle the baby snugly in a soft, warm blanket.
- Check to make sure that clothing is not too tight, or that fingers or toes are not bent.
- If you are frustrated and need a break, put the baby in a playpen or crib, go to another part of the house and do something to calm down.
- Turn up the music on the stereo, run the vacuum, turn on the dryer or let water run in the tub for a few minutes; babies enjoy consistent, rhythmic noise.
- Sing or quietly talk to the baby.
- Offer the baby a noisy toy; shake or rattle it.
- Put the baby in a soft front carrier close to your body and breathe slowly and calmly; the baby may feel your calmness and become quiet.
- Give the baby a pacifier.
- Lay the baby tummy down across your lap and gently rub or pat his or her back.
- Try giving the baby a bath; the warm water might be calming.
- Massage the baby's body and limbs gently or tickle soft circles on their face.
- Call a friend or relative you trust to take over for a while, then get away, get some rest and take care of yourself.
- If nothing works, put the baby on his or her back in bed, close the door and turn up the TV or radio. Check on baby every 10-15 minutes.

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[www.gobroomecounty.com/FVPC](http://www.gobroomecounty.com/FVPC)

Provided by the Child Abuse Prevention Center / National Information, Support and Referral Service of Shaken Baby Syndrome

[www.dontshake.com](http://www.dontshake.com)