



10 Tips To Prevent Or Subdue Temper Tantrums

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you are encouraged to
pass it on to anyone you
think may help.

CHALLENGE: "Whenever David doesn't get his way he throws himself on the floor, screams, kicks and cries incessantly. What can you do to help him overcome this behavior?"

TIP #1: What is David getting out of this behavior. First make sure that you are not rewarding this type of behavior, positively or negatively because both will help keep it alive.

If you eventually give in to this behavior by changing your initial decision (not letting David go out to play, refusing David a cookie), David has learned that tantrums work.



Hence, when David wants his way he may think, "a good tantrum just may get me that candy bar, it got me out of bedtime last night."

Negative attention (yelling, threatening, ridicule, spanking) seldom changes the behavior. Getting you upset may be just as rewarding as giving in to his demands. So again, make sure you are not unintentionally rewarding David for this behavior.

TIP #2: Be proactive. Think of the situations that invite David's meltdowns and head them off before they happen. Do questions that require a **yes** or **no** answer provoke a tantrum?

Instead of "Do you want a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for lunch David?" try "It is time for lunch David. Would you like PB&J or macaroni and cheese?"

Advance notice may help as well. "We will be leaving Grandma's in ten minutes. Get everything you want to take care of completed before we go."

Is David more likely to throw a tantrum when he is tired? Then you may want to provide an opportunity for him to take a nap.



TIP #3: Consequence. Be sure to tie the consequence back to the misbehavior. "David, remember the last time we went to the store and you threw a fit because I wouldn't let you have that Power Ranger?"



Remember how you kept putting it in the cart and screaming that you wanted it? Well I am going shopping but you won't be going with me.

I just don't feel like dealing with that kind of behavior today. Mrs. Hamblin is here to watch you until I get back. Try to make the best of it. Love ya, bye."

TIP #4: Move David to a different location. The key is for you to model taking care of yourself. Your ears hurt when you hear David's screaming.

You may not be able to control whether or not David has a tantrum, but you can control where he does it. **"Tantrums are for the bedroom. Let's go."**

You may want to give him a choice. "Where do you want to be until you can get that under control, the bathroom or the laundry room? If David can't decide quickly, you decide for him. Come on out when there is no more crying and screaming."

TIP #5: Notice the exceptions. Point out the times when David may have thrown a tantrum but did not. "I really appreciate how you came in the house when I asked without throwing a "fit". You should feel good about being able to do that."



TIP #6: Give the behavior a name. This will help externalize the problem, which is to say, it separates the person from the problem.

It helps David and the family view the behavior as the problem and not him (the problem is the problem). For example, you could call David's tantrums the "uglies".

This can help put David and you on the same side in the battle against the "uglies". Questions like "can you think of a time when you have beat the "uglies" David? How did you do it? or how do you know when the "uglies" are coming?

What can you do to stop them? "David may enjoy the imagery of conquering the "uglies" and this can give David a sense of control over the behavior.



TIP #7: Acknowledge his feelings. This aligns you with David and sets the stage for him to begin to work through his own problems.

David: "Dad, can I get this Power Ranger?"

Dad: "No, David I am not buying toys today."

David: Eyebrows coming closer together and lip starting to pucker. "But it is the last one I need and I will have them all."

Dad: "Not today David."

David: Screaming and crying. "You never get me anything I ask for. You don't love me."

Dad: Acknowledging David's feelings. "You must feel really sad about not being able to get the Power Ranger. I know I sometimes feel bad when I can't get what I want."

David: Sniffling. "Yea, I really want it."

Dad: "Tell you what. (Taking pen and paper out of planner) I will write this down as "things David wants"."

David: "Okay Dad."

You can later use this list for surprises or gifts for special occasions.

TIP #8: Tell David what you are going to do. "David, I'll come back down stairs when you get that under control" or "I will be happy to talk to you when you are not crying and your voice is soft like mine."



TIP #9: Ignore the tantrum. If you have the will power to outright ignore the behavior you must remember that it may get worse before it gets better.

That is, when David's behavior doesn't produce the desired results, he may turn it up a notch to see if a higher intensity level gets a response.

Be careful. If you give in and respond to the higher level or longer duration, David learns that it's how intense or how long he needs to tantrum from now on in order to receive attention.



TIP #10: Direct David toward a different way of expressing how he feels. "David, here is some paper and crayons. How about drawing how you are feeling right now." This is a positive, less annoying way of communicating how he feels.

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