



The Sunny Side of Toddler Tantrums: 7 Tips on Staying Supportive

Toddlers are famous for having minds of their own and can express strong feelings about what goes on around them. The word “NO” becomes a favorite and powerful tool that helps them assert their independence. At the same time, toddlers can easily become overwhelmed by the many things they want to explore. Parents and caregivers are often challenged as they try to support their toddler’s flood of emotions.

Tantrums can be challenging to manage, but if adults can reframe their thoughts and feelings surrounding the struggle, they can help children develop vital self-calming and recuperative skills that eventually enable children to walk themselves up and down their own “emotional ladders.”

Tantrums are sometimes unavoidable. Responsive adults can support children by:

1. Tuning into a child’s temperament (some children are more flexible/fearful/feisty than others)
2. Tuning into their own temperaments/“anger buttons” (when adults change their response to challenging childhood behaviors, “goodness of fit” is achieved)
3. Looking for patterns (careful observation can reveal behavior patterns which then helps adults preset sensitive children and/or anticipate, even avoid melt downs)
4. Empathizing with and mirroring a child’s feelings as they are revealed by matching facial expressions, words and volume
5. Pausing, staying calm and being open to what a child is trying to communicate
6. Being a role model (“I just made a big spill all over my shirt and we are late to the library! That makes me feel so mad right now!”)
7. Having developmentally appropriate expectations for young children

Resources:
 Emotional Flooding: Using Empathy to Help babies manage Strong Emotions, by Linda Groves Gillespie & Amy Hunter, Young Children, September 2008. parenting.com/Tips for Toddler Temper Tantrums
zerotothree.org/Self Control: 12-24 Months



Try completing the chart below to help identify “tantrum triggers” that may affect your toddler

My Child Copes Best When:	My Child Loses Control When:
I’m attentive and available	We shop in the afternoon
She’s well rested and prepared	I’m distracted for too long
I wear her in a sling	There is too much stimulation
She is interested	She isn’t sure of what to do

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